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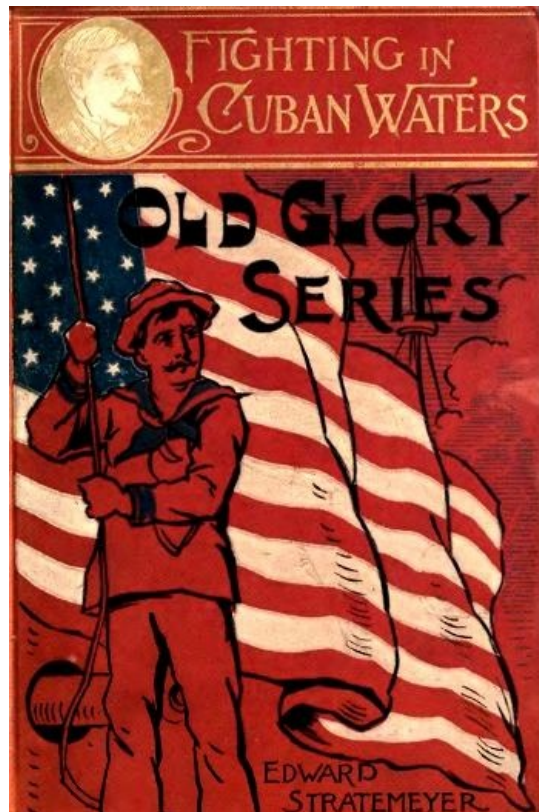
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FIGHTING IN CUBAN WATERS; OR, UNDER SCHLEY ON THE BROOKLYN ***



FIGHTING IN CUBAN WATERS

OR

UNDER SCHLEY ON THE BROOKLYN

Old Glory Series

BY EDWARD STRATEMEYER

AUTHOR OF "UNDER DEWEY AT MANILA" "A YOUNG VOLUNTEER IN

CUBA" "RICHARD DARE'S VENTURE" "OLIVER BRIGHT'S SEARCH" "TO ALASKA FOR GOLD" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
A. B. SHUTE

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"THE FLAGSHIP BEGAN THE FIRING."

PREFACE

"FIGHTING IN CUBAN WATERS," although a complete story in itself, forms the third volume of the "Old Glory Series," tales depicting the various campaigns in our late war with Spain.

In "Under Dewey at Manila" we followed Larry Russell's adventures on board of the flagship *Olympia* during the memorable contest off Cavite; in "A Young Volunteer in Cuba" we marched and fought with Ben Russell in that notable campaign leading up to the surrender of Santiago; and in the present volume are narrated the haps and mishaps of Walter Russell, who joins Commodore Schley's flagship, the *Brooklyn*, and sails with the Flying Squadron from Hampton Roads to Key West, thence to Cienfuegos, and at last succeeds in "bottling up" Admiral Cervera's fleet in Santiago Bay. The long blockade and the various bombardments are described, and then follow the particulars of that masterly battle on the part of the North Atlantic Squadron which led to the total destruction of the Spanish warships.

Walter Russell's bravery may seem overdrawn, but such is far from being a fact. That our sailors were heroes in those days we have but to remember the sinking of the *Merrimac*, the *Winslow* affair, and a score of deeds of equal daring. "The hour makes the man," and the opportunity likewise makes the hero. Walter was brave, but he was no more so than hundreds of others who stood ready to lay down their lives in the cause of humanity and for the honor of Old Glory. Like

his two brothers, his religious belief was of the practical kind, and he went into battle convinced that so long as he did his duty according to the dictates of his conscience, an all-wise and all-powerful Providence would guide him and watch over him.

The author cannot refrain from saying a word about the historical portions of the present work. They have been gleaned from the best available authorities, including the reports of Admiral Sampson, Commodore Schley, and a number of captains who took part in the contest; also the personal narratives of one man who was on board the *Merrimac* at the time that craft was sunk, and of a number who have made the *Brooklyn* their home for several years past, and who will probably remain on the pride of the Flying Squadron for some time to come.

In presenting this third volume, the author begs to thank both critics and the public for the cordial reception accorded to the previous volumes, and trusts that the present story will meet with equal commendation.

EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

NEWARK, N.J.,

March 1, 1899.

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By EDWARD STRATEMEYER

BY EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

By OLIVER OPTIC

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"The flagship began the firing"

"He bent over Walter again"

"The President bowed in return"

"See here, I want to talk to you!"

"I'll get square on all of you!"

["With a final lurch the *Merrimac* went down"](#)

["Surrender, or I'll shoot you where you stand!"](#)

["Rammer in hand, Walter edged close to the muzzle"](#)

FIGHTING IN CUBAN WATERS

CHAPTER I

WALTER DETERMINES TO ENTER THE NAVY

"Well, Walter, I suppose the newspapers are going like hot cakes this morning."

"They are, Mr. Newell. Everybody wants the news. I ran out of 'Globes' and 'Heralds' before seven o'clock, and sent Dan down for fifty more of each."

"That was right. It's a windfall for us newsdealers, as well as a glorious victory to match. It makes me think of my old war days, when I was aboard of the *Carondelet* under Captain Walke. We didn't sink so many ships as Dewey has at Manila, but we sank some, and smashed many a shore battery in the bargain, along the banks of the Mississippi. What does that extra have to say?" and Phil Newell, the one-legged civil-war naval veteran, who was also proprietor of the news-stand, took the sheet which Walter Russell, his clerk, handed out.

"There is not much additional news as yet," answered Walter. "One of the sensational papers has it that Dewey is now bombarding Manila, but the news is not confirmed. But it is true that our squadron sunk every one of the Spanish warships,—and that, I reckon, is enough for one victory."

"True, my lad, true; but there is nothing like keeping at 'em, when you have 'em on the run. That is the way we did down South. Perhaps Dewey is waiting for additional instructions from Washington. I hope he didn't suffer much of a loss. Some papers say he came off scot free, but that seems too good to be true."

"The news makes me feel more than ever like enlisting," continued the boy, after a pause, during which he served out half a dozen newspapers to as many customers. "What a glorious thing it must be to fight like that and come out on top!"

"Glorious doesn't express it, Walter. Why, if it wasn't for this game leg of mine, and my age being against me, I'd go over to the navy-yard to-day and reënlist, keelhaul me if I wouldn't!"

"But what of the stand?"

"The stand could take care of itself—until the Dons were given the thrashing they deserve for making the Cubans suffer beyond all reason." Phil Newell threw back his head and gave a laugh. "That puts me in mind of something that happened when the Civil War started. A young lawyer in New York locked up his office and pasted a notice on his door: 'Gone to the front. Will be back when the war is over.' I'd have to put up something similar, wouldn't I?"

"I wish you and I could go together, Mr. Newell."

"So do I, Walter, but I'm over sixty now, and they want young blood. By the way, what of that brother of yours down in New York?"

"Ben has joined the militia of that State, and is now at Camp Black waiting to be sworn into the United States service. I wish he had come on to Boston."

"Well, Uncle Sam wants soldiers as well as sailors, or he wouldn't call for a hundred and twenty-five thousand volunteers. But give me the deck or gun-room of a warship every time. Nothing finer in the world. I served for nearly ten years, and I know."

Walter smiled, and then waited on several additional customers. "My youngest brother, Larry, takes to the ocean," he answered. "He is out on the Pacific now, somewhere between the Hawaiian Islands and Hong Kong. He was always crazy for a boat when we were at home in Buffalo together, and spent all his spare time on Lake Erie."

"Going to Hong Kong, eh? That's not so far from the Philippines. It is a pity he is not with Commodore Dewey. It would be a feather in his cap when he got home."

A steady stream of customers for five minutes broke off the conversation at this point, and throwing down his newspaper, Phil Newell—he never wanted to be called Philip—entered the stand to help his young assistant. The stand was situated in the heart of Boston, just outside of one of the leading hotels, and trade at this hour in the morning, eight o'clock, was always brisk.

When there came a lull later on, Walter turned again to his employer. "Mr. Newell, what if I do enlist? Can you spare me?" he questioned.

"What! do you really mean it, Walter?"

"I do, sir. As you know, I've been thinking the matter over ever since this war with Spain started."

"But you've got to have your guardian's consent, or they won't take you."

"I've got it in my pocket now. I wrote to him last week, and he answered that, as Ben had already joined the soldiers, I could do as I pleased, but I mustn't blame him if I was killed."

"Which you wouldn't be likely to do, if you were killed dead, so to speak," laughed Phil Newell. Then he slapped Walter on the back, for twenty odd years on land had not taken his "sea-dog" manners from him. "Enlist, my lad, enlist by all means, if you feel it your duty. Of course I don't like to lose such a handy clerk, but Uncle Sam can have you and welcome."

"Didn't you say there was a young man named Gimpwell looking for this position?"

"Yes, and he wants it badly, for he has a sick sister to support."

"Has he any experience?"

"Oh, yes; he tended a railroad stand for several years."

"Then, perhaps you could break him in without much trouble—if I went away."

"Do you want to go at once?"

"If I am to enlist, then it seems to me the quicker the better. I see by the papers that some of our warships are still at Hampton Roads and Key West, but there is no telling when they will start for Cuban waters. Besides, I've been thinking that if I could manage it, I should like to get aboard of the *Brooklyn*, the flagship of Commodore Schley's Flying Squadron, which is now at Hampton Roads awaiting orders."

"It's not so easy to pick your ship, my lad. However, if you wish, you can go over to the navy-yard this afternoon and see what you can do,—and I'll go along and leave Dan in charge here," concluded Phil Newell.

Walter Russell was one of three brothers, of whom Ben was the eldest and Larry the youngest. Their home had been in Buffalo, where at the death of their mother, a widow, they had been turned over to the care of their step-uncle, Mr. Job Dowling, an eccentric old bachelor, whose prime object in life was to hoard up money.

In the two volumes previous to this, entitled respectively, "Under Dewey at Manila," and "A Young Volunteer in Cuba," I related how the boys found it impossible to remain under Job Dowling's roof, and how they ran away, each to seek fortune as he might find it. Larry drifted first to San Francisco and then to Honolulu, the principal city of the Hawaiian Islands, where he shipped on a vessel bound for Hong Kong. From this ship he was cast overboard with a Yankee friend named Luke Striker, and both were picked up by the flagship *Olympia* of the Asiatic Squadron and taken to Manila Bay, there to serve most gallantly under the naval commander whose name has since become a household word everywhere. As Walter had intimated, Larry was a sailor by nature, and it was likely that he would follow the sea as long as he lived.

Ben and Walter had gone eastward, but at Middletown, in New York State, they had separated, Walter to drift to Boston, and Ben to make his way to New York. At the latter city the eldest of the Russell brothers had secured employment in a hardware establishment, but this place was burned out, and then Ben enlisted in the 71st Regiment of New York, while his intimate friend, Gilbert Pennington, joined Roosevelt's Rough Riders, and both went to Cuba, there to fight valorously in that campaign which led to the surrender of Santiago and caused Spain to sue for peace.

As Walter had written to Larry, the recital of the former's adventures in getting from Middletown to Boston would fill a volume. He had stolen a ride on the cars from Middletown to Albany, and during this wild trip his hat blew off and was not recovered. He was put off the train just outside of the capital city; and, stopping at a farmhouse to inquire the way, had his clothing torn by a bull-dog that was more than anxious to get at what was beneath the garments. Walter hardly knew what to do, when a tramp put in an appearance, and sent a well-directed stone at the dog's head, causing the beast to slink away. The tramp introduced himself as Raymond Cass, a bricklayer, out of luck, and bound for Boston on foot. He proposed that they journey together, and Walter rather hesitatingly consented. They moved eastward in company for two days, when, on awakening one morning, Walter found Raymond Cass missing. The boy's coat was also gone, and with it his entire capital,—forty-seven cents.

The pair had made their bed in the haymow of a large barn, and while Walter was searching for the tramp, the owner of the place came up and demanded to know what the youth was doing on his premises. Walter's tale was soon told, and Farmer Hardell agreed to give him a week's work in his dairy, one of the dairymen being sick. For this Walter received four dollars, and an old hat and a coat in addition.

Leaving Cornberry, the name of the hamlet, Walter had struck out once more for Boston, but this time steering clear of all tramps, of the Raymond Cass type or otherwise. He was sparing of his money, and the first day out earned his dinner and a packed-up lunch for supper, by putting in two panes of glass for an old lady who had waited for a week for a travelling glazier to come

around and do the job. In addition to this, the lad worked for two days at a village blacksmith's establishment during the absence of the regular helper who had gone to his aunt's funeral in another place, and also found a regular position with a florist, who had a number of large greenhouses up the Charles River. Walter was not used to working where there was so much glass, and on the third day he allowed a step-ladder he was using to slip. The ladder crashed through several hot-bed frames, and poor Walter was discharged on the spot, without a cent of pay.

The boy's next move had been to the river, where he had obtained a position on a freight steamboat. His duty was to truck freight on and off, and the work blistered his hands and gave him many a backache. But he stuck to it for two weeks, thereby earning fourteen dollars, and with this capital entered Boston.

Walter had not expected an easy time finding a situation in the Hub, but neither had he anticipated the repeated failures that one after another stared him in the face. For over a week he tramped up and down, without so much as a "smell of an opening," as he afterwards wrote to his brothers. In the meanwhile his money diminished rapidly, until more than two-thirds of it was gone.

A deed of kindness had obtained for him the position with Phil Newell. Chancing to walk along School Street one afternoon, he had seen two boys beating a small boy unmercifully. The small boy had turned into Province Street, and the big boys had followed, and here they had thrown the little fellow down, and were on the point of kicking him, when Walter rushed up and flung both back. "You brutes, to attack such a small boy!" he had cried. "Clear out, or I'll call a policeman, and have you both locked up."

"We told him to keep back at de newspaper office," growled one of the big fellows. "Do it again, Dan Brown, and we'll give it to you worse," and then as Walter advanced once more, both took to their heels and disappeared.

Dan Brown had been very grateful, and questionings had elicited the information that the lad worked for Phil Newell, as a paper carrier and to do errands. "His regular clerk, Dick Borden, left yesterday," Dan had continued; "perhaps you can get the job." And Walter had lost no time in following the small youth to Newell's place of business. Here Dan's story was told, and the lad put in a good word for Walter, with the result that the youth was taken for a week on trial. How well Walter pleased the old naval veteran we have already seen. He had now occupied the place as head clerk for nearly two months, and his salary had been increased from four dollars a week to six. He boarded with Dan's mother, in a little suite of rooms on a modest side street, not a great distance from the Common.

It must not be supposed that Job Dowling, who held a good deal of money in trust for the boys, had allowed them to run off without making an effort to bring them back. Larry was out of his reach, but Ben and Walter were not, and the miserly man had descended upon Ben in New York and tried his best to "make things warm," as Ben had mentioned in a letter to Larry. But Job Dowling had overreached himself by attempting to sell a watch and some jewelry which had belonged originally to Mr. and Mrs. Russell, heirlooms which were not to be disposed of under any circumstances. On his trip to New York after Ben, the articles had been stolen from him at the Post-office—something that had so frightened Job Dowling that he had consented to Ben's enlisting in the army with scarcely a murmur, fearful the youth might otherwise have him brought to book for what had happened. A vigorous search had been made for the thief, but he was not found. Later on, when Ben was in the army, Job Dowling received information that caused him to reach the conclusion that the thief had gone to Boston. The miserly guardian of the boys returned to his home in Buffalo and, as much worried as ever, wrote to Walter to keep an eye open for the missing property. Walter did as requested, but in such a large place as the Hub the youth had little hope of ever seeing the precious heirlooms again.

CHAPTER II

A VISIT TO THE NAVY-YARD

There was a rush of business at the news-stand between twelve and one o'clock, but shortly after one this died away, and inside of half an hour Phil Newell told Walter that they might be on their way—"If you are bound to enlist in Uncle Sam's service," he added.

Walter made sure that the paper containing Job Dowling's permission for him to enter the navy was safe in his coat pocket, and then announced his readiness to depart. The owner of the stand called up Dan Brown and gave him a few directions, and in another minute Newell and Walter had boarded a Charlestown car and were off.

"I haven't been over to the navy-yard for several years," remarked Phil Newell, as they rode along. "I used to know several of the boys that were there, but they've grown too old for the service. I reckon the yard is a busy place these days."

And a busy place it proved to be as they turned into Chelsea Street, and moved along the solid granite wall which separates the yard from the public thoroughfare. From beyond came the

creaking of hoists, and the ringing of countless hammers and anvils, for the government employees were hard at work, fitting out a warship or two and converting several private vessels into naval craft.

"I don't know if I'm just right about this," went on Phil Newell, as they headed for one of the numerous buildings near the wall, after being passed by a guard. "It may be that they want to keep strangers out, now the war is on, and you'll have to go elsewhere to sign articles. But I know old Caleb Walton is here, and he'll tell me all he can, and set us straight."

Walter's heart beat violently, for he began to realize that the step he was about to take was a serious one. Who knew but that, after getting into the navy, he might be sent to the Philippines or to the coast of Spain? Already there was some talk of carrying the war into the enemy's home waters.

"But I don't care," he said to himself. "If Larry can ship for Hong Kong, I guess I'm safe in shipping to anywhere. But I do hope I can get on the *Brooklyn*, or on some other ship of the Flying Squadron."

"Hi, there, Phil Newell! What brought you here, you old landlubber?" came a cry from their left, and Phil Newell turned as swiftly as his wooden leg permitted, to find himself confronted by the very individual he had started out to find.

"Caleb Walton!" he ejaculated joyfully, and held out his bronzed hand. "I just came in to see you. Here is a young friend of mine who wants to sign articles under Uncle Sam. Do you think you can take him in?"

"Take him in?" Caleb Walton held out his hand, brown and as tough as a piece of leather. "Sure we can take him in, if he's sound,—and glad to get him." He gave Walter's hand a grip that made every bone crack. "So you want to enlist, eh? Go right over to yonder office, and they'll soon put you through a course of sprouts," and he laughed good-naturedly.

"But, hold on, Caleb," interposed Newell, as the seaman was about to show Walter the way. "He don't want to sign articles and go just anywhere. He would like to get aboard the *Brooklyn*."

"That is what half of all who come here want," answered Caleb Walton. "I reckon they think Commodore Schley's Flying Squadron is going to settle the whole war by going after that Spanish fleet said to be at Cadiz, or thereabouts. Well, the lad better come with me. I belong to the *Brooklyn* now."

"You!" came from both Phil Newell and Walter simultaneously.

"I thought you were stationed here?" continued the wooden-legged man.

"I was, but I've just received orders to join the *Brooklyn* and bring at least fifteen men with me. It seems they are short-handed and can't get the men at Norfolk. If this lad wants to go with me, now is his chance. What's his handle?"

"My name is Walter Russell, sir. But—but are you going to join the *Brooklyn* at once?" stammered Walter, never having dreamed that he would be taken away on the spot.

"Uncle Sam doesn't wait long when he picks his man," replied the old gunner, for such Caleb Walton was. "Orders were to leave Boston to-night, but I fancy we'll be kept until to-morrow night, for we are shy three men, not counting you. Come on." And he led the way to the building he had previously pointed out.

"He's all right, and you're in luck," whispered Phil Newell, when he got the chance. "Cotton to Caleb Walton, and you'll have a friend worth the making." How true were Newell's words the chapters to follow will prove.

The building to which Caleb Walton led them was one in which were situated the main business offices of the yard. This was now a busy place, and they had to fairly push their way through the crowd of seamen, officers, and workmen, who kept coming and going, on one errand or another. Several telephones were ringing, and from a corner came the steady click-click of a telegraph sounder.

"Uncle Sam has his shirt sleeves rolled up and is pitching in," whispered Caleb Walton. "Here we are. Captain Line, here is another man for my party."

"He's rather a boy," rejoined Captain Line, as he gave Walter a searching glance. "Is your father with you?"

"My father is dead," answered Walter, softly. "Here is my guardian's consent." And he handed over the sheet.

"That seems to be correct. Walton, take him over to the examination room. And hurry up, for I must catch the four-fifty train for New York."

The "course of sprouts" had begun, and almost before he knew it, Walter had been passed upon as able-bodied. Time was pressing, and in a quarter of an hour the youth received a slip of paper signed and sealed by Captain Line.

"That is good for your passage to Fortress Monroe," he said. "You will make the journey in

company with Walton and a number of others. When you get there you will report to Lieutenant Lee, who will have you transferred to the *Brooklyn*,—unless the flagship has already sailed, in which case you will be assigned to some other ship."

"And when do I start, sir?"

"Walton will have the orders inside of the next hour. Go with him, and he will tell you what to do." Then came a bang of the curtain to a roller-top desk, a shoving back of a revolving chair, and in a twinkling Captain Line had disappeared from view. Truly, Uncle Sam and all under him were rushing things.

Walter wished very much to visit the dry dock and the great west basin, filled as both were with vessels in various stages of construction, alteration, or repair, but he felt if he was to leave that night he must be getting back to Boston and to his boarding-house, to pack his "ditty box," as Phil Newell had dubbed his valise, for all such receptacles are called ditty boxes in the navy.

"All right, Walter, you go ahead," said Newell. "I'll stay with Caleb and let you know just when you are to leave, so you won't be left behind." And in a moment more the youth had run out of the navy-yard and was on board of another car. He made one transfer, and in less than half an hour entered Mrs. Brown's home.

"Why, Mr. Russell, what brings you?" queried Dan's mother, surprised at his appearance, for he rarely showed himself during the day excepting at the dinner and the supper hours.

"I've enlisted, Mrs. Brown, and I'm to get off to-night or to-morrow," he answered. "You can let Mr. Keefe have my room now. I'm glad that it won't be left empty on your hands."

"So am I, Mr. Russell, for a poor widow can't afford to have a room vacant long," replied Mrs. Brown, with a faint smile. "So you have really entered the navy? Well, I wish you all the luck in the world, and I hope you will come out of the war a—a—commodore, or something like that." And she wrung his hand.

Walter's belongings were few, and soon packed away in his valise. Then he ran downstairs again and bid Mrs. Brown good-by and settled up with her. "I'll write to you and Dan some time," he said, on parting.

"Well, did you make it?" was Dan's question, when Walter appeared at the news-stand.

"I did, Dan." And the protégé of Uncle Sam told his youthful friend the particulars.

"I'm glad you got on the *Brooklyn*," said Dan, with a shake of his curly head. "She's going to lick the Spaniards out of their boots, see if she ain't!" And his earnestness made Walter laugh. Dan was but eleven, yet he read the newspapers as closely as do many grown folks.

The afternoon papers were now coming in and trade picked up, so that Walter had to help behind the counter. While he was at work a tall, thin boy sauntered up and gazed at him doubtfully.

"That's George Gimpwell," whispered Dan. "Didn't the boss say something about hiring him?"

"He did, Dan. Call him over."

The errand boy did so. "Russell wants to see you," he explained.

"I believe you were speaking to Mr. Newell about this situation," began Walter.

"Well—er—I asked him if he had any opening. I want work the worst way," sighed George Gimpwell. "Of course, I don't want to do you out of your job."

"That's all right; I've just enlisted in the navy," replied Walter, and he could not help but feel proud over the words. "So if you want this situation, you had best remain around here until Mr. Newell gets back."

"I will." George Gimpwell's face brightened. "So you've enlisted? I wanted to do that, but I was too tall for my weight, so they told me."

"So you've enlisted?" broke in a gentleman standing by. "Glad to hear it, young man; it does you credit." And buying a magazine, he caught Walter by the hand and wished him well. Soon it became noised around on the block that Newell's clerk was going to join the *Brooklyn*, and half a dozen, including the clerk of the hotel, came out to see him about it. In those days, anybody connected with our army or navy was quite a hero, and somebody to be looked up to, people unconsciously told themselves.

It was after seven o'clock, and Walter was wondering if anything unusual had delayed his employer, when Phil Newell hove into appearance. "It's all right, my lad, don't worry," he said at once. "You don't leave until to-morrow noon. You are to meet Caleb Walton at the New York and New England railroad depot at exactly eleven o'clock, and all of the others of the crowd are to be there too. The government wants to get you down to Norfolk as soon as it can, and will, consequently, send you by rail instead of by water."

"Hurrah! that will make a jolly trip," cried Walter. "If only I could stop off at New York, take a run out to Camp Black, and see Ben."

"I doubt if you'll be given time to stop anywhere, time seems to be so precious. Caleb Walton

thinks the Flying Squadron will up anchors before another week is out."

"Well, I don't care how quickly they leave—after I am on board," laughed the youth, much relieved that nothing had occurred whereby he had been left behind.

George Gimpwell now came up again, and soon he was engaged to take Walter's place. Phil Newell promised him five dollars weekly, and as Walter had gotten six, the good-hearted newsdealer put the extra dollar on Dan's salary, much to that lad's delight.

Eight o'clock found Walter at the stand alone, and it was then that he penned the letter mailed to Ben, as mentioned in a previous volume, stating he had enlisted and was making a strong "pull" to get on the *Brooklyn*. "I won't say I am on her until it's a fact," he thought, as he sealed up the communication, stamped it, and placed it in the corner letter-box.

The stand was located in a niche of the hotel, and was open only in the front, above the counter. At night this space was closed by letting down two large shutters attached to several hinges and ropes.

"I reckon this is the last time I'll put these shutters down," thought Walter, as he brought one down on the run. He was about to drop the second, when a burly man, rather shabbily dressed, sauntered up, and asked for one of the weekly sporting papers.

"I'm thinking of going to the theatre," he said, somewhat unsteadily, and now Walter learned by a whiff of his breath that he had been drinking. "What's the best variety show in town?"

"I'll give it up," said the youth, laughingly. "I haven't been to a show since I came to Boston, and that's a number of weeks ago."

"Humph! What do you do with yourself nights?"

"I'm here up to eight or half past, and after that I either go home or to one of the public reading rooms, or to the Young Men's Christian Association Hall."

"Humph! that must be dead slow." The man lurched heavily against the counter. "What time is it now?"

"About half past eight. I haven't any watch, so I can't tell you exactly."

"I've got a watch right here," mumbled the newcomer, still leaning heavily on the counter. "Here it is. But your light is so low I can't see the hands. Turn it up."

Walter obligingly complied, and the fellow tried again to see the time, but failed. "Strike a match," he went on; "I ain't going to no theatre if it's as late as you say it is."

Walter did not like the man's manner, but not caring to enter into any dispute, he lit a match as requested, and held it down close to the timepiece, which lay in the man's open palm.

"Only eight-twenty," grumbled the fellow, slowly. "I knew you was off. You don't—What's up?" And suddenly he straightened himself and stared at Walter.

"I want to know where you got that watch," demanded the youth, excitedly.

"That watch?" The man fell back a pace. "What do you—ahem—why do you ask that question, boy?"

"Because I know that watch," was Walter's ready reply. "It was stolen from my uncle in New York only a few weeks ago!"

"Was it?" The man's face changed color. "You—you're mistaken, boy," he faltered, and fell back still further, and then, as Walter leaped over the counter, he took to his heels and started down the half-deserted street at the best speed at his command.

CHAPTER III

A CHASE AND ITS RESULT

Walter knew that watch, which had belonged first to his father and then his mother, quite well, but if there was anything needed to convince him that there was no mistake in the identification, it was furnished by the hasty and unceremonious manner in which the partly intoxicated wearer was endeavoring to quit the scene.

"If he was honest, he wouldn't run!" thought the youth. "Ten to one he's the thief who took the grip from Uncle Job." He started after the fleeing one. "Come back here!" he shouted. "Stop, thief!"

But the man did not stop; instead, he tried to run the faster. But he did not turn any corners, and consequently, aided by the electric lights, Walter could see him for quite a distance ahead.

The youth ran but a few yards, then turned and clashed back to the stand. Bang! the second

shutter came down with a crash, and in a trice he had the padlock secured. Then off he set, satisfied that a form in the distance was the one he wanted to overtake.

"What's the matter?" questioned a policeman on the second corner, as he clutched Walter by the arm. "What are you running for?"

"Didn't I call out to catch the thief?" answered the youth, sharply. "Let me go. If you weren't so dead slow, you'd be doing something, instead of standing there looking at the moon." And on he went again, the officer shaking his fist after him, half of the opinion that Walter was trying to joke him.

At this hour of the evening the street was far from crowded, and Walter kept the man ahead in sight with comparative ease. Four blocks were covered, when the fellow paused and looked back. Seeing he was being followed, he turned and darted into a small side street. Here were a number of warehouses and several tenements. The door to one of the latter stood open, and he lost no time in seeking the shelter of the dark hallway.

"That's the time I made a bad break," he muttered thickly. "When I came up to Boston with that stuff I reckoned I was safe. I wonder if he'll follow me to here? He had better not, unless he wants a broken head."

In the meantime, Walter had reached the corner of the side street and come to a halt. The narrow thoroughfare was but dimly lighted, and not a soul was in sight.

"He turned in here,—I am certain of that," said the boy to himself. "More than likely he is in hiding in some dark corner. I wonder if I hadn't better call an officer?"

With this intention he gazed around, but no policeman was in view, and he did not think it advisable to go back for the guardian of the peace before encountered. He entered the side street slowly and cautiously, peering into every nook and corner, and behind every bill-board, box, and barrel as he moved along.

He had just passed the tenement where the man was in hiding when the sounds of muffled voices broke upon his ears, and the front door was thrown back with a bang.

"Who are you, and what are you doing in here?" came in an unmistakable Irish voice.

"Excuse me—I—I made a mistake," was the answer; and now Walter recognized the tones of the fellow who had the watch. "I am looking for a man named Harris."

"Well, he doesn't live here,—so you had better get out."

"Will you—er—tell me who lives next door?" asked the man Walter was after, in a lower tone, evidently wishing to gain time ere leaving the building.

"A man named Casey and another named Barton live there. There ain't a Harris on the block. If you—"

"Hold him, please," burst in Walter, mounting the tenement steps. "He has a watch that was stolen from my uncle."

"Shut up, boy!" answered the man fiercely. "My watch is my own, and this is all a mistake."

"There is no mistake. Hold him, will you?"

"I've got him," came from the gloom of the hallway. "I thought he was a sneak or something by the way he was tip-toeing around here."

"You are both of you crazy. I never stole a thing in my life. Let go, both of you!" And then the man began to struggle fiercely, finally pushing the party in the hallway backward, and almost sending Walter headlong as he darted down the tenement steps and continued his flight along the side street.

As Walter went down, he made a clutch at the man's watch-chain, or rather the chain which belonged among the Russell heirlooms. He caught the top guard and the chain parted, one half remaining in the boy's hand, and the other fast to the timepiece.

"Help me catch him!" gasped the youth, as soon as he could get up. His breast had struck the edge of one of the steps, and he was momentarily winded.

"I will," answered the man who lived in the tenement. "Stop there!" he called out, and set off in pursuit, with Walter beside him. But the Irishman was old and rheumatic, and soon felt compelled to give up the chase. "I can't match ye!" he puffed, and sank down on a step to rest; and once again Walter continued the chase alone.

Had the thief, Deck Mumpers, been perfectly sober, he might have escaped with ease, for he was a good runner, and at this hour of the evening hiding-places in such a city as Boston, with its many crooked thoroughfares, were numerous. But the liquor he had imbibed had made him hazy in his mind, and he ran on and on, with hardly any object in view excepting to put distance between himself and his pursuer.

He was heading eastward, and presently reached a wharf facing the harbor and not a great distance from the Congress Street bridge. Here there was a high board fence and a slatted gate,

which for some reason stood partly open. Without a second thought, he slipped through the gateway, slid the gate shut, and snapped the hanging padlock into place.

"Now he'll have a job following me," he chuckled. "I wonder what sort of a place I've struck?" And he continued on his way, among huge piles of merchandise covered with tarpaulins.

Walter had come up at his best speed and was less than a hundred feet away when the gate was closed and locked.

"You rascal!" he shouted, but Deck Mumpers paid no attention to his words. "Now what's to do?" the boy asked himself, dismally.

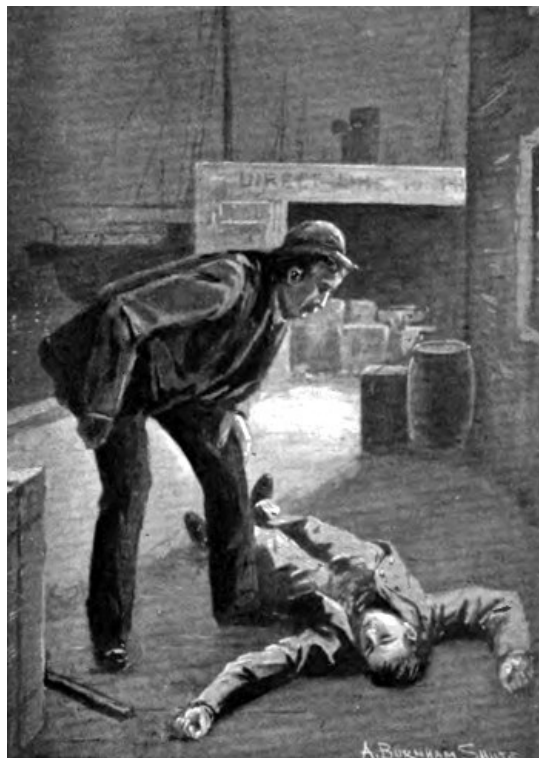
He came up to the gate and examined it. It was all of nine feet high, and the palings were pointed at the top. Could he scale such a barrier?

"I must do it!" he muttered, and thrust one hand through to a cross brace. He ascended with difficulty, and once slipped and ran a splinter into his wrist. But undaunted he kept on until the top was gained, then dropped to the planking of the wharf beyond.

Several arc lights, high overhead, lit up the wharf, and he ran from one pile of merchandise to another. Half the wharf was thus covered, when he suddenly came face to face with Deck Mumpers. The thief had picked up a thick bale stick, and without warning he raised this on high and brought it down with all force upon Walter's head. The boy gave a groan, threw up both hands, and dropped like a lump of lead, senseless.

"Phew! I wonder if I've finished him?" muttered the man, anxiously. "Didn't mean to hit him quite so hard. But it was his own fault—he had no right to follow me." He bent over Walter and made a hasty examination. "He's breathing, that's certain. I must get away before a watchman shows up."

He started to go, then paused and bent over Walter again. With a dexterity acquired by long practice in his peculiar profession, he turned out one pocket after another, transferring the cash and other articles to his own clothing. Then, as Walter gave a long, deep sigh, as if about to awaken, he took to his heels once more. He was in no condition to climb the wharf fence as Walter had done, but helped himself over by the use of several boxes; and was soon a long distance away.



HE BENT OVER WALTER AGAIN.

When Walter came to his senses and opened his eyes, the glare from a bull's-eye lantern struck him, and he saw a wharf watchman eyeing him curiously.

"What are you doing here, young fellow?" were the watchman's words.

"I—I—where is he?" questioned the youth, weakly.

"He? Who?"

"The thief—the man who struck me down?"

"I haven't seen anybody but you around here."

"A thief who has my uncle's watch came in here, and I followed him, and he struck me down with a club. When—how long is it since you found me here?"

"Several minutes ago. I thought you were drunk at first, and was going to hand you over to an officer."

"I don't drink." Walter essayed to stand up, but found himself too weak. "Gracious, my head is spinning around like a top!" he groaned.

"You must have got a pretty good rap to be knocked out like this," commented the watchman kindly. "So the man was a thief? It's a pity he wasn't the one to be knocked down. Do you know the fellow?"

"I would know him—if we ever meet again. But I fancy he won't let the grass grow under his feet, after attacking me like this."

"I'll take a run around the wharf and see if I can spot any stranger," concluded the watchman, and hurried off. Another watchman was aroused, and both made a thorough investigation, but, of course, nobody was brought to light.

By the time the search was ended, Walter felt something like himself, and arose slowly and allowed the watchmen to conduct him to their shanty at one side of the wharf. Here he bathed his face, picked the splinter from his wrist, and brushed up generally. A cup of hot coffee from one of the watchmen's cans braced him up still further.

"It must be ten o'clock, isn't it?" he asked.

"Ten o'clock!" came from the man who had found him. "I reckon that clip on the head has muddled you. It's about three o'clock in the morning."

"Three o'clock in the morning!" repeated Walter. "Then I must have been lying out there for several hours. That thief has escaped long ago." And his face fell.

"Yes, he's had plenty of time, if he did the deed as long ago as that. Did he have anything else besides your uncle's watch?"

"I don't know, but it's likely. You see my uncle came to New York from Buffalo to sell some heirlooms which were left to my brothers and myself when our folks died. The heirlooms were in a travelling-bag, and consisted of the watch and chain, two gold wedding rings, and a diamond that a grandfather of mine once picked up in Australia. My uncle left his bag standing in the post-office for a few minutes, and when he got back the grip was gone. The police hunted everywhere for the thief, but all that could be discovered was that it looked as if the rascal had come to Boston. To-night—or rather, last evening—a man came up and showed the watch, which I know only too well, as it has a little horseshoe painted on the dial plate. I tried to collar the fellow, but he ran away, and after stopping in a tenement house, he came here. Now I suppose he is miles away—perhaps out of the city altogether."

"That's so, yet there is no telling, lad. The best thing you can do is to report to the police without delay—if you are able to do it."

"Yes, I guess I am able, although my head aches a good bit, I can tell you that. I am much obliged for what you have done for me."

"Oh, that's all right—hope you get your belongings," replied the watchman, and led the way to the gate, which he unlocked. Soon Walter was on the street, and walking as rapidly as his condition permitted to the police station.

At this hour of the night he found only a sergeant and several roundsmen in charge. The sergeant listened with interest to what he had to say.

"I remember that case—it was reported to here from New York some time ago. The pawnshops were ransacked for the jewelry and the watch, but nothing was found. So you are certain you would recognize the man again if you saw him?"

"I am—unless he altered his appearance a good deal. He had a small, dark moustache, but otherwise he was clean-shaven."

"Come into the rear office and look over our album of pickpockets and sneak-thieves. That is what this fellow most likely is—and a peculiar one too. No first-class criminal would do this job as he is doing it."

"He drinks heavily—he was partly intoxicated when I met him," said Walter, as he followed the station official into a rear office.

"Then that accounts for it. A man can't be a really successful criminal unless he keeps his wits about him. Here is the album. Look it over carefully, and let me know if you see anybody that looks like your man." And he left Walter to himself and reëntered the outer office, to hear the

reports of the roundsmen coming in.

The book given to Walter was a thick one, filled with cards, photos, and tin-types of criminals. Under each picture was written a name, usually accompanied by several aliases, and also a number, to correspond with the same number in the criminal register.

"Gracious, but they keep pretty good track of them," thought Walter, as he turned over page after page. "Who would think all these good-looking men were wrong-doers? Some of them look a good deal more like ministers."

Walter had gone through half the book, and the photographs were beginning to confuse his already aching head, when a certain picture arrested his attention. "I've found him!" he cried out. "That's the fellow, although he is minus that moustache of his!"

"Did you call?" asked the sergeant, coming to the door.

"I've found him. This is the man. His name is given as Deck Mumpers, alias Foxy Mumpers, and Swiller Deck."

"If he is called Swiller Deck, he must drink a good deal," said the sergeant, with a laugh. "You are sure of this identification?"

"I am. But he wants a moustache put on that picture."

"We take them bare-faced if we can. This photo was taken in Brooklyn." The officer turned to an official register. "Deck Mumpers, age forty-two, height five feet seven inches, weight one hundred and thirty-two pounds. Round face, big ears, broad shoulders, poor teeth. Sent to Sing Sing in 1892 for two years, for robbery of Scott diamonds. A hard drinker when flush. Now wanted for several petty crimes in New York. Came originally from South Boston, where he was in the liquor business." The sergeant turned again to Walter. "I guess you have struck your man. I'll send out the alarm. What is your address?"

"I have just joined the navy and am bound for the *Brooklyn*. But I can leave you my uncle's name and address, and he can come on to Boston from Buffalo, if it's necessary."

"That will do, then," answered the sergeant.

He brought forth a book in which to put down the details of the affair. While he was writing, Walter slipped his hand into his pocket to see if the slip of paper he had received at the navy-yard was still safe. The paper was gone.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE WAY TO THE "BROOKLYN"

"Oh, what luck!"

"What is the matter now?"

"My order for a railroad ticket from Boston to Fortress Monroe is gone!"

"Is that true? Perhaps Deck Mumpers cleaned you out after he struck you down," suggested the sergeant, quickly. "Feel in your pockets."

Walter did so, and his face blanched. "He did—everything,—my money, keys, cash,—all are missing. What in the world shall I do now?"

"How much money did you have?"

"About twenty dollars. The main thing was that railroad ticket order. If that is gone, how am I to get to Norfolk?"

"Was your name mentioned on the paper?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where was it to be presented? any particular depot?"

"Yes, the New York and New England railroad depot."

"Then the best thing to do is to ring the railroad folks up and have the bearer of the order detained, if the slip is presented," went on the police officer, and stepping to the telephone he rang up central and had the necessary connection made.

"Is this the ticket office of the New York and New England railroad depot?" he questioned.

"Yes," came the reply over the wire.

"A navy-yard order for a ticket from here to Norfolk, or Fortress Monroe, has been stolen. It is made out in the name of Walter Russell. If it is presented, hold the party having it and communicate with police headquarters."

"Is the name Walter Russell?" was the excited query, and Walter's heart began to sink as he seemed to feel what was coming.

"Yes."

"That order has already been filled. It was presented about ten o'clock last night."

"I've missed it!" groaned the youth, and dropped into a chair. "What will the navy-yard people say to this when they hear of it?"

"I don't see how they can blame you," returned the sergeant, kindly, "seeing as you were knocked senseless by the thief. Deck Mumpers has got the best of it so far."

He called through the telephone for a description of the party having the order, and soon learned it must have been Mumpers beyond a doubt.

"Can't you telegraph to Norfolk to have him arrested when he arrives?" asked Walter suddenly.

"You don't think he'll go all the way to Norfolk, do you?" smiled the police officer. Then he turned again to the telephone. "What kind of a ticket did that party get on the order?" he asked.

"First-class, with sleepers."

"He got a first-class ticket. Ten to one he'll not use it at all, but sell the pasteboard at some cut-rate ticket office right here in Boston and then buy another ticket for somewhere else."

"I see!" cried Walter. "But if the ticket was sold here, could we trace it?"

"It is not likely, for many first-class tickets are alike. We might trace the sleeping-car checks, but I doubt if Mumpers will try to do anything with those."

"But he may use the ticket," ventured Walter, hardly knowing what else to say.

"Oh, possibly. I'll have the men at the various stations keep an eye open for the rascal," concluded the sergeant, and after a few more words Walter left the station.

It must be confessed that the youth was considerably out of sorts. "I start off to recover some stolen property and end by losing more," he groaned. "I'm not fit to join the navy, or do anything." And he gave a mountainous sigh.

It was almost five o'clock, and knowing Dan would soon be on hand with Gimpwell to open the stand, he walked slowly in that direction. To keep up his courage he tried to whistle, but the effort was a dismal failure. Walter was naturally very light-hearted, but just now no one looking at his troubled face would have suspected this.

Reaching the stand, he opened the shutters and put out the light which he had forgotten to extinguish. Soon the first bundles of papers came along, and he sorted them over and arranged them for sale and for Dan's route. The work was almost done when the carrier came along, followed immediately by the new clerk.

"Hullo, I didn't know you'd be here!" cried Dan. "Why didn't you come home last night? Mother expected you to use the room, and you paid for it."

"I wish I had used the room," answered Walter, and went over his tale in a few words, for Dan must be off, to serve several men with newspapers before they themselves started off to their daily labors.

"Say, but that's too bad!" cried the errand boy. "I've got two dollars, Walter. You can have the money if it will do you any good."

"Thanks, Dan, I want to see Mr. Newell first. But it's kind of you to make the offer."

"I'd offer you something, Russell," put in the new clerk. "But the fact is I haven't even car-fare; had to tramp over from Charlestown."

Phil Newell put into appearance shortly before seven o'clock, coming a little earlier than usual, to see that Gimpwell got along all right. Calling him aside, Walter told of what had happened. He was getting sick of telling the story, but, in this case, there was no help for it.

"Douse the toplights, but you've run on a sunken rock, and no mistake, Walter," cried the old naval veteran. "So he cleaned you out completely, eh?"

"Yes, Mr. Newell. I don't care so much for the money, but that order for the railroad ticket—"

"It's too had; too bad!" Phil Newell ran his hand through his bushy hair. "I don't believe the navy-yard authorities will issue a duplicate order."

"Neither do I."

"You see, some sailors wouldn't be none too good for to get such a paper and then sell it for what she would fetch."

"Yes, that's the worst part of it. I shouldn't want them to think I was—was getting in on them—or trying to do so."

"The best thing to do, as far as I can see, is to call on Caleb Walton and get his advice."

"Where does he live?"

"In Charlestown, only a few blocks from the Bunker Hill monument. I don't know the number, but it's on Hill Street, and I know the house."

"Will you go with me? If I haven't the number—"

"To be sure I'll go with you, just as soon as I can set the new clerk on his proper course."

"And, Mr. Newell, would you mind—that is, would you make me a—a loan—" faltered Walter.

"Out with it, my boy, how much do you want? I told you before I'd be your friend, and what Phil Newell says he means, every trip."

"You are very kind, sir. I don't know how much I want. I had twenty dollars and thirty-five cents, and Mr. Walton said that was more than enough to see me through until pay day came along."

"Then here are twenty dollars." The proprietor of the news-stand pulled a roll of small bills from his pocket and counted out the amount. "You can pay me back when you recover your money, or else out of your pay money, if they don't collar that thief. Have you had breakfast yet?"

"No, sir."

"Then you had better get a bite while I instruct Gimpwell. I'll be ready for you in quarter of an hour."

Fifteen minutes found them on the way, taking a car which took them directly over to Charlestown, along the navy-yard and up Hill Street.

"Here we are," cried Phil Newell, as he stopped the car. "And just in time, for there is Caleb Walton leaving his house now."

"What brings you up?" demanded the gunner, when confronted. "Well, this is certainly a mess," he continued, after he had been told. "No, I'm certain they won't issue a duplicate order, for Captain Line is out of the city."

"But we might try and see what we can do," insisted Phil Newell.

"To be sure; come on." And the three set off for the navy-yard. Here it looked at first as if nothing could be gained, but finally one of the higher officers took it upon his own shoulders to give Walter a new order, at the same time saying something about charging it up to the Emergency Account.

"Well, that's a big relief," murmured Walter, on coming away. "I feel as if a thousand pounds were taken from my heart." And he certainly looked it.

"I must leave you now," said Caleb Walton. "Be sure and be at the depot on time, and take care of that new order."

"It's pinned fast in my pocket," said the youth. "If it goes, so does my coat."

On returning to the news-stand, Walter procured some paper and an envelope, and in the reading-room of the hotel sat down and wrote a long letter to his uncle, Job Dowling, telling of his enlistment in the navy and of what had happened during the night. "I think you ought to come to Boston," he concluded. "If the police can't do anything, a detective ought to be set on this Deck Mumper's track. You are holding a good deal of money in trust for Ben, Larry, and me, and for my part, I would spend a good deal rather than see father's watch and his and mother's wedding rings gone forever,—not to mention grandfather's diamond, which alone is worth at least two hundred dollars. Write to me concerning this, and send the letter to the *Brooklyn*, Off Fortress Munroe, Va."

This letter was mailed without delay, and soon after Walter bade Phil Newell, Dan, and several others good-by, and, grip in hand, walked to the depot. Here he found several jackies already assembled, and soon learned that they were members of Walton's party. In a few minutes Walton himself came hurrying down Federal Street, with several green hands in tow.

"All here?" he demanded, and began to "count noses." Only one man was missing, and he soon put in an appearance, and all entered the depot and procured their tickets. Then Walter asked about the stolen order, but the clerk had heard nothing new concerning it. "You were mighty lucky to get another order," he said with a grin. "Next time they may make you walk the tracks."

The train was in, and hurrying out to the long shed, they found their proper places. Soon there came a sharp jerk, the train moved off; and the long journey southward was begun.

For a seat-mate Walter had a typical Yankee lad, one from the coast of Maine, a young fellow who knew but little about warships, but who had spent several years on the rolling deep, in voyages to South America, to Nova Scotia, and elsewhere. His name was Silas Doring, and Walter found him talkative, although not objectionably so.

"Yes, I couldn't hardly wait till I got to Boston," said Si, for that was what he said all of his friends "to hum" called him. "We'll lick the Spanish out of their boots, see if we don't!"

"You are bound for the *Brooklyn*?" asked Walter.

"That's it, if they want me, otherwise I'm booked for the *Texas*. Putty good for a boy from Maine to go on the *Texas*, ain't it, he! he! But I don't care much. They can put me on the *San Francisco* if they want to—so long as they give me a chance at them tarnal Dons. When the *Maine* was blowed up, why, I jest jumped up an' down an' up an' down with rage. 'Si Doring,' sez I, 'Si Doring, are you a-going to let such an insult an' crime go by unnoticed? Not much!' sez I. 'I'll join the navy, an' help blow all of the Spanish to Jericho,'—an' I'm going to do it!" And the Yankee lad struck his fist into his open palm with a thump of energy.

"I wish I knew as much about ships as you do," ventured Walter. "I've been on two trips across Lake Erie, and know something, but I'm afraid I'll feel like a fish out of water when I get on a man-o'-war."

"We'll keep our eyes and ears open, and try to learn—that's the only way. I know every rope on a merchantman, kin name 'em from fore royal stay to topping lift, but that ain't the hundredth part on it. We've got to learn our vessel jest as a person has got to learn a new city and its streets, fer boats ain't built one like another, not by a jugful! And after we have learned the ship, we've got to learn the guns, and the fire-drill, and how to clear ship for action, and a lot more, not to say a word about learning how to knock out them Dons, as some calls 'em. Oh, we'll have our hands full after we get on board, don't forget it!" And Si Doring shook his head vigorously.

On and on sped the train until Hyde Park was reached. Here a brief stop was made, and several persons including a sailor got on board. The sailor came through the car as if looking for somebody and finally found Caleb Walton and shook hands.

"Yes, I'm bound for Norfolk, too," Walter and Si Doring heard him remark.

"By gum!" whispered the Yankee sailor. "I wonder if thet chap is going with us?"

"Do you know him?" asked the boy.

"Know him? jest guess I do! His name is Jim Haskett, and he used to be the mate of the *Sunflower*, a three-master from Penobscot. I sailed under him once, and he was the hardest man on shipboard I ever got next to. If he gets in the navy, he'll make everybody under him dance to his pipings, and worse."

"If that's the case, I sincerely hope he isn't assigned to my ship," was Walter's comment. "I haven't any use for a bully, big or little."

"I owe Jim Haskett many an old score; I would like to get the chance to even up," went on the Yankee. "But I've enlisted to do my duty and lick the Spanish, and if Haskett leaves me alone, I'll leave him alone. Here he comes now." And Si straightened up.

The former mate of the *Sunflower* passed down the aisle slowly. When he saw the Yankee he started and then scowled at him. "Have you enlisted?" he asked, in a voice that was far from pleasant.

"I have," returned Si. "Got any objections, Haskett?"

"Humph!" was the only answer, and the ex-mate of the *Sunflower* passed on, to drop into a vacant seat some distance behind them.

"Oh, he's a corker," whispered the Yankee, and Walter nodded to show that he agreed with him. Walter was destined to many an encounter with Jim Haskett before his first term in the navy should come to an end.

CHAPTER V

SOMETHING ABOUT WAR AND PRIZE MONEY

Commodore George Dewey's great victory over Admiral Montojo occurred on May 1, 1898, and was the first to be scored during our war with Spain.

Previous to this time, matters had moved along swiftly, but with no definite results. Following the wanton destruction of our battleship *Maine* in the harbor of Havana, in February, popular indignation arose to a fever heat against the country which had offered the American flag several insults in the past, and which was now engaged in a ruthless effort to put down the long-standing rebellion in Cuba, be the cost what it might.

For many months our President, Congress, and the people had watched, with anxious eyes, the progress of events in Cuba—had seen the Cubans doing their best to throw off the yoke of Spanish tyranny and oppression. From a little uprising here, and another there, the rebellion spread all over what was no longer "the ever-faithful isle," until rich and poor, those of Cuban-Spanish blood, and those whose ancestors had been negroes and Indians, became involved in it. At first there was no army, only bands of guerillas, who fled to the mountains whenever a regular Spanish force presented itself, but soon the conflict assumed a definite shape, a rebel army was

formed, to be commanded by Generals Gomez, Antonio Maceo, Calixto Garcia, and others, and then Spain awoke to the realization that Cuba, her richest colonial possession, with the possible exception of the Philippines, was about to break away from her.

This crisis filled the rulers in Spain with alarm, for Cuba had turned into her treasury millions of *pesetas* every year, for which the island got little or nothing in return. "Cuba must, and shall be subdued," was the cry, and thousands of soldiers were transported from Spain and elsewhere, to be landed at Havana, Santiago, and other points. These soldiers immediately took possession of all the larger cities, causing those in rebellion to withdraw to the villages and to the forests and mountains.

A bloody warfare lasting between two and three years followed, and thousands of the rebels, including the noble Antonio Maceo, one of the best negro patriots that ever existed, were slain. In addition to this, millions of dollars' worth of property were destroyed, in the shape of torn-up railroads, burnt sugar and tobacco plantations, and sacked villages and towns. Every owner of property was compelled to take sides in the conflict, and if he did not side with those who waited upon him, then his property was either confiscated or destroyed.

The Spanish authorities had started out to crush the rebellion on the spot. As time went by and the rebels grew stronger and stronger, those in command saw that extreme measures must be resorted to, or the campaign would prove a failure. The majority of the Cuban men were away from their homes. At once orders were issued to drive all the defenceless women and children into the cities held by the Spanish. This was accomplished under the pretext that Spain wished to keep them from harm. Once driven into the larger places, these women and children were not fed and cared for, but were allowed to either live upon the charity of those about them, or starve. These poor people were called *reconcentrados*, and it is a matter of record that before the war closed nearly three hundred thousand of them gave up their lives through neglect and lack of food.

The people of the United States had stood by mutely and seen the war waged against the rebels who well deserved their liberty, but no one could stand by and see women, children, and helpless old men starved to death. At once it was proposed to send relief ships to Cuba, but Spain frowned at this, saying that such relief was only one way of helping those who had taken up arms against her.

At this time there were many Americans in Havana and elsewhere in Cuba, and as a matter of self-protection the battleship *Maine* was sent down to Havana harbor to see that no harm came to them. How the battleship was blown up and over two hundred and fifty lives lost, has already been told in the previous volumes of this series. A Board of Inquiry was appointed by the President, and it was soon settled that the explosion which had wrecked the warship had come from the outside and that Spain was responsible for the loss. Spain denied the charge; and the war was practically on.

The first movement of the authorities at Washington was to blockade the city of Havana and a large portion of the coast to the east and the west of that port. This work was intrusted to Commodore (afterwards Admiral) Sampson, and he left Key West with the North Atlantic Squadron on the morning of April 22, and in a few days had a grand semicircle of warships stationed on the outside of Havana, Matanzas, Mariel, Cardenas, Bahia Honda, Cabanas, and other ports of lesser importance. Later on, other ports were likewise blockaded, and these portions of Cuba suddenly found themselves cut off from the outside world. Sampson wished to bombard Havana and bring the Spanish stationed there to terms at once, but this suggestion was overruled, as it was imagined that Spain might be brought to terms without such a great loss of life.

As soon as the blockading of the ports mentioned began, the President called for volunteers, and how nobly all our states responded we have already learned in "A Young Volunteer in Cuba." The regular army was also hurried to the south-east and concentrated at Tampa and other points, while the volunteers remained in their various state camps, waiting to be mustered into the United States service. Of the grand movement to Cuba we shall hear later.

The news of Commodore Dewey's glorious victory, as related in "Under Dewey at Manila" thrilled our people as they had not been thrilled for years. In the army and the navy were men from both the North and the South, and sectionalism was now wiped out forever, and all stood shoulder to shoulder under Old Glory, fighting for the sake of Humanity. The battle-cries were "Free Cuba!" and "Remember the *Maine*!" and certainly none could have been more inspiring.

The blockading of so long a coast line required a great many warships, and as it was not deemed advisable to place all our big vessels on this duty, the authorities lost no time in buying or leasing a number of ocean steamers and coast craft and converting them into vessels of war. These vessels required a great number of men, and the Naval Reserves were in great demand, as were also volunteers for the regular navy. This was the reason that Walter and those with him were taken on so quickly. Had he applied for enlistment into the navy during times of peace, he would have found an entrance far more difficult, for Uncle Sam is growing more and more particular every day as to the class of men he allows to tread the decks of his men-o'-war.

Shortly after Havana and its neighboring ports were blockaded, it was rumored that Spain would send over a powerful fleet to bombard New York or some other principal city along our eastern seacoast. This caused a good deal of uneasiness, and steps were immediately taken to fortify all

principal points and mine many of the harbor entrances. Patrol boats were also placed on duty, to give the alarm at the first sight of an enemy. In some cases channel buoys were removed, and lighthouse lamps were left unlit, so that no Spanish vessel might creep in under cover of darkness.

Acting Rear-Admiral Sampson, as he was officially designated, was kept busy watching the blockade along the northern coast of Cuba, and in distributing his auxiliary vessels to such points as would be most advantageous. This being the case, Commodore Schley, next in command, was left at Hampton Roads, near Fortress Monroe, Virginia, with what was known as the Flying Squadron, a number of the fastest warships riding the Atlantic. The Flying Squadron was to wait until the Spanish fleet started westward, when it was to do its best toward doing as Dewey had done to Montojo's fleet, "find it and engage it"; in plain words, to fight it to the bitter end. Great things were expected of the Flying Squadron, and in this the people were not to be disappointed, as we shall see.

The trip by rail from Boston to the South proved full of interest to Walter, who loved riding on the cars. So far two transfers had been made, one at New York, and the other at Baltimore, but at neither city was any time allowed for seeing the sights. "It's a case of get there," explained Caleb Walton. "You see, that Spanish fleet may sail for the United States at any moment, and then Schley will be bound to go out on a hunt for it in double-quick order."

"I see that the Spanish Cape Verde Squadron has joined the fleet at Cadiz, which is ready for sea," observed Walter, pointing to a morning newspaper he had purchased on the train. "There are four first-class cruisers, the *Viscaya*, the *Almirante Oquendo*, the *Infanta Maria Teresa*, and the *Cristobal Colon*, besides two or three torpedo-boat destroyers. At Cadiz there are the *Pelaya*, *Alfonso XIII.*, and several other ships. If they all come over here, it seems to me they may make matters mighty warm for us."

"We want 'em warm," interrupted Si Doring. "I wouldn't give a rap for a milk-and-water battle. Let us have it hot, say I, hot,—and knock the Spanish to kingdom come!"

"They won't dare to send all of the ships over," said Caleb Walton. "They must guard their own coast. If they don't, some of our ships may slip over there and make it interesting for them."

"Do you think we'll carry the war to Spain?" asked Walter, with deep interest.

"There is no telling, lad. Some folks have it that half of Europe will be mixed up in this muss before it's over. One thing is certain, Dewey's victory at Manila isn't going to be such a smooth thing out there, for the Filipinos are in a state of revolt and won't want us to govern them any more than they want the Spanish; and besides, Germany, France, and other nations have big interests there."

"Well, I guess the best we can do is to look out for our little end," smiled the boy. "As for the rest, the authorities at Washington must settle that."

"Well said, lad; you and I couldn't run the government if we tried. But we can do our duty, and that will be to obey orders and take what comes."

"How is it that you got Jim Haskett to enlist?" asked Si.

"Oh, that fellow is after prize money," was the gunner's reply. "He has been reading of the luck down around Havana, and he wants the chance to earn a few hundred extra. Well, maybe he'll get it."

"I've heard of prize money before, but I don't exactly know what it is," observed Walter.

"It's the money got out of a captured ship when she's sold. You see, when a ship is captured she's taken to some port and turned over to a prize court, and if she doesn't turn out a Scotch prize she is knocked down under the hammer."

"I know what you mean by knocking her down under the hammer. But why doesn't the rule apply to a Scotch vessel?"

At this query of Walter's Caleb Walton burst into a roar of laughter. "It's easy to see you're a landsman," he said. "I didn't say a Scotch vessel; I said a Scotch prize—a ship captured illegally, and one that must be given back to her owners. I don't know where that term came from, but it's what the men in the navy always use."

"I see."

"A legitimate prize is sold, and then the money is divided. If the vessel captured was the equal of that taking her, then all the prize money goes to her captain and crew; but if the captured ship is inferior, then her takers get only half of the money, and Uncle Sam keeps the balance."

"And what part would I get if my ship took a prize?" went on Walter, more interested than ever, for the question of prize money had not appealed to him before.

"You would get a share according to your regular pay—perhaps one dollar out of every five or ten thousand."

"That wouldn't be much—on a small craft."

"You are right, lad, but it would be a tidy amount on a big warship worth two or three millions. The division of the prize money is regulated according to law, so there can't be any quarrelling. The commander of a fleet gets one-twentieth, the commander of a ship one-tenth of that coming to his ship (when there are more ships than one interested in the prize), and so on, and we all get our money even if we are on temporary leave of absence."

"But what does Uncle Sam do with his share?" put in Si.

"His share is put into a fund that is used toward paying naval officers, seamen, and marines the pensions due them. These pensions are, of course, not as large as those of the army, but they are considerable."

"Well, I hope we strike a big prize, or half a dozen little ones," said Walter. "On a pay of eleven dollars a month a fellow can't expect to get very rich."

"Do your duty, lad, and you may rise before the war is over." The old gunner caught Walter by the arm. "Come with me," and Caleb Walton arose, and led the way to the smoking-car. Wondering what was meant by this movement, Walter followed.

"I want to have a quiet talk with you," went on Caleb Walton, after they were seated in a secluded corner. "Do you smoke?"

"No, sir."

"You're just as well off. But I must have my pipe." Caleb Walton drew forth a brier-root, filled it with a dark mixture of tobacco, and lit it. "Ah, that's just right. And now to business." And he threw one leg over the other. For a moment he gazed thoughtfully at Walter, and the boy wondered what was coming next. He was satisfied that it must be of more than ordinary importance, otherwise the old gunner would not have asked him to come to the smoking-car, away from their companions.

CHAPTER VI

A GLIMPSE OF THE PRESIDENT

"You see it's this way," began Caleb Walton, after gazing for a moment at Walter. "Phil Newell is your friend, isn't he?"

"Yes, indeed!" responded the boy, warmly.

"Exactly—likewise he is my friend, too. We served together for years, and I sometimes looked up to Phil as a kind of elder brother. Well, after you left us at the navy-yard he and I had a long talk about you, and he made me promise to keep my eye on you—do you understand?"

"I think I do."

"Now, keeping an eye on you is out of the question unless you are placed where I can see you."

"But aren't we both to go aboard of the *Brooklyn*?" cried Walter.

"Yes, according to the course we're steering now. But both being on the *Brooklyn* doesn't cover the bill. I expect to be in charge of one of the guns—will be if Bill Darworthy is still in the hospital. Now if you enter as a mere boy, or even as a landsman, it may be that you'll never get around to where I am. You must remember that the *Brooklyn* is a big ship, and all the men on her are divided into classes,—officers, petty officers, seamen, gunners, marines, and so on,—and one class is pretty well separated from another."

"I presume that is so, but I never thought of it before."

"Even seamen are divided into seamen gunners, apprentices and the like, and if you went on as a mere boy you might not see me once a week, unless we happened to be off duty at the same time."

"I see what you are driving at, Mr. Walton; you—"

"Avast there, Walter, no mister for me, please. I'm plain Caleb Walton."

"Well then, Walton, you want to get me attached to that gun you hope to have placed in your charge?"

"Now you've struck the bull's-eye, lad. The thing of it is, can I manage it?"

"I'm sure you must know more about that than I do. I'll like it first-rate if you could, for I—well, to be plain, I like you."

Caleb Walton held out his horny hand. "The liking is mutual, Walter, and there's my fist on it. Now I have an idee." The old gunner took several puffs at his pipe. "I know Captain Cook of the *Brooklyn* tolerably well—served under him for a short spell, and once did a little private business for him. Now, Captain Cook won't do a thing as is out of his line of duty, but still—"

"He may aid you in having me assigned to the gun you expect to have charge of?" finished Walter.

"That's it. I think I can work the deal—almost sure of it,—but you must help me."

"What must I do?"

"Say nothing and leave it all to me, and if my plan goes through, don't tell any one that you were favored. If you do, you'll only make enemies."

"I'll remember that. But what of Haskett, Doring, and the others?"

"I'd like to have Doring in my gang—he's the right sort. I don't want that scowling Jim Haskett, not after what Doring has told me of him. But he's out of it, anyway, for he enlisted as a first-class seaman, at twenty-six dollars per month."

"I wish I knew a little more about a warship," said the youth, longingly. "The more I hear, the less I seem to know."

"It will all come to you in time, and when you are on board I'll show you all I can. It would do no good to talk about guns and the like until I can point out the different parts to you, for you wouldn't know a breech-block from a priming-wire until you laid eyes on it."

"But how is a ship commanded? Won't you tell me something about that?"

"Of course you mean a warship, not a merchantman. Well, the highest officer is, of course, the captain, although the vessel may be the flagship of a commodore or an admiral."

"And what of a commodore and an admiral? You see I'm awfully green, when it comes down to the navy. My younger brother Larry is the real sailor in our family."

"You'll get there, lad; anybody will who is in for learning as you are. An admiral is the highest officer in any navy, and he commands everything that floats, from battleship to despatch tug. Next to him is the vice-admiral. In the United States navy these offices don't exist any more, having died out with the deaths of Admiral Porter and Vice-Admiral Rowan."

"But the newspapers speak of Admiral Sampson."

"He is acting rear-admiral, but holds only the office of commodore. He commands a fleet of warships, while a commodore commands only a squadron; that is, four or six, usually, although he may have more at times. His ships are generally divided into two divisions."

"I understand. Please go on."

"Well, as I said before, the captain really commands the ship. Next to him are the commander and the lieutenant-commander. The first of these takes orders from the captain and issues them to those under him. The lieutenant-commander is called the executive officer, and he's always put down as the hardest worked man on the ship. What he does would fill a book, and he rarely gets leave of absence, for nobody can spare him."

"But what does he do?"

"Well, in the first place he sees that the whole crew keeps straight, and he keeps a conduct book for reference. He hears all complaints and straightens out all difficulties. He sees to it that the ship is kept clean, and he has the say about arranging messes. He must also station the hands for the various fire, sail, and boat drills, the gun exercises, and the drills with small-arms and cutlasses. Then every night at eight o'clock he receives the reports of petty officers, to show that each department is O. K. up to that hour. And there is a lot more besides."

"Thanks, but I don't care to be an executive officer," smiled Walter. "But perhaps he gets well paid for it."

"He earns from twenty-eight hundred to three thousand dollars per year. The commander gets five hundred more than that. A commodore gets five thousand a year, and a rear-admiral six thousand, when at sea. When on shore all these figures are slightly reduced."

"Those are nice salaries."

"That is true. But don't forget that everybody on the ship in the shape of an officer must board himself. The crew does that too, but Uncle Sam makes them an allowance for that purpose."

"Don't the higher officers get anything?"

"They have a ration allowed them—that or thirty cents. Of course such a ration cuts no figure with a commander or a captain."

"I suppose that's so. But please go on. Who is next to the executive officer?"

"The junior lieutenant, and then come the ensigns and naval cadets; that is, those young fellows from Annapolis who are studying up to become higher officers."

"And after that what?"

"Then come the warrant officers, that is, those warranted by our President, and they include boatswain, gunner, carpenter, and sail-maker. And you mustn't forget the marines—the soldier-sailors."

"Gracious, what a lot! Any more?"

"We are not half through, lad, but the others will explain themselves by their titles, such as chief engineer, chief surgeon, paymaster, and chaplain. The chaplain holds the relative position to a captain or a commander, but his whole duty is to hold church and keep the men from going wrong, morally and spiritually. Besides these, we have boatswain's mate, gunner's mate, and the like. Then among the seamen the leading men are called captains; as, for instance, captain of the top, captain of the afterguard, and like that. You'll soon get to know them all, never fear."

"How will I know them—by their uniforms?"

"By their uniforms, and also by the stripes and devices they wear. Don't you see this flaming spherical shell of silver that I wear? That shows that I am a gunner and have seen over twenty years of service. If I was a gunner with less time to my credit, the shell would be of gold."

"And does everybody wear some device?"

"Everybody, from a rear-admiral with his two silver stars and anchor down to the apprentice who has his figure 8 knot. If I get to be a chief gunner, I'll wear two crossed cannons instead of this shell."

"And if you got to be a captain, what would you wear?"

"A silver spread eagle, with an anchor at each end, on my shoulders."

"That's another deal to learn. I should think a fellow would get mixed on all these stars, eagles, shells, cannons, and the rest."

"It takes time to learn, lad. Let me give you a bit of advice. If you meet another person on shipboard and you are in doubt about it, salute. You may be making a mistake, but it will be a mistake on the right side."

"I'll remember that. But I feel as if I had more than ever to learn. Can't I get some book and study it?"

"I've got such a work in my valise. I'll get it for you," concluded Caleb Walton, and he arose. "But remember about that other thing—mum is the word."

"I certainly shall remember," and Walter smiled. "I'm awfully glad I've found such a friend as you," and he squeezed the old gunner's hand.

They returned to the other car, and soon Walter was deeply interested in the volume which Caleb Walton loaned him. It was a technical work, issued by the authority of the Navy Department, and contained all that he desired to learn, and a deal besides.

"Going to learn your duty as soon as possible, eh?" observed Si Doring, as he looked over the boy's shoulder. "That's right. If you want to know anything about sails or knots, call on me."

"What's the matter with calling on me?" put in the voice of Jim Haskett, as he slid into the seat behind them, and leaned over. "I reckon I know as much as Doring about a ship, and maybe a leetle more."

At this Si Doring fired up on the instant. "See here, Haskett, I ain't under ye no longer, remember that!" he cried. "I don't want you to talk to me, or about me. I owe you one, and more, and I ain't forgetting it—remember that!"

"Oh, don't get on a high horse," growled the former mate of the *Sunflower*. "I won't talk to you if you don't want me to."

"And ye needn't talk about me, either. Think ye know a leetle more about a ship than I do, eh? Well, maybe Captain Pepperill didn't think so, when you let the *Sunflower* split her foremast in that blow off—"

"I wasn't responsible for that!" interrupted Jim Haskett, his surly face growing red. "You let the past drop, and I'll let it drop." He glared savagely at Si, then turned to Walter. "Do you want some p'int explained, Russell?"

"Thank you, but I would just as lief study this book for the present," answered Walter, coldly, and somewhat astonished to learn that Haskett knew his name.

"Maybe I can make some p'int clearer. I'm an old sea-dog, you know."

"I think Doring can explain all I wish to know," continued the boy, feeling he ought to stick up for the Yankee who had made himself so agreeable since leaving Boston.

"Don't want my advice, then?"

"I think not."

"All right, then, suit yourself. If you want to cotton to such a fellow as Doring, you can do so, but"—he lowered his voice—"I reckon you are making a mistake." And then, before either Walter or Si could answer, he bounced up, and strode down the aisle and into the smoker.

The train was approaching Washington, and shortly after this conversation it rolled into the depot

at the Capitol city, and came to a standstill.

"We stop here for fifteen minutes," said the porter to Walter, when questioned on the point. "Give you sailor-boys time to stretch your shoah legs." And he grinned, having been on a warship himself once, serving as a "striker,"—one who waits on the mess tables.

"Let us take a few minutes' walk; I am all cramped up," said Walter to his Yankee friend; and Si readily agreed. Caleb Walton was willing they should go, but warned them not to stay too long.

"Fifteen minutes don't mean sixteen; remember that," he called after them.

"I should like to spend a few days here," observed Walter, as he and his companion hurried on. "The Capitol, patent offices, and other buildings must be very interesting."

"I'd rather see President McKinley," returned the Yankee. "My, but he must have his hands full these days!"

"Do you want to see the President?" questioned a man who was just passing them. "If you do, he's in his carriage three blocks below here. There's a cave-in of a sewer, and his carriage just stopped."

"Then here's our chance, Si!" cried Walter, eagerly. "Come on; we can make it if we run. I wouldn't miss seeing the President for a good deal!"

"Thet's me!" burst out the Yankee. "Off we go!" And he started to run, his long legs giving Walter all he could do to keep up with him. The three blocks were covered, and they came to where the cave-in was located, but only some very ordinary vehicles were in sight.

"We're too late!" grumbled Si, crestfallen. "Come on back."

"Too late for phwat?" asked an Irishman standing near the sewer.

"We wanted to see the President."

"Sure an' there goes his carriage down beyant." And the Irishman pointed to a side street.

It was still less than a block away, and without stopping to think twice they made after it, and came up just as it was turning a corner. A very trim driver sat on the box of the turn-out, and on the rear seat, the sole occupant of the carriage, sat our country's chief executive.

"Hurrah!" shouted Walter, impulsively, and waved his cap, and Si did the same. Several others bowed and tipped their hats, and the President bowed and tipped his silk hat in return. Then the carriage rolled swiftly away.



THE PRESIDENT BOWED IN RETURN.

"It was him all right enough," exclaimed Si, enthusiastically, and with a total disregard for

grammar. "He looks jest like his pictures, only a little more care-worn. I suppose he loses lots o' sleep these nights."

"Yes, indeed. Being the President isn't the easiest berth in the world. If I—" Walter broke off short. "Our train—I'll wager a dollar we'll miss it!"

"Creation! don't say that!" gasped Si; and then both took to their heels as if running the race of their lives.

CHAPTER VII

A TALK ABOUT SPANISH SAILORS

"The train is gone!"

It was Walter who gasped out the words, as he and his companion rushed upon the depot platform. In the distance they could see the end of the rear car just vanishing from view in a cloud of dust.

"Thet's so!" groaned Si, panting for breath, for they had done their best to reach the depot in time. "What's to be the next move?" And he looked anxiously at his companion.

"I'm sure I don't know," was Walter's slow answer. "I—I almost wish I hadn't seen the President—now."

"Can't we take a later train?"

"I don't know if the tickets will be good. Certainly we'll have no sleeping accommodations for to-night."

"Who cares for that, so long as we get to Fortress Monroe? Come on, let us see what can be done." And Si led the way to the ticket office.

The ticket-seller was busy, and it was several minutes before they could get to him. "Yes, there will be another train in an hour and a quarter," he said. "About your tickets, did you have stop-over privileges?"

"We did not—we didn't intend to stop over," answered Walter.

"Then I don't believe the conductor will accept them."

"Gee shoo!" groaned Si, dismally. "Do you mean to say we've got to pay the fare from here to our destination? Why, it will take all I've got with me, and maybe more."

"There ought to be some way of having our tickets fixed up," said Walter. "Can't we go to the main office and see about them?"

"Certainly, if you desire," rejoined the ticket seller, and turned to a number of others who were waiting impatiently to be served.

The main offices of the railroad company were not far distant, and hither they made their way. Inside, a young clerk learned what they wanted, and then took them to an inner apartment.

"Government fares, eh?" questioned the elderly gentleman to whom they had been conducted. "What was the reason you didn't catch your train?"

"We lingered to see President McKinley, who was out in his carriage," said Walter. "We got so interested we forgot the time until we were just about a minute late."

"Well, I can't blame you much for wanting to see the man you are fighting under," said the railroad official. "Let me see your tickets." And, taking them, he wrote upon the back of each in blue pencil. "There you are, but you'll have to ride in an ordinary coach."

"We don't care if it is a freight," put in Si, earnestly. "We want to get there." And, after both had thanked the official for his kindness, they withdrew.

"We're all right so far," observed Walter, as "to kill time," they walked slowly down one of the broad avenues for which our Capitol city is famous. "The question is, what will Caleb Walton think of us when he finds us missing?"

"I hope he doesn't think we are trying to desert!" cried Walter, to whom this idea had not before occurred.

"Some fellows wouldn't be any too good to desert, Walter. Only last week a lot of fellows deserted on their way from one of the western states. They got to Chicago, where they wanted to go, and that was the last seen of them. They were like tramps—willing to do anything for a free ride on the cars. But they ran the risk of being court-martialled for it."

"I think the fact that we had our tickets fixed up will go to show what our intentions were, Si. However, we have put our feet into it, and must take what comes."

After a walk of half an hour, both felt hungry and entered a modest-looking restaurant on a side street. They had just ordered a cheap meal each, when a newsboy entered with a bundle of afternoon newspapers.

"Have a paper, sir? Extra, sir; all about the Flying Squadron going to sail. Only one cent, sir."

"What's that?" questioned Walter. "Here, give me a paper." And he grasped the sheet eagerly, while Si also purchased one of another sort. Soon both were devouring the "scare-heads" showing upon each.

THE FLYING SQUADRON READY TO SAIL!

Schley and His Warships May Leave Hampton Roads To-night!

The Spanish Fleet Said To Be On Its Way Westward!

Has It Sailed for Cuba or Will It Bombard Some City on Our Coast?

The Authorities Very Reticent, but a Strict Watch To Be Kept from Maine to Florida for the Appearance of the Enemy!

"By ginger, they're a-comin' over here, sure pop!" burst from the Yankee youth's lips. "Supposing they bombard New York? Why, I heard tell that they could lay out in the harbor and plant a shell right on the top of Trinity Church, or come up to Boston Harbor and knock the top off of the Bunker Hill monument!"

"Our ships and forts won't give them the chance to come so close, Si. But what I'm thinking of is, supposing the warships sail before we can get on board?"

"That's so!" Si Doring heaved a long sigh. "Why didn't we wait some other time for to see the President? If we miss the ships, I don't know what we'll do. We'll be stranded."

"Oh, I presume, they'll put us on some other vessel. But my heart was set on getting aboard the *Brooklyn*." And Walter sighed, too.

Both had lost interest in eating, and swallowed the food mechanically. Then, without waiting, they hurried back to the depot, bound that the next train should not slip by.

The route to Fortress Monroe was by way of Fredericksburg, Richmond, and Newport News. Soon the train came along and they got aboard. The cars were comfortable, but not nearly so elegant as the one previously occupied.

"It is odd to me to see separate cars for negroes and whites," observed Walter, after the journey had begun. "We don't have any such thing up North."

"They will be done away with in time, I guess," answered Si. "By the way, I see in this newspaper that among the first troops to be sent to Cuba will be two regiments of negroes. Hurrah for those boys, say I."

It was growing dark, and soon the car lamps were lighted. The boys read their newspapers through from end to end, and Walter learned that the volunteer regiments were everywhere being sworn into the United States service as rapidly as possible.

"I wonder who will get to the front first?" he mused. "It would be odd if they should send Ben to the Philippines instead of Cuba. If only Larry was with me to go into the navy. I am sure he would enjoy this sort of service." And thus musing, he dropped asleep, never dreaming of the part his younger brother had taken in the contest of Manila Bay.

"Richmond! Change cars for James City, Williamsburg, and Newport News!" Such was the cry which awoke him. He arose sleepily, to find Si snoring heavily.

"Si, wake up!" he cried, and shook his companion. "We have to change here."

"Change—for what?" questioned the Yankee, as he blinked his eyes in the glare of an electric light. "How far have we got?"

"Richmond. Come—the other train leaves in a few minutes."

It was early morning, and the depot platform was deserted excepting for the passengers that left the train. Soon the second train rolled in, and they found a double seat, and proceeded to make themselves comfortable.

"By ginger! I never thought of 'em before," remarked Si, suddenly.

"What?"

"Our satchels, that we left in that first train."

"I had mine checked through."

"I didn't, because I wanted to look over some things of mine on the way down." Si shook his head in dejection. "Say, but ain't I running up against the worst luck ever was! I'll bet a new pocket-knife the satchel is gone when I get to the end of this trip."

"Oh, I hope not, Si. Did it contain much of value?"

"It had my clothing in, a Bible that my mother gave me, and a ten-dollar gold piece that I've been carrying around for twelve years for luck, because it was given to me by a South American rain-maker, a kind of water-witch I met in San Luiz, Brazil. And that ain't the worst on it, either. The grip wasn't locked."

"It's too bad. But let us hope it's all right, Si. Anyway, I wouldn't worry until you know the truth," said Walter, trying to put a bright face on the matter, and then he dropped asleep again, and the Yankee youth presently followed his example.

Luckily the train ran right through from Newport News to Hampton, which is within two miles and a half of Old Point Comfort and Fortress Munroe. The ride proved uneventful, and when they reached Hampton they fell directly into the arms of Caleb Walton.

"What does this mean?" demanded the old gunner, as he caught each by the arm. "Missed the train, eh? I told you to be careful."

"We'll know better next time," answered Walter. "But what of the Flying Squadron? Has it sailed?"

"Not yet, but the ships may leave Hampton Roads at any hour. I made up my mind to wait for this train and then go on. I sent the others ahead."

"What of my satchel?" put in Si.

"It's in the baggage room. But hurry up; every hour counts just about now." And he led the way to where the bag had been left.

"Here is a big wagon bound for the fort," said Walton, as they left the station. "We'll ride down on that, for the soldiers in charge gave me permission, should you show up."

The wagon was loaded with blankets, and the pile made a soft seat. Soon there came a crack of a whip, and they were off, down a sandy highway leading directly to the sea. Soon the salt air filled their nostrils.

"Oh, we're in good shape to give the Dons a hot reception, if they show themselves around here," said one of the soldiers, in reply to a question from Walter. "We've got some of the finest guns in the country at the fort, and can reach a ship ten or twelve miles out in the harbor."

"I should like very much to inspect a real fort," answered the youth. "The guns must be even more complicated than on board a warship."

"The disappearing guns are very fine. But I doubt if you could get permission to go through now—at least, not until you were duly enlisted into the navy and had your uniform on. You know we have strict orders to keep all outsiders at a distance. We don't want any Spanish spies to get plans of our hidden batteries and the fort itself."

"Would they dare to try to get them?" asked Si. "'Pears to me that would be a mighty risky piece of business."

"Certainly they would try. You mustn't think that all Spaniards are cowards—even if the authorities are responsible for blowing up the *Maine*. They'll give us a good shake up, if they get the chance."

"I don't think so," said Caleb Walton. "They are not as up-to-date as we are. I know we can beat 'em at gun practice every round."

"Don't brag. Wait till the war is over."

"I'm not bragging—only talking facts, sergeant. I have a friend at the Brooklyn Navy-Yard, and he wrote to me about the gunners on the *Vizcaya*, when that Spanish warship was lying off Staten Island this spring. He said they were—well tired, I reckon we'd call it,—and didn't have any drills worth mentioning all the while the ship was there. Now you know that won't do."

"Oh, yes, I know a man must keep at his drills if he doesn't want to grow rusty."

"Besides that, you must remember that four-fifths of their sailors don't enlist for themselves. They are shanghied out of the seaport towns, made drunk, and taken on the ships like so many cattle, and they are lucky if they get away inside of ten or fifteen years. And in addition the cat-o'-nine tails is always dangling afore their eyes. Now a man treated like that can't make a good sailor, for the simple reason that he knows he has been treated unjustly, and he can't take an interest in his duties."

"Gracious, don't you think you are stretching it a bit?" put in Walter. "What of their officers?"

"Nearly every one of them comes from the ranks of the nobility, and that takes a good deal of ambition from the men, too, knowing it will be next to impossible for them to rise, even to a petty office. Now in our navy it's totally different. A man enlists of his own free will, he is treated fairly even though subject to rigorous discipline, and if it's in him he can rise to quite a respectable office and earn a good salary—and he's certain to get his money, while the Spanish sailors and soldiers go without a cent for months and months."

"I know what you say about wages is true," said the sergeant in command of the army wagon. "I have it from a friend who left Havana when Lee, our consul, came away, that the majority of the Spanish troops stationed about the city hadn't seen a pay-day for nearly a year."

"And then there is another thing," continued Caleb Walton. "The Spaniards have little mechanical ability, and before this war broke out they had a great number of engineers and the like who were foreign born—Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Germans principally. Now those men won't stay on Spain's warships during this little muss,—at least the Englishmen and Germans won't,—and a green hand at a marine engine can do more damage in ten minutes than a ship-yard can repair in a month. Take it, all in all, therefore, I think we have the best of it," concluded the old gunner.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MEN BEHIND THE GUNS

By the time Fortress Monroe was reached it was quite dark, so but little could be seen outside of those sturdy and frowning walls behind which were concealed the heavy guns intended to protect the entrance to Chesapeake Bay.

The warships rode at anchor some distance beyond. To the squadron had just been added the protected cruiser *Minneapolis*, and the *New Orleans* and *St. Paul* were also expected, and all was a buzz of excitement alongshore.

"They'll be off before long," said one old soldier. "I know because I saw one of the captains saying good-by to his family. Such a parting means a good deal."

"I understand a Spanish warship was sighted last night," put in another. "We may have a fight right here unless Schley keeps his eyes open."

"Oh, he's got the *Scorpion* out on scout duty—she can take care of any sneak work," was the answer. He referred to the gunboat *Scorpion* of the auxiliary navy, which was doing duty just beyond the capes. The *Scorpion* was fast, and carried a strong searchlight, so it was likely nothing could pass her without being detected and the alarm being given. Alarms were numerous, but they were likewise all false, for no Spanish ship of war came anywhere near our coast.

A boat was in waiting at the wharf, and Walter, Si, and the others were ordered aboard without delay. The boat was manned by eight sturdy jackies.

"Up oars!" came the command, and up went the eight blades straight into the air; "Let fall!" and the oars fell into the water; "Give way!" and the blades moved in a clock-like stroke, and they were off to the ships. It was destined to be many a day before Walter should set foot on land again.

"Halt! who goes there?" came suddenly from out of the darkness, and Walter saw that they were lying beside what looked to be a bulging wall of dark-colored steel.

"Aye! aye!" was the answer, and there followed a short talk. "Got ten of them, sir," said the wardroom officer, in charge of the small boat. Then a rope ladder was thrown down, and the newcomers clambered aboard the warship that was to be their home for so long to come.

Walter gazed about him eagerly, but that look was hardly satisfactory, for to the darkness was now added a heavy fog through which the ship's lights shone but faintly. All had their baggage, and without ceremony they were told to fall in, and were then marched below by order of the officer of the deck.

"This looks like home to me," exclaimed Caleb Walton, as he gazed around the berth deck. "I went over the *Brooklyn* many a time when she was up at the navy-yard, so I know her from stem to stern." He took Walter by the arm. "Here is the baby I hope to manage," he whispered, and pointed to one of the starboard monsters, whose long muzzle pointed frowningly outward. "Isn't she a daisy?"

"I suppose she is," was the boy's reply. "But how in the world do you manage such a mass of metal? Surely a man can't do it by hand."

"It might be done by hand, but nowadays everything is worked by electricity and hydraulic pressure. You'll learn it all after you have been on board awhile. At present just do what you are told and keep your eyes open."

Supper had been served some time before, but as it was not intended to let the newcomers go hungry, a table was set and they messed together. The swinging table and the tableware all interested Walter, especially when he was provided with his own personal cup, plate, spoon, knife, and fork.

"As a gunner I'll mess with the other warrant officers," exclaimed Caleb Walton, in reply to a question about messes from Walter. "You see, there are a great number of tables. The commodore is entitled to dine alone, so is the captain and the commander, while the other

officers have what they call the wardroom mess. Then there are the steerage mess, for midshipmen, ensigns, and clerks; the master-at-arm's mess, for yeomen, machinists, boiler-makers, and so on; and three or four other messes besides, including that to which you will belong. We gunners dine with the boatswain, sail-maker, and carpenter."

The meal was a plain one, of bread and butter, coffee, cold corned beef, and apple sauce, but it was well cooked, and all the new men and boys ate heartily. As soon as it was finished, Walton hurried off to interview Captain Cook, if he could obtain that privilege.

"Well, where are we going to sleep? I don't see any beds," said one of the boys, a timid lad named Paul Harbig. His query brought forth a roar.

"Your bed is rolled up and lashed away, Paul," answered Si, who had rather taken to the little lad. "Do you see those gratings over yonder?"

"Yes."

"Well, all the hammocks for this deck are stowed away behind that. When it comes time to go to bed, we'll get them out, fasten them up to the hooks you see about you, and there you are. And let me tell you there is nothing finer nor a good canvas hammock to sleep in. I'll take it before I take a greasy, dirty bunk in a buggy fo'castle every time."

"But a fellow may fall out," suggested Paul.

"If you're afraid of that, get a rope's-end and tie yourself in," answered Si, philosophically. "But you won't tumble, unless we strike some putty rough weather."

The order was now passed to bring along all baggage, and Walter and Si picked up their satchels. Thinking to take out several things he needed, the Yankee youth opened his bag and put his hand inside.

"By ginger!" came from him in an undertone, but loud enough for Walter to hear.

"What's up, Si?"

"Thet ten-dollar gold piece is gone!"

"Are you sure? Perhaps it has slipped among some of the clothing."

"I'll soon see," was the quick response, and the Yankee youth dumped the articles out in a heap. Sure enough, the golden eagle was gone.

"Somebody has robbed me," came in a groan. "Now who did it, do you suppose?"

"I'm sure I don't know. It might have been done here or on the train, or at the depot."

Si looked around him sharply. Not far away stood Jim Haskett, watching him intently. As soon as the ex-mate of the *Sunflower* saw that he was noticed he turned away.

"I've got half a notion Haskett was the one to play me foul," he whispered to Walter. "What do you think?"

"He wouldn't be much of a man to rob a messmate of ten dollars."

"Oh, you don't know Haskett. He's as close as he is brutal. Once we got up a list to give Captain Pepperill a birthday present, but Haskett, although he was first mate, only gave twenty-five cents,—no more than Cooley, the cook, chipped in. In his eyes a ten-dollar gold piece is a big lot of money."

"It wouldn't do you any good to accuse him if you wasn't pretty certain he was guilty," returned Walter, cautiously. "You don't want to get into trouble right after coming on board. If you raised a row, they might put both you and Haskett in the brig."

"I'm going to ask him about it, anyway," answered the Yankee youth. "See, he is looking at us, and it 'pears to me as if he was enjoying himself to see me in trouble."

Leaving his satchel and scattered clothing as they were, Si advanced upon Haskett and without ceremony caught the man's shoulder.

"Haskett, I want to ask you something," he said, in a low tone. "Do you know anything about this, or don't you?"

"I don't know—" The ex-mate of the *Sunflower* stopped short. "What are you talking about, Doring?"

"I left my satchel on the train, as you know. A ten-dollar gold piece is missing. I want to know ___"

"What! do you accuse me of taking it?" demanded the man, wrathfully.

"I asked you if you knew anything about it."

"No, I don't. I've got my own affairs to look after. More than likely the car porter took your money —if you really had that amount."

"Well, I'm going to find that gold piece sooner or later, as sure as my name is Si Doring," exclaimed the Yankee youth, determinedly, and with a shake of his head he rejoined Walter and Paul Harbig.

The officer who had previously taken them in charge now came forward and assigned them to their various sleeping places. This matter was readily arranged, for one of the main features of the cruiser *Brooklyn* is her commodious berthing quarters, there being two complete decks, running from end to end of the ship, for this purpose, also an extra forecabin, so that the vessel can accommodate a thousand men if required—a number nearly double that of her usual crew.

"It's a big hotel, with one room on a floor," thought Walter, as he took the hammock assigned to him. He was glad to find Si on one side of him and Paul Harbig on the other. Si showed both boys how to take their canvasses and sling them. This work was just completed, when Caleb Walton came back with a broad smile on his face.

"It's all right," he whispered to Walter. "The captain treated me better than I thought he would. He called up the chief gunner, and we had a talk, and you are to take the place of a man named Silvers, who has gone lame through having a cat-block fall on his foot. If you'll only mind yourself, and study up as I tell you, you'll have the chance of your life."

"Study! I'm ready to begin right off," answered Walter, earnestly. "I'm just crazy to get at that gun you pointed out to me. Can't you show me something to-night?"

Caleb Walton laughed outright. "Don't try to learn it all before you go to bed, Walter," he said. "Of course, you know more than some landlubbers who think that on warships of to-day they handle the guns as they used to, when one man took the powder and ball from the powder-monkeys, another rammed them home in the gun, and the gunner sighted his piece and pulled the string. Those days are gone, and a head gunner like myself has very little to do, even if the position is a responsible one. Come, I'll get permission to go below, and show you just how a big gun is served from start to finish. Folks talk about 'the man behind the gun' when they really mean from eight to twelve men."

The two hurried off, and presently descended an iron staircase which seemed to lead into the very bowels of the ship. At last they came to a steel trap-door, barred and locked.

"Below this door is one of the magazines," explained Caleb. "It contains the ammunition for the eight-inch guns in the turret above. The keys to the magazine are in the captain's cabin, and can only be had on special order and by certain persons. The magazines are kept locked continually, excepting when in use or when being inspected. All of them are connected with huge water tanks, so at the first sign of a fire they can be flooded, thus lessening the danger of an explosion."

"Yes, I remember the Spaniards tried to prove that the *Maine* blew up from one of her magazines."

"Such a thing couldn't happen in the American navy, because the discipline is too strict. Now, when a gun is being served, several men in the magazine get out the shells for the shellmen, who load them on the ammunition hoist over there, which is nothing more than a warship dumbwaiter. The hoist takes the shells up to the guns, in this case in the forward turret. Other hoists supply the rear turret and the secondary battery and other guns, including the rapid-firing weapons in the military tops."

"You mean those platforms around the upper ends of the two masts?"

"Exactly. The tops are the places for the sharpshooters and the range-finders."

"The range-finders?"

"Exactly. You see, it is a difficult matter to get an exact range on an enemy several miles off, and we have to try to get the range in various ways. One of the simplest ways is to station two range-finders in the tops, as far away from each other as possible. Each man gets a bead on the enemy with his glasses, and then proceeds to get the angle between the bead and an imaginary line drawn between his station and that taken by the other fellow. The three points—that is, the two range-finders and the enemy—form a triangle, and having one line and the two angles to work on, the working out of the problem gives the distance the gunners are hunting for."

"That makes pointing a gun nothing but a mathematical problem doesn't it?"

"It makes it partly a mathematical problem, lad. But having the distance isn't everything, for that will only give us the height at which a gun should be elevated in order to make its charge cover that distance and hit the mark, instead of flying over it or ploughing the water below it. After getting the distance we have to calculate on how the enemy's vessel is moving, if she is under steam, and then, most important, we have to let the gun go off at just the right motion of our own craft. In some navies they discharge the guns on the upward roll of the ship, and in others on the downward roll. My private opinion on that point is, a downward roll in clear weather, and an upward roll in a choppy sea, when you don't know just what is coming next."

"I see. Firing a gun isn't so easy as one would imagine."

"Easy enough if you want to waste ammunition, as those Spaniards did at Manila. Gun practice is expensive, and Spain hasn't any money to waste in that direction. Come, we'll have to get up to sleeping quarters now," concluded the old gunner, as a drum beat was heard sounding

throughout the warship. "That's tattoo. It will soon be two bells, nine o'clock, and then comes pipe down."

"All right, I'm willing enough to go to sleep," said Walter. "But just one question more. How do you count the time by bells on a warship?"

"Just the same as on any ship, lad. The bell strikes at each half-hour, starting at half-past twelve at night, which is one bell. This makes one o'clock, two bells, half-past one, three bells, and so on, up to four o'clock, which is eight bells, when you start again from the beginning. By this means the day and night are divided into periods of time called watches, as morning watch, middle watch, dog watch, and the like. You'll get the lay of it soon," finished Walton, and then, having reached the berth deck, the pair separated for the night.

CHAPTER IX

COMMODORE WINFIELD SCOTT SCHLEY

In a couple of days Walter began to feel at home on the flagship, and he could no longer be termed a "greeny," strictly speaking, although there were still a great number of things for him to learn. He was much interested in the *Brooklyn* as a whole as well as in detail, and was proud to learn that this armored cruiser was the largest of the class in our navy, having a displacement of 9215 tons, as against her sister ship, the *New York*, which had a displacement of about a thousand tons less.

"This ship is just four hundred feet and six inches long," said Caleb. "She don't look so long as she rides the water, but as a city block is ordinarily two hundred feet deep, so to speak, she would cover two blocks of a side street, providing the street was sixty-five feet wide, for her to rest in. That's pretty big, eh?"

"And how much water does she draw, Walton?"

"Draws twenty-four feet, which is the height of an ordinary two-story house. Her three smokestacks are about a hundred feet high each, and that gives her fires a first-class draught, sailing or standing still."

"I'm awfully glad I'm on her," smiled Walter. "Oh, I do hope we have a fight with the Dons. I want to see the big guns go off. I know the main battery, as you call it, has eight 8-inch guns. How many guns are there besides?"

"There are twelve 5-inch rapid-fire guns, twelve 6-pounders, four 1-pounders, four Colts, and two field guns. Besides, we carry four torpedo tubes."

"We're a regular floating arsenal!" exclaimed Walter. "It must make things shake when they all get to firing."

"You'll think you've struck the infernal regions, lad, if we ever do get them all a-going. Yes, the *Brooklyn* is nothing but a floating fort. She's an unusual type, because she has an extra high forecastle deck. Some folks don't think that makes her a beauty, but they must remember that warships aren't built altogether for looks, although to my mind she's as handsome as any of 'em. The high bow enables us to carry our forward guns eight feet higher than those on the *New York*, and it will come in mighty handy if we ever want to run full steam after an enemy in a heavy sea which would drown out a ship with a low freeboard."

"And why is she called an armored cruiser?"

"Because she is protected by steel plating three inches thick on her sides and on her deck, and under this is an additional protection of coal and of cocoa-fibre, for keeping out water. It would surprise you to see how the sides and deck, as well as the bottom, are built, were they taken apart for examination."

Discipline Walter found very strict, and once he had donned his uniform he was kept employed from sunrise to sunset, his duties being largely similar to those performed by his brother Larry on the *Olympia*. Early in the morning he was aroused by the blare of a bugle, or the roll of a drum, and given but a few minutes in which to dress and roll up his hammock and put it away. Then came the work of washing down the deck, followed by breakfast, and later all hands were called to quarters, to attend some drill, sometimes at the guns, sometimes at the hose pipes scattered about in case of fire, and occasionally with small-arms and with cutlasses. Each afternoon there was a "run around," lasting from ten minutes to half an hour. In this the men fell in singly or in pairs, and ran around and around the deck, at first slowly until "second wind" was gained, and then faster and faster. This is the one chance a jackie gets of stretching his legs while on board of his ship, and how he does enjoy it!

Taking them as a whole, Walter found the ship's company a jolly crowd, with but few men of the Jim Haskett stamp among them. The men connected with the guns were a particularly brotherly set, and the youth soon felt thoroughly at home among them. He was always willing to do anything asked of him, and in return the best gunners on the vessel did not hesitate to give him

"points" whenever he asked for them. One jocularly called him The Questioner, but Walter did not mind, and went on picking up all the information possible.

On his second morning on board Walter was talking to Si when a low roll of drums reached their ears. "Hark!" cried the Yankee boy. "Two ruffles. Do you know what that means? The commodore is either leaving or coming on board. They always give a high officer that salute, or a similar one."

"Let us see him if we can," exclaimed Walter, who had not yet caught sight of the commander of the squadron. They crowded to an open port and were just in time to see Commodore Schley descend by the swinging ladder to the gig. Soon the little craft shot out of sight through the fog, for the day was far from clear.

"He looks like a fighter," remarked Walter. "He has quite a record, hasn't he?"

"Yes, indeed, I was reading about him only last week. He was in the Civil War, operating along the Mississippi, and after that he saw a lot of fighting besides."

"I know all about our commodore," said a gunner standing near. "My father fought with him on the Mississippi, and also when Port Hudson, in Louisiana, was taken. He is named after General Winfield Scott,—Winfield Scott Schley,—for his father and the general were warm friends."

"It's a good name for a fighter; for certainly nobody fought better than did General Scott, through the war with Mexico," was Walter's comment.

"Schley entered the Naval Academy in 1856 and remained until 1861, when the war broke out," continued the gunner. "They say he graduated at the head of his class and was so well liked that he was given sea-duty on the frigate *Potomac*, and in 1862 he was made a master, and ordered on the *Winona*, of the Gulf Squadron.

"After the Civil War was over, he was sent to the Pacific, and there he aided in the suppression of an outbreak among the Chinese coolies in the Chin Chi Islands. The United States consulate at this place was in danger of being mobbed, but Schley took a hundred marines ashore, and knocked the whole uprising in the head in short order."

"No wonder he's a commodore," said Walter; and Si nodded approvingly.

"It wasn't long before the young officer was made a lieutenant-commander, and coming back from the Pacific, he was placed in charge of a department at the Naval Academy. He remained ashore for three years, then went to the coast of Africa, on the *Benicia*, where he took part in a number of contests, and helped clear the Congo River of pirates, and overthrew the forces defending the Salu River in Corea, another bit of work for which he was warmly praised."

"Oh, he's a corker," cried Si, enthusiastically.

"I'm not done yet," went on the gunner, who loved to talk about the exploits of his old commander. "Of course you have heard how the Greely Expedition to the North Pole got lost and couldn't get back home. Well, it was Schley who went after them, and found Greely and six of his companions at Cape Sabine and brought them safely back. For this Congress voted him a medal, and President Arthur raised him to the full rank of captain and made him Chief of the Bureau of Equipment, a very important office in the Naval Department. But Schley couldn't stand it on land, he must have the rolling ocean under him, and so he gave up his berth ashore and took command of the *Baltimore*."

"I remember about that," put in Walter. "I was reading about John Ericsson, the inventor of the monitor. When Ericsson died, the body was sent to Sweden, his fatherland, on the *Baltimore* under Schley."

"Exactly, and the King of Sweden gave Schley a medal to commemorate the event, at a grand gathering at Stockholm. From Sweden Schley took the *Baltimore* to Southern waters, and while off the coast of Chili he smoothed out what threatened to become a serious difficulty between that country and ours on account of some of Uncle Sam's jackies being stoned on the streets of Valparaiso. For this the Navy Department was extremely grateful, and he went up several points on the register, so that it didn't take him long to become a commodore."

"He's certainly a man worth sailing under," said Walter. "I suppose he is married?"

"Yes, and has several children—but that don't interest me," concluded the gunner, who was an old bachelor, with a peculiar dislike for the gentler sex.

Since the time that Si had spoken to Haskett about the missing money, the seaman had steered clear of both the Yankee lad and Walter. Perhaps he was afraid that Si would accuse him openly of the theft of the gold piece, or perhaps he was afraid of Caleb Walton, who was continually around and ready to champion his "boys," as he had dubbed both. But there was one boy who could not get away from him, and that was Paul Harbig.

"You're just the right sort to take to," said Haskett, as he caught Paul by the arm one morning, while both were coming from mess. "You're too much of a real little man to have anything to do with that Russell boy or Si Doring."

"Oh, I like them both very much!" answered Paul, and attempted to pass on. With a frown Haskett caught him by the arm and swung him back.

"See here, I want to talk to you," he cried uglily. "Has Si Doring been telling you any yarns about me?"



"SEE HERE, I WANT TO TALK TO YOU."

"You let go of me," was Paul's only answer. "I don't want anything to do with you."

"Answer my question."

"I haven't got to." And now Paul did his best to get away. He had just twisted himself loose when Jim Haskett struck him a cruel blow on the head.

"You—you brute!" gasped the boy, as the tears came. He was about to try retreating again, when Haskett caught him once more.

"Now answer me, or I'll thrash the life out of you," he hissed into Paul's ear. "And mind you tell the truth."

"He said that he had a—a—" the boy broke off short. "I won't tell you, there! Now let go!" And he began to squirm.

"I know what he said," blustered Haskett. "Said he had had a ten-dollar gold piece in his valise, didn't he?"

"Ye-es."

"And he accused me of taking it, eh?"

"He didn't say so outright. He said you had been where you could get at the bag."

"It amounts to the same thing. As a matter of fact I couldn't get at the bag any more than could you, or Russell, or Walton, or any of the others."

"I suppose that is so. Now let me go."

"I will in a minute, but I want to tell you something, for it's not nice to have folks taking you to be a thief," went on Haskett, tactfully.

"I haven't said anything about the affair."

"Perhaps not, Paul, but Doring talks, and I reckon so do Russell and Walton. During the past couple of days I've found more than one fellow aboard the *Brooklyn* looking at me queer-like, and I can put two and two together as quick as the next man. If I allow this to go on, there won't be a soul speak to me after a while."

"I shan't say a word—I'll promise you."

"It's Russell who will talk the most, I reckon," went on Haskett, with apparent bitterness.

"Russell, the very fellow who ought not to say a word."

"I'll caution him, if you want me to," went on Paul, who was tender-hearted and very willing to help anybody out of trouble.

"Caution Russell! Not for the world. See here, I'll tell you something, and you can tell Doring or not, just as you please. To the best of my knowledge Russell is the thief."

"Walter!" ejaculated Paul. "Oh, no, you must be mistaken. Why, why—how could he get at the satchel? He was with Doring."

"I don't know about that. But I'm almost positive Russell is guilty."

"Have you any proof? You shouldn't say such a thing unless you have," retorted Paul, anxious to stick up for Walter, who had served him several good turns since they had become acquainted.

"I've got more proof against Russell than Doring has against me," answered Jim Haskett, boldly. "And what is more, I can prove what I've got to say."

"But what have you to say?" came in a cold, heavy voice behind Haskett, and turning swiftly the former mate of the *Sunflower* found himself confronted by Caleb Walton. The old gunner's face looked stern and angry.

"Why—er—where did you come from?" stammered the seaman.

"I asked you what you have to say against Walter Russell," demanded Caleb. "Come, out with it, or by the jumping beeswax, I'll wipe up this deck with you!" And he doubled up his fists.

"I'm not afraid, if you want to fight, Walton," replied Haskett, recovering somewhat from his fright. "What I said about Russell, I'll stick to."

"But what have you got to say? out with it," was the old gunner's demand.

"I've got this much to say. I think Russell took Doring's gold piece, and I am not the only one that does either. If you think I'm wrong, ask Cal Blinker, the shellman. He heard almost as much as I did."

"Heard what?"

"Heard Russell talk in his sleep. It was last night. I got up to get a drink of water and slipped and roused up Blinker. Then, when I went to the water tub, I passed Russell's hammock. He was dreaming and talking about the gold piece and saying that Doring would never learn that he had it, and a lot more about hiding it under the gun. He went on about the money and about hiding it for fully ten minutes. If you don't believe me, go to Blinker about it."

CHAPTER X

WALTER SHOWS HIS PLUCK

"And is that all you have to say?" asked Caleb Walton, after a few seconds of silence, during which he gazed so sharply at Jim Haskett that the fellow felt compelled to drop his eyes. "Because a fellow dreams about a gold piece, must you accuse him of stealing?"

"That's all right, too," responded Haskett, doggedly. "I know he wouldn't dream that way unless there was something in the wind. I'm satisfied he took the money."

"And I am satisfied that he is innocent," cried Caleb. "That boy would never steal a cent from anybody."

"Why, he was after a thief himself before he left Boston," put in Paul, who had now sought protection behind the old gunner.

"Well, suit yourselves," answered Haskett, with a shrug of his somewhat rounded shoulders. "But let me tell you that I won't allow Russell, Doring, or anybody else to speak of me as having taken the money—mind that!" And he shook his fist savagely.

"Here comes Walter now," announced Paul. "Walter, come here!" he called out, before Caleb could stop him.

At once Walter came up, an inquiring look upon his manly face, which was now becoming sunburnt through exposure on deck. "What do you want, Paul?" he asked.

"It's only some of Haskett's nonsense," answered Caleb, ere the boy could speak. "Tell us, lad, do you remember dreaming anything about Si's gold piece?"

For the instant Walter looked puzzled, then his face brightened. "I do," he answered. "What of it?"

"Tell us what you dreamed first."

"Why—I—I can't remember exactly, excepting that I was having a good lot of worry about it," he stammered. "You know how dreams come and go."

"To be sure, Walter."

"You dreamt about the money you hid, didn't you?" said Haskett, sneeringly.

"The money I hid? I hid no money."

"Oh no, of course not!"

"See here, Haskett, what do you mean?" And Walter strode over to the seaman, his face flushing deeply. "Do you mean to insinuate that I took Si's gold piece and hid it away?"

"He just does," burst out Paul. "And he says you talked in your sleep about it, too."

"It is false—at least, it is false that I took the money. I might have dreamed about it and talked in my sleep. We are not accountable for what we do when we are sleeping."

"Perhaps you took the gold piece when you were asleep," said Haskett, squinting suggestively at those surrounding him.

"The gold piece was taken while Si and I were left behind in Washington. It was taken by somebody on the train."

"That's your story—and you've been trying to lay the thing at my door. But I shan't stand it—not me," stormed Haskett. "I heard what you said in your sleep, and so did Cal Blinker. If anybody is guilty, it is you!" And he pointed his long, bony finger full in Walter's face.

By this time a crowd of a dozen or more had gathered round, realizing that a quarrel of some sort was in progress. "It's about a gold piece," said one. "Haskett says Russell took it. Say, fellows, we don't want anything to do with a thief."

"Not much we don't!" answered a messmate. "Heave him overboard if he is guilty."

"This matter ought to be reported to the officer of the deck," put in a third. "If there is a thief on board, no man's ditty-box will be safe."

At Haskett's concluding remark Walter's face grew as red as a beet, then deadly pale. For a moment he stood stock still, breathing heavily. Suddenly he leaped forward with clenched fist and struck Haskett a stunning blow on the chin which sent the seaman staggering up against a gun-carriage.

"That, for talking to me in this fashion!" he exclaimed.

"Oh!" grunted the ex-mate of the *Sunflower*, as he caught at the gun just in time to prevent himself from falling to the deck. "You—you young rascal, what do you mean by hitting me?"

"A fight! a fight!" cried several, and soon a crowd of about fifty jackies surrounded the pair.

"Wasn't that a pretty blow though! And he's only a boy, too!" came from a gunner's mate.

"I'll fix you for this!" went on Haskett, putting one hand to his chin, where a lump was rising rapidly. "I never before allowed anybody to hit me—leastwise a boy." And he rushed at Walter with a fierceness which boded the youth no good.

"Don't you hit him, Haskett," put in Caleb, catching the seaman by the arm. "If you do, you'll have to settle this affair with me."

"He hit me."

"And you as much as said he was a thief."

"And so he is."

"I am not, and I've a good mind to hit you again for saying so," burst out Walter, and before anybody around could separate them he and Haskett had closed in. Several ineffective blows were struck on each side, when they were pulled apart.

"This won't do, Walter," whispered Caleb. "If you're not careful, you'll spend a week in the brig."

"But—but it's awful to have him say I'm a—a—"

"I know, I know. But keep cool, lad; it's best, take my word for it. You've been on board only a few days, but you have made lots of friends, while I reckon most of the men have already sized up Haskett for the meanest chap on board."

"He has no right to talk about me."

"He says you and Si Doring talked about him."

Haskett now pushed his way forward again. "I don't want trouble with the officers, so we'll let this matter drop for the present," he blustered. "But I'll remember you, and some day you'll be mighty sorry we had this little mix-up." And muttering some more that nobody could understand he strode off, the majority of the crowd gazing after him curiously.

"Ran away from a boy!" said one old tar. "He must be a regular coward, and no mistake!"

Many wanted Walter to relate his version of what had brought the encounter about, but Caleb hurried the lad away to a corner, where he took a wash up and brushed off his clothing.

"I want to interview that Cal Blinker," said the youth. "Where can I find him?"

"Down around the forward ammunition hoist," answered Paul, and Walter hurried off, accompanied by his friends.

"Yes, I did hear you say something about a gold piece," the shellman admitted. "You didn't talk very plainly and I understood very little. Haskett said he understood every word. Well, maybe he did. I've been in the navy so long that the noise of the big guns has affected my hearing."

"Did I say I stole the piece?" insisted Walter.

"I don't know as you did. All I could make out was 'ten dollars in gold' and 'the gun—just the place.'"

This was all Cal Blinker had to say. He was rather old and it was plain to see that he wanted nothing to do with the controversy, one side or the other.

Si Doring had been attending a special boat drill, and it was not until an hour had passed that he came below and heard what had occurred. Without hesitation he slapped Walter on the shoulder.

"Don't you take this to heart," he said. "No matter what that mean old rascal of a Haskett says, he'll never make me believe that you are anything but perfectly straight. I believe yet that he took the gold piece and that some day I'll be able to prove it." And there the incident, for the time being, dropped.

The manner in which Walter had "sailed into Haskett," as Caleb expressed it, made the youth many friends among the crew, for if there is one thing a jack tar loves it is to see a messmate stand up for himself. "You're all right, you are," said more than one, and caught Walter's hand in a grip calculated to break the bones. Several, who had thought to play a few tricks on the "greeny," reconsidered their ideas on the subject and concluded that it was best not to run any chances with such a spirited lad.

For some time Walter was afraid that the executive officer would hear of the encounter and bring him to book for it; but if the "mix-up" was reported, nothing came of it. As a matter of fact, Uncle Sam's officers just then had affairs of more importance requiring their attention.

For every hour on board of the warships composing the Flying Squadron increased the anxiety concerning the Spanish ships which it was felt were preparing to make a quick dash for Cuba or for our own coast. How soon would these warships sail, and where would they make their presence felt? those were the all-important questions commodore and captains asked of each other. "They'll most likely try to break the blockade at Havana," said one. "No, they'll bombard one of our down-east seacoast cities," said another. "I think they'll rush through the Suez Canal to fight Dewey," was the conclusion reached by a third. Under-officers and men speculated quite as much as did their superiors, arriving at equally opposite conclusions. "They have our whole seacoast and Cuba to pick from," Commodore Schley said. "They will go where they can do the most good—to their way of thinking. I think they'll go to Cuba or Porto Rico." How correct the commander was history has shown.

Although the *Scorpion* was patrolling the ocean just outside of the capes, a strict watch was kept on every one of the warships, night and day. Rumors were numerous, and one was to the effect that the Spaniards had a submarine craft in their service and that this boat would soon arrive along our eastern seacoast, to destroy the shipping from Maine to the Gulf of Mexico. In these days, when we know the truth, we can afford to laugh at such a report, but to the jackies on the warships, who remembered only too well the fate of the *Maine*, it was no laughing matter. Even when off duty, many would go on the spar deck and lie flat, gazing into the dark waters for the best part of a night, hoping to catch a glimpse of the unknown terror, should it come to that vicinity.

Sunday, with its deeply impressive church service, came and went, and still the squadron lay at anchor. In the meantime it was rumored that Sampson would soon take his most powerful vessels from the blockade and bombard Havana. The newspapers reported this, but if such was the plan of the Navy Department, it was altered at the last moment.

On May 12 came news of a fierce fight in the harbor of Cardenas, a seaport a hundred and twenty miles east of Havana. In an attempt to effect a landing, the torpedo boat *Winslow* had her boiler blown to pieces and several men were killed and injured, among them Ensign Worth Bagley, who was thus the first American officer to fall in the war. Two other warships, the *Wilmington* and the *Hudson*, also took part in the contest, but were repulsed after a gallant onslaught lasting over an hour.

"This is war," said Caleb, as he read the news from the paper that one of the gunners had just brought on board. "Those fellows on the *Winslow* caught it hot. Think of running right into that harbor and having a shell drop and smash your boiler and send the live steam all over you. I tell you Ensign Bagley was a plucky one, all honor to his memory."

The next day brought even more important news. Dewey had gained a foothold in the Philippines,

the main city of Cuba was in a state of blockade, and now Rear-Admiral Sampson had shifted the scene of action to Porto Rico, by shelling the forts of San Juan, the principal city of Spain's only other possession in the West Indies.

"We're getting there!" cried Caleb, excitedly. "We'll soon give the Dons all they want."

"If Sampson succeeds in making the San Juan forts surrender, the whole city will be at our mercy," said Walter. "Hurrah for the American navy, and every ship and man in it."

"We are bound to get them on the run," put in Si. "Here is another report about a fight at Cienfuegos. Where is that?"

"On the southern coast of Cuba," answered Walter, who had always had a good head for geography, and who, since the war had started, had studied the map of Cuba closely. "Havana, San Juan, and Manila! Say, but this is becoming a war of magnificent distances."

"It's a naval war, that's what it is," said Caleb. "If we—hullo! Did any of you see this telegram?" He pointed to his newspaper. "The Spanish Squadron under Admiral Cervera has slipped away from Cape Verde Islands and is undoubtedly bound westward."

"And here is another report that some strange vessels, supposed to be warships, have been sighted off Martinique, Windward Island," added Walter, quickly. "I'll wager we leave soon!"

"But where to—the Windward Islands?" queried Si.

"That's for Commodore Schley to decide. Rest assured he'll find this Admiral Cervera sooner or later, just as Dewey found old Admiral Montojo."

The news was spreading, and officers and men gathered in knots to discuss the situation. As for Commodore Schley and Captain Cook, they smiled knowingly, but said nothing. Everybody in the Flying Squadron remembered what Dewey and his men had accomplished, and all were on their mettle accordingly.

CHAPTER XI

THE SAILING OF THE FLYING SQUADRON

"We are off at last!"

It was Walter who broke the news, as he came tumbling down the stairs to the berth deck, where Si and Caleb were engaged in a friendly game of checkers on the top of a ditty-box.

"Off!" cried the old gunner, and leaped up, scattering the men on the checkerboard in all directions. "Who told you?"

"The signal has just been hoisted on the military mast. I couldn't read it, but Sandram could and he translated it for me."

Caleb waited to hear no more, but rushed on deck, with Walter and the others following. The news was true, the signal flew the words, "Weigh anchor and follow the flagship," and the heavy black smoke was pouring in dense volumes from every warship's funnels.

"I wonder where we are bound?" questioned Walter, whose heart was thumping within him at the thought war might soon become a stern reality to him. "Of course we are going after Admiral Cervera's ships."

"I reckon that's right, but there's no telling," responded Caleb. "The officers don't consult us when they want to move, you know." And he said this so dryly that both Walter and Si had to laugh.

The warships at hand were four in number,—the *Brooklyn*, which I have already described, and the *Massachusetts*, *Texas*, and *Scorpion*. With them was the collier *Sterling*, loaded to the very rail with huge bags of coal, for the exclusive use of the Flying Squadron.

The *Massachusetts* was a battleship of the first-class, a sister ship to the *Indiana*. She had a displacement of over ten thousand tons, and a speed of sixteen knots per hour. Her massive armor was eighteen inches thick—enough to withstand some of the heaviest shots ever fired from any gun. Her armament consisted of a main battery of four 13-inch and eight 8-inch guns and four 6-inch slow-fire guns. The secondary battery comprised twenty 6-pounders, four 1-pounders, four Gatlings, and two field-guns. Besides this she carried three torpedo tubes and an immense quantity of small-arms. Captain Francis J. Higginson was in charge, with Lieutenant-Commander Seaton Schroeder.

The *Texas* was a battleship of the second class, her displacement being only 6315 tons. She had the honor to be the first vessel built when our navy began its reconstruction, in 1886. Her armor was just one foot thick, and she could speed along at the rate of nearly eighteen knots an hour. Two 12-inch and six 6-inch slow-fire guns made up her main battery, while her secondary battery counted up six 1-pounders, four Hotchkiss and two Gatling guns. There were two torpedo tubes.

The *Texas* was under the command of Captain John W. Philip and Lieutenant-Commander Giles B. Harber.

The *Scorpion* was a despatch boat of the gunboat pattern, with a displacement of six hundred tons, and a rapid-firing battery of four 5-inch and six 6-pounders. She was a swift craft, and had done duty as a scout for a long time.

The signal to weigh anchor was hoisted on the flagship at four o'clock in the afternoon, and inside of half an hour the Flying Squadron and the collier were standing down Hampton Roads toward the capes, each ploughing the waters at a twelve to fifteen knot rate. The wharves alongshore were lined with people, who waved their hats and their handkerchiefs, and shouted out their best wishes for the departing ones.

"Remember the *Maine*, boys, and send us a good account of yourselves!" shouted one old Southern veteran, as he shook a partly empty coat sleeve at them. "I wish I was younger; I'd go along and fight as well for the old stars and stripes as I once did for the stars and bars."

"Now you're talking," responded a Union veteran. "That other quarrel was our own, eh, neighbor? Let foreign nations keep their hands off Uncle Sam's family and the children seeking his protection. Three cheers for Old Glory and Free Cuba!" And the cheers were given with a will, while Fortress Monroe thundered out a parting salute.

A number of other vessels, including the protected cruisers *Minneapolis* and *New Orleans* and the auxiliary cruiser *St. Paul* had been left behind, to join their sister ships later on. The *New Orleans* was a warship but recently purchased from the Brazilian government, and formerly known as the *Amazonas*. The *St. Paul* had formerly been a trans-Atlantic steamer, and was commanded by Captain Charles E. Sigsbee, who had so gallantly stuck to his post until the last moment when the *Maine* was destroyed.

Each of the warships had a harbor pilot on board and proceeded under a full head of steam for the passage between the capes, which were passed a little after seven o'clock in the evening. Leaving Cape Henry well to starboard, the pilots were dropped, and the warships, taking the middle course, as it is termed, disappeared from the gaze of those who had watched their departure so eagerly.

"We're out for a fight now, sure enough," said Caleb, as he and Walter went below, each to the mess to which he had been assigned. "Orders are to prepare for action, so I've just been told."

"I noticed that lights were being extinguished," answered the youth. "Do you suppose they are afraid that the Spanish warships are coming up this way?"

"No telling, lad. It's a game of hide and seek, until one fellow or the other sneaks up and thumps his opponent in the neck. I only hope we're in it to do the first thumping."

Mess was scarcely over when there came a call to quarters. Ports were closed with massive steel covers, the battle hatches were put down, and the big guns were carefully loaded. Watches had, of course, already been established, and now the men were ordered to take turns at standing by the guns.

"Which way are we pointing, eastward or down the coast?" questioned Walter of Si, who had come up during his off hours to take a look at the cloudy sky from which only a few stars were peeping.

"We are moving almost directly southward," was the slow reply of the Yankee youth, after a long look overhead.

"And where will that bring us to, Si?"

"It will take us to Cape Hatteras first, and if we keep on long enough it will bring us to the neighborhood of San Salvador Island. But I reckon we'll change our course after Hatteras is passed."

"Isn't Hatteras a bad point to pass?"

"Is it? You just ought to try it in dirty weather. Many a craft has left her hulk off that cape. But such a craft as the *Brooklyn*, with her high bow, ought to weather almost anything. To my mind, the worst thing we can run into is a fog-bank, and that's just what we are likely to do in this vicinity."

The regular lights of the warship had been extinguished, but behind its hood the great searchlight glowed and spluttered, ready to be turned to one point or another at a second's notice. All was quiet on board, save for the rumble and quiver of the powerful engines which were driving this floating fort on her way through the rolling ocean. While daylight lasted the vessels kept more or less apart, but with the coming of night they closed in, and the fretting and puffing little *Scorpion* darted ahead on picket guard.

Walter's duty at his gun came to an end at midnight, and none too soon for the lad, whose head had suddenly begun to spin around like a top. "I guess I'm getting seasick," he murmured to Si; and the Yankee lad at once led him away to a secluded corner, where he might have matters all his own way, and where none might look on and enjoy his misery. Once Haskett started to pass some uncomplimentary remarks about Walter, but a single stern look from Caleb silenced the

seaman, who tumbled into his hammock without another word. For several days Jim Haskett had kept his distance, but he was only biding his time to "even up," as he termed it. "I'll make young Russell feel mighty sore before I'm done with him," was what he promised himself.

Walter was expected to go on duty again at four o'clock, but he was in no condition for service, and sent Caleb word to that effect. Paul took the message and soon returned with a reply.

"You're to take it easy until you're all right," said Paul. "Walton will fix it up so there will be no trouble."

"He's the best friend a fellow ever fell in with," sighed Walter. "If I hadn't met him I don't know what I should have done."

"Oh, you would have taken care of yourself," answered Paul, lightly. He had not yet forgotten the attack Haskett had sustained at Walter's hands.

Daybreak found the squadron running into the first of a series of fog-banks. At once the speed of each warship was reduced, and presently it became necessary to use the fog-horns and ship-bells. In the meantime all hands were put through several drills, "to get them into fighting trim," as the officer of the deck explained. The drills lasted until dinner time, and in some way they made Walter feel much better. As a matter of fact, his spell of seasickness was of short duration, and once gone, the malady never returned.

"I'm a fine specimen of a jackie, am I not?" he said to Caleb, with a faint smile, on first presenting himself. "Why, a Spaniard could knock me over with a feather."

"Don't you go for to find fault with yourself," was the old gunner's reply. "I've known men who have been on the ocean for years to get sick the first day out. It's something they can't overcome, try their best. Why, I saw several officers of the marines as sick as so many dogs."

Mess over, Walter went on deck for a breath of fresh air. They had just left a fog-bank and were standing out boldly into the ocean. The youth sauntered slowly forward as far as the rules permitted.

"Sail O!" came suddenly from the military mast.

"Where away?" demanded the officer on the bridge.

"Dead ahead, sir."

"Is she flying any flag?"

"I think not, sir."

"What does she look like?"

"I can't make out very well, for she is running into the fog. I don't know but that she looks a bit like a warship," continued the lookout, after some hesitation.

Without delay Commodore Schley and Captain Cook were notified. A brief consultation took place, and it was decided to pursue the unknown craft and find out what she was and where she was going.

CHAPTER XII

AN ADVENTURE OFF CHARLESTON

The news that a strange vessel was in sight soon travelled throughout the ship, and all who could do so, crowded to the spar deck, while the officers stationed themselves on the fore-castle, bridge and other points of vantage.

There was no necessity to give the order, "Clear ship for action!" for the *Brooklyn* was already cleared. Moreover, all the big guns contained their charges of eight-inch and other shells. The six-pounders and the Colts were now "provided," as it is termed, and then there was nothing to do but to lie by the guns and await further orders.

Immediately upon notification that a strange sail was in sight, the flagship had run up a signal to the *Scorpion*, "Follow the unknown ship to the southward," and away darted the little gunboat at a rate of speed which caused the mighty waves of the Atlantic to wash her decks from end to end. Presently the sea proved almost too heavy for her and she had to reduce her speed, and the *Brooklyn* went ahead, her high freeboard sending the water to port and starboard with scarcely an effort. Once, however, she did get caught below an unusually high crest and all on the forward deck received a liberal drenching.

"Fire a shot across her bow!" was the order given, when the strange craft again emerged from a fog-bank, and boom! one of the smaller guns belched forth. The echoes of the shot had scarcely died away when the unknown ship was seen to hoist the British flag.

"Only a Britisher!" sighed Caleb, when the news came down to him. "And I thought we were

going to have the profit of a nice Spanish prize."

Not caring to go entirely by the flag displayed, since the unknown ship had acted so strangely, the *Scorpion* was again sent forward to make an investigation. In quarter of an hour she came up within hailing distance.

"What ship is that?" was bawled out through a megaphone.

"British steamer *Elsie*. What gunboat is that?"

"The *Scorpion*, of the United States navy. Where are you bound and what have you on board?"

"Bound for Norfolk, Virginia, with a cargo of phosphate rock."

"Why didn't you show your flag before?"

"Well, to tell the truth we were afraid we had run into some Spanish warships, and that England might be mixed up in this muss, in which case we didn't want to become a Spanish prize. How is it? are we in it yet?"

"No, Uncle Sam is running this war without outside help," was the concluding remark, and then the two vessels separated; and the Flying Squadron proceeded on its way.

Saturday found the course of the *Brooklyn* changed to southwest by south. "We are still hugging the coast," explained Si. "I shouldn't wonder if we are to make a stop somewhere, say at Charleston or Savannah."

"Perhaps the commodore has word that the Spanish ships are sailing for our south-east coast," suggested Walter. "My! what a nasty day it is going to be." He referred to the mist, which was so heavy that it felt almost like rain. For May, the weather was raw and cold, and all hands were glad to stay below decks as much as possible.

On this day another long exercise at the gun was had, and Walter learned more thoroughly than ever how the charge was raised from the ammunition hoists to the gun, pushed into place by the mechanical rammer, and how the gun was moved up, down, or sideways by merely touching this button or that wheel or lever. "It's wonderful!" he observed. "I suppose it would be next to impossible to move such a big gun by hand."

"Oh, it can be done," answered Caleb. "In the old navy they used to do it by hand, and each gun had ten to sixteen men to man it. In those days they had no device to lessen the shock of the recoil as we have now. Instead of having a water cushion for the gun to strike on, they used a heavy rope in the back, and sometimes the rope broke, and the gun did more damage flying backward than the charge did flying forward."

"They didn't have any breech-loaders in those days, did they?"

"They had some in the Civil War, but not many before that. Everything in the way of powder and ball had to be put into the muzzle, and was rammed home by hand. The first breech-loading guns were clumsy affairs, and not a few accidents were had by guns going off before the breeches were properly locked."

"And what about sighting the pieces?"

"Oh, they have had dozens of devices for getting a correct aim, some pretty good and some decidedly bad. In the old navy the guns didn't carry near so far as they do now, and your old-time gunner was just what his name calls for, for he sighted the piece and fired it himself. But the old times are gone, and I expect one of these days all the work still left will be done by machinery, and a dozen men sitting up in the conning tower will control the warship from stem to stern."

Walter laughed at this. "I reckon we're some time off from that yet, Walton. But it is wonderful how much the commander can control by using his bells, annunciators, speaking-tubes, and electrical indicators. I guess that is a great improvement on the old way of yelling orders through a speaking-trumpet and having a dozen middies rushing around telling this man and that what to do."

"No doubt of it, lad. But when it's all done and said, you must remember one thing—we have still to prove the worth of our floating forts in war times. Dewey did well at Manila, but it may be that the Spanish warships out there weren't in the best condition. Now this Admiral Cervera, whom we are after, has ships that are thoroughly up to date, and when his outfit meets ours, then—well, we'll see what we will see," concluded the old gunner.

That afternoon Walter took his first lesson in making knots. He had had some idea concerning a variety of knots which had been taught to him by Larry, when he and his younger brother were sailing about Lake Erie, but those which were now exhibited were truly bewildering.

"The single bend and figure of 8 are easy enough," he sighed. "But when you come to that sheep-shank and bowline upon the bight, as you term them, it grows confusing."

"This is only the beginning," answered Caleb. "After you know the knots, you'll want to learn the hitches—half-hitch, rolling-hitch, and so on,—and after that you'll want to take up the splices, and then the different kinds of tackle,—long-tackle, single-whip, and all that. I reckon those will keep your mind busy for a week or two. To be sure, those things belong more to a seaman than a gun-

hand, but it's good to know how to do, in case you are called upon at some time."

The night came on with a storm in the air. As before, all the lights were extinguished, and the different watches took their turns at the guns. Walter had just turned in when a shout rang out. "Another vessel in sight!" As rapidly as possible the lad leaped up.

"Is it a Spanish warship?" he asked.

"Don't know," answered Caleb, laconically, but leaped to the gun, with Walter and the others following.

But it was only another scare, for the vessel in sight proved to be a merchantman bound for a northern port. The big searchlight of the *Brooklyn* was turned upon her, and instantly every light on the merchantman went out and the ship sneaked away with all sails set. No effort was made to pursue her.

"The captain of that craft will report falling in with a big Spanish fleet; see if he don't," said Caleb; and the old gunner was right, as a newspaper of a few days later proved.

By noon on Sunday Charleston Harbor was sighted, and a few hours later the squadron came to anchor near Charleston Bar, nine miles from the city.

"The *Sterling* isn't in sight," said Walter, as he came on deck and took a look behind. "I wonder if the heavy sea was too much for the collier."

"Oh, she'll turn up sooner or later," answered Si. "But a boat loaded as she was isn't the safest thing to sail around such a point as Cape Hatteras, I can tell you that." The collier came in before night, reporting a thoroughly disagreeable trip.

A lighthouse tender was at hand, ready to take the mail ashore, as well as to deliver letters and special messages. The messages were at once delivered to Commodore Schley.

"I wonder how long we'll stop here," said Walter. "I wouldn't mind a run ashore, just to see what the city looks like."

"There goes a signal to the *Texas*," said Si, as the signalman took up his flag and began to wig-wag. "Wait a moment till I read what he is saying."

"Can you read it?" asked Walter, in deep interest.

"Certainly, it's easy enough." Si began to spell to himself. "'W-h-a-t, what—i-s, is—y-o-u-r, your—b-e-s-t, best—r-a-t-e, rate—o-f, of—s-p-e-e-d, speed—n-o-w, now?' He is asking what the *Texas* can do at once, so far as speed is concerned. That means something important. Hold on, here comes the answer." Again the Yankee youth began to spell. "Might go fifteen and a half knots." Then the signalman on the *Brooklyn* sent another message. "We are off on business now." And the signal went up for the squadron to weigh anchor again.

"We're off for a fight!" ejaculated Walter. "But tell me about that wig-wagging, Si; how do they signal the letters?"

"It's easy enough. You take a small flag of some bright color, attached to a pole six or eight feet long. As soon as you attract the attention of the other fellow, you begin to use the flag in three motions, to the right, the left, and down in front. To the right means one, to the left means two, and down in front means three. Now all the letters are represented by combinations of numbers, and all you have to do is to learn the combinations and spell ahead. It's easy enough when one gets the hang of it. At night you can use a lantern instead of a flag."

"That is easy," commented Walter. "But what about those signals at the masthead. Can you read those?"

"No. In those, most every flag represents a letter, or a word, or sentence; but to read the signal you have got to have either the international signal code-book, or else the United States Navy code-book. The navy code is locked up in the captain's cabin, and the book is weighted with lead, so that if anything happens, it can be heaved overboard and sunk, thus keeping it out of the enemy's hands."

"I declare, signalling isn't so difficult, after all," cried Walter. "To me it looked like a perfect jumble."

"The trouble with flags is, that when there's no wind they won't straighten out so you can see 'em," put in Caleb, who had joined the pair. "Lanterns are more to be depended upon, and they have a new system now, called the Ardois electric, in which they use four powerful electric lights, so that the signals can be read at a distance of several miles. You'll learn all about them if you stay in the navy long enough."

CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH THE GOLD PIECE COMES TO LIGHT

"Where now?" was the question which more than one man on board of the *Brooklyn* asked himself. But no answer was forthcoming. The commodore, captain, and commander knew, of course, but they kept the information to themselves. In war it is a rule not to let the enemy know what you are doing until you do it, and so a strict guard was kept, so that no information might leak out. Yet Spanish spies in Canada learned a good deal, and notified the home government as quickly as it could be done.

From Charleston the course was almost due south, and both Si and Caleb came to the conclusion that the flagship and her sister craft were bound for Cuban waters. "Perhaps we're going to join in the blockading of Havana," remarked the old gunner.

"Oh, I hope not," said Walter. "Riding in one spot day after day must be awfully tiresome. I'd like to hunt the Spaniards out and do them battle, as Dewey did. He didn't waste any time."

Dewey's name was to be heard constantly, for the jackies never got done talking about this first great victory of the war. Some of them had served on the *Olympia*, *Boston*, and other vessels of the Asiatic Squadron, and they described just how these boats were built, and what parts they must have taken in the contest.

"Don't grow impatient, Walter," said Caleb. "We'll run up against something soon—perhaps more than you care for. It's easy enough to think of sinking an enemy's ship. Supposing he puts a few thirteen-inch shells through your craft, and you begin to go down—what then?"

"I'll make the best of it," returned the boy, calmly. "I enlisted to fight for Uncle Sam, and I'm willing to take what comes."

Jim Haskett was passing when Walter made this remark, and his lip curled with a sneer. "That boy is too big for his boots," muttered the seaman. "I can't see what the other men find in him to like."

Jim Haskett was more sour than ever, for his disagreeable ways had lost to him the few friends he had picked up when first coming on board. The fact that Si and Walter were growing more popular every day caused him fairly to grate his teeth with rage.

"I'll fix him, see if I don't," he told himself that night. "They shan't tell everybody that I took that gold piece—when I didn't touch his bag."

Jim Haskett was one of those mean, unscrupulous men, who do a wrong and then try to argue themselves into thinking that it is all right. It was not true that he had taken the ten-dollar gold piece from Si's bag, but it *was* true that he had found the Yankee boy's satchel overturned and partly open, and had closed it up and locked it, and afterward found the money on the floor of the car within a few feet of where the bag had stood. Any fair-minded man would have told himself that the gold piece must be the one lost by Si; but Haskett was not fair-minded, and it was doubtful if the man could ever become so, any more than a dwarfed and crippled tree can be forced to become straight and upright.

On Monday morning, the day after leaving Charleston Bar, Haskett heard Caleb tell Walter and Si that the gun must be cleaned and oiled. "We'll go over the piece from top to bottom tomorrow," said the old gunner, "and if there is anything more that you don't understand I'll explain it to you."

"This is my chance," said Haskett to himself, and lost no time in bringing forth the gold piece from the place where he had hidden it. Watching his opportunity, when Caleb, Si, and Walter were asleep that night, he secreted the piece in a corner of the track upon which the gun-base revolved.

Inside of half an hour after breakfast the next day, Walter, stripped to the waist, was working over the gun, in company with his friends and Steve Colton, the second gun-captain, and Carl Stuben, the hose-man. All were supplied with cotton waste, polishing-paste, and rags, and in a short while the bright portions of the gun shone like a mirror.

"There, I reckon that will suit the chief gunner," was Caleb's remark as he stood back to inspect the work. "No piece on the starboard side brighter than this, I'll wager my month's pay."

Si was bending down under the gun, swabbing up some oil which had run down from one of the working joints. Suddenly the Yankee youth threw down his swab and caught up something which shone in spite of the dirt upon it.

"My gold piece, as sure as you're born!" he ejaculated, after he had made an inspection at the porthole. "Now how in creation did that get there?"

He looked at Caleb, and half unconsciously both turned to Walter.

"What's that?" asked the youth.

"My gold piece—I found it hidden under the gun-track," answered Si.

Walter's face turned red, as he remembered what Jim Haskett had said concerning his talking in his sleep. "Why, Si—are—are you sure it is your piece?" he faltered.

"Certainly. There is the date, 1876—centennial year, and here is a scratch I once made with my jack-knife. It's the very one that was taken from my bag, beyond any doubt."

Si continued to look at Walter, while Caleb suddenly turned and gazed out of the porthole, while Stuben, the hose-man, whistled softly to himself.

"Why, Si, have you got your money back?" cried Paul, who had just chanced up.

"Yes."

"And where did you find it?"

"Under the gun, by the track." And Si pointed out the place with his forefinger.

"Under the gun! Why, that is where Haskett said Walter hid it!" was Paul's comment, before he stopped to think twice. "I mean—that is, Haskett said something about it," he stammered.

"I know he did," answered the Yankee youth, coldly.

Walter's face was burning hotly now, and he could scarcely trust himself to speak. "Si, do you think I put that money there?" he asked in a strained voice.

"I'm sure I don't know what to think," was the dogged answer, and now Si turned his gaze away. "Haskett said—well, you know what,—and Cal Blinker backed him up in it," he went on, hesitatingly.

"Yes, I know what Haskett and Blinker said," answered Walter. "But—but—do you think I stole your money?" The words would scarcely come, but he forced them out.

"I don't say that, Walter; but the whole thing looks mighty queer."

"I have it!" burst out Caleb. "Perhaps Walter put the money there when he was asleep. Folks often do queer things when they have the nightmare."

"Yes, but if he put it there while he was asleep, how did he come by it in the first place?" questioned Si, bluntly.

"Perhaps he took it out of the bag while he was asleep on the train," suggested Caleb. "You had the bag with you all the way from Boston, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"And Walter bunked with you, too?"

"He did."

"Then it's as plain as day," went on the old gunner. "Walter took the money while you were asleep on the train and hid it away in his clothing, or somewhere. When he got on board he took to sleep-walking and put the piece under the gun. Of course he doesn't know anything about the transaction."

Again all eyes were turned upon Walter, whose face was as red as ever. "Perhaps that's true—but it's mighty queer," murmured Colton, the second gun-captain.

"I don't believe I did anything of the sort!" cried the youth, at last. "I can give you my word on it that I never saw Si's money until just now. To my mind, this whole matter is a job put up by Jim Haskett. He took the money, and then when Si raised such an ado about it he was afraid to get it changed or to spend it, and he watched his chance to get rid of it. He's down on me, and when he heard me mutter in my sleep he formed his plan to get me into trouble. I'm going to find Haskett on the spot." And off he rushed before anybody could detain him.

Haskett was discovered mending his jacket, which had become torn the evening before. "What do you want?" he asked, as Walter ran up and caught him fiercely by the arm.

"I want you to own up to your dirty trick on me," answered the boy. "You thought you had me, but your little plot won't work."

"What do you mean?" blustered Haskett, although he knew well enough what was coming.

By this time the crowd had followed Walter, and they gathered round the pair. Soon Haskett had heard all there was to say.

"Don't lay it off on me," he cried. "I knew Russell was guilty from the start. Si Doring can think as he pleases. As for me, I'm glad that I'm not training with a night-walker—or a thief."

Walter leaped forward with blazing eyes. But before he could strike out, Caleb caught him, while another man held Haskett. Then, before anything more could be done or said, Si stepped to the front.

"Haskett, I lost the money, and I think I ought to have the biggest say in this matter. If you played a trick on Walter, you are the meanest man that ever trod the deck of a ship. If you didn't, let me say that I don't think Walter stole the gold piece, although he may have taken it while he was asleep and not responsible for his doings."

"Thank you for saying that, Si," came from Walter. "But I don't think I took it even when asleep. To my mind Haskett is guilty, and nobody else."

"If I wasn't held—" began Haskett, when a young seaman named George Ellis, chief yeoman of

the *Brooklyn*, stepped forward and asked to know what the trouble was about.

"I think I can tell something about this," said George Ellis, after the matter had been explained.

"You just hold your jaw!" stormed Haskett. "You don't know anything."

"I know what I see," answered the chief yeoman, pointedly; and something in his manner attracted such attention that all in the crowd gathered around to learn what he might have to say.

CHAPTER XIV

KEY WEST, AND THE LAST OF JIM HASKETT

George Ellis was known to be an upright honest man, and one whose word was worth taking upon every occasion. He had an education above that of the ordinary man in the navy, and was anxious to make something of himself while in the service of his country, never dreaming, alas! that his life was so soon to be taken from him during our struggle in the cause of humanity and Cuban freedom.

"And what did you see?" questioned Caleb, as all eyes were turned upon Ellis, inquiringly.

"It was last night," answered the Range Finder, for such was the man's popular title, given him because he was so good at determining distances. "I was rather feverish and couldn't sleep. I walked the berth deck for a while and then went up to Walton's gun and stood leaning out of the porthole, gazing at the water.

"Presently I heard a slight noise behind me, and turning around I saw in a dim way the figure of a man behind me. He was bending down under the gun, as if he was hunting for something. I was just on the point of speaking to him when he straightened up and slunk away as silently as a ghost. I watched him, and when he got under the rays of the electric light I got a good look at his face."

"And was it this man?" cried Si, pointing to Jim Haskett.

"It was."

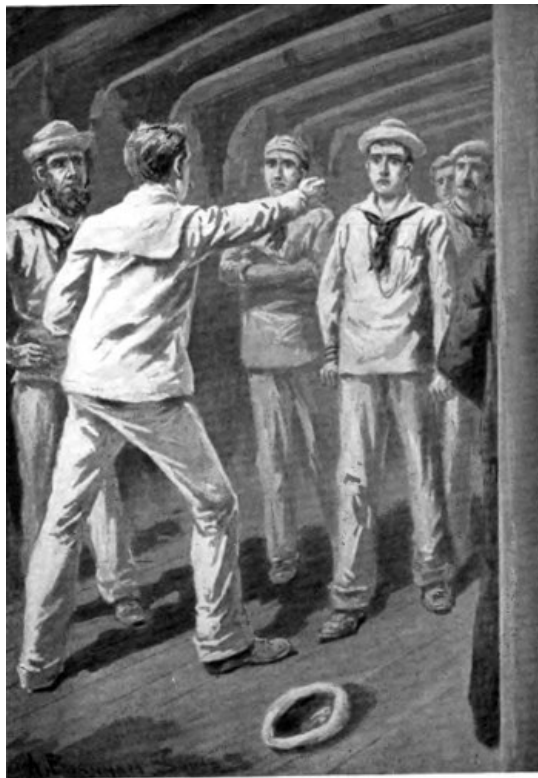
With a cry of anger Si leaped upon Haskett and bore him to the deck. "You good-for-nothin' rascal!" he panted. "Will try to shove off your dirty tricks on Walter, eh? So you stole my money and then got afraid to use it? Take that, and that, and that!"

Each *that* was a blow in the face, one on the cheek, another on the nose, and a third directly in Haskett's left eye. They were heavy, and Haskett roared with pain.

"Let up!" he sputtered. "Let go of me,"—the latter to Caleb, who still held him. "Oh, my eye! Is this fair fighting, two to one?"

"It is as fair as you treated Walter," answered Caleb. "Give him another, Si; he deserves it." And Si followed directions by planting a blow on Haskett's neck, something which spun the former mate of the *Sunflower* around like a top. At last Haskett broke loose and backed away.

"I'll get square on all of you!" he foamed, shaking his fist first at Caleb and then at the others. "I'm not done yet."



"I'LL GET SQUARE ON ALL OF YOU!"

"I've a good mind to report you," put in Walter. "I reckon you'd be good for a month in irons, on bread and water."

At this Haskett grew pale. "The officers won't believe your story. Ellis, and the rest of you haven't any witnesses," he replied, but his voice shook. "Just wait; my day will come some time." And then, as Si started to advance again, he beat a hasty retreat.

"That settles that mystery," remarked Caleb, when the excitement was over. "I calculate, Walter, that you are not sorry the way matters came out."

"No, indeed." Walter turned to George Ellis. "I owe you one for your kindness. I'll not forget it."

"That's all right—I only did what any fair-minded fellow would do," answered the chief yeoman, and strolled away.

It was time for dinner, and Walter hurried off arm in arm with Si, who was still somewhat worked up over what had happened. "Walter, don't you go for to imagine I thought you guilty," said the Yankee boy. "I know you are honest to the core."

"Even if I do talk in my sleep," said Walter, from whose heart a great load had been lifted.

Once more the course of the Flying Squadron had been changed and now they were making straight for the coast of Florida. Tuesday passed quietly, although the same vigilance prevailed as before. It was evident, come what might, Commodore Schley did not mean to allow the enemy to catch him napping.

They had passed through the Straits of Florida, and now they turned to the westward, past a number of the Florida Reefs. Far across the ocean could be seen the low-lying shore, backed up by stately palms and other trees. The weather was now much warmer.

"You see, we are drawing closer to the equator," remarked Caleb. "I reckon we are bound for Key West." And his surmise proved correct, for they dropped anchors in Key West Harbor early on the morning following.

"What a lot of warships around here," cried Walter, as he came on deck. "What is that big fellow over yonder?"

"That is the *Iowa*," answered the old gunner. "You can well say big fellow, for the *Iowa* is the largest seagoing battleship we possess. She has a displacement of over eleven thousand tons and can speed in any sea at over seventeen knots. She carries four 12-inch guns and a whole host of others. Her armor belt is solid steel, fourteen inches thick."

"She's a beauty. I wonder if she will go out with us?"

"That is according to what Rear Admiral Sampson has to say about it, lad. You see, this campaign in Atlantic waters is largely in his hands."

The *Iowa* lay quite close, and during the day several messages were transmitted from one warship to the other by means of the wig-wag system. Walter had now mastered the mysteries of wig-wagging and amused himself by spelling out the messages as they passed to and fro.

A salute had been fired when the commodore entered the harbor, eleven rounds being shot off. "If he was a rear-admiral, he'd get thirteen guns," explained Caleb. "You see the salute varies from the President down. McKinley gets twenty-one guns, the Vice-President or Secretary of the Navy nineteen guns, a foreign minister fifteen guns, a consul seven guns, and so on. By counting the guns every man on the ships can tell what sort of a dignitary has arrived."

It was a cloudy day, and the air was so close that Walter was glad enough to take it easy. Presently he saw a boat leave the side, containing several petty officers and George Ellis and Jim Haskett.

"I wonder where they are going," said Walter to Si.

"Some special business for Captain Cook," answered Paul, who stood near. "Oh, but Haskett is in an ugly mood to-day. It will be a big wonder if he and Ellis don't get into a fight before they come back."

"Ellis is too much of a gentleman to fight with any one," returned Walter. "By the way, what is his real position on board?"

"He is chief yeoman," replied Si. "He is going ashore to look after some ship's stores, so I heard him tell one of the paymasters."

The small boat was soon out of sight, and Walter turned away to seek the shade, for it was growing hotter and hotter. "If this is a sample of weather in the torrid zone, what shall we do when we get into Cuban waters?" he observed.

"We are not very far from Cuban waters now," said the Yankee youth. "We could make Havana in six or seven hours if it was necessary."

"I wonder how the people of that city feel, Si, all cooped up as they have been for so long."

"I reckon they wish they had some fighting ships to come out after us, Walter. I've heard it said that General Blanco hardly knows how to turn himself, food is so scarce and so many idlers are about. It wouldn't surprise me if they had a riot there, if they haven't had one already. Even soldiers won't keep quiet when the grub fails."

But little could be seen of Key West outside of the numerous shipping. Presently a couple of petty officers came along with marine glasses and one pointed out to his companion several Spanish prizes in the port. "They'll be worth a good bit of money to the sailors on the blockade," he added. "I wish we were in for a share of the spoils."

"There are several transports," said Caleb, on joining his friends. "They are fitting out to go to Tampa. It won't be long before an army of invasion starts for Cuba."

"I wonder if my brother Ben will go along," mused Walter, but just then to get word from his older brother was impossible.

Inside of two hours the small craft came back. Somewhat to his surprise Walter saw that Jim Haskett was missing. He would not have thought much of this had it not been that the *Brooklyn* was already preparing to continue on her trip.

"Haskett did not come back," he announced to Si. "I'll wager something is wrong."

"Oh, I guess not," said the Yankee youth; nevertheless, he, too, began to watch for the former mate of the *Sunflower*.

Several hours later Walter passed George Ellis on the upper deck and saluted. The chief yeoman hesitated and then called Walter to him.

"I suppose you and your friend will be interested to know that James Haskett has been left behind at Key West under military arrest," he began.

"Indeed! And what for, if I may ask?"

"For getting into a rough-and-tumble fight with a soldier named Grumbell. It seems Grumbell once owned a fishing-smack down East, and Haskett failed to settle up on a cargo of fish he sold for Grumbell three years ago. They had a quarrel of words and then got to blows, and Haskett hit a captain of the regulars who tried to separate them. Both he and the soldier are now in prison, and I rather imagine it will go pretty hard with the seaman, for striking a captain is no light offence." And after a few words more, George Ellis passed on.

Of course Walter lost no time in carrying the news to his friends. All listened with interest, and Si said he was glad Haskett was gone. "And I hope he doesn't ever come back," he added.

And Jim Haskett never did come back, nor did Walter ever set eyes on the man again. For quarrelling with the soldier and striking the captain of the regulars, Jim Haskett was dishonorably discharged from the navy, and sentenced to a year's imprisonment at hard labor. Thus, in a roundabout way, was the rascal made to suffer the punishment he so richly deserved.

CHAPTER XV

FROM CIENFUEGOS TO SANTIAGO BAY

From Key West the Flying Squadron set sail direct for Cienfuegos. The *Brooklyn*, *Massachusetts*, *Texas*, and *Scorpion* left together, and were followed, twenty-four hours later, by the *Iowa*, mentioned in the previous chapter, and by the *Castine* and the collier *Merrimac*.

Cienfuegos is a town of good size lying on a small bay on the south coast of Cuba, about midway between the eastern and western extremities. For several days the Navy Department had been watching, or trying to watch, the movements of the Spanish squadron, satisfied at last that it was somewhere in Cuban waters. One report had it that Admiral Cervera was at Cienfuegos, another that he was at Santiago de Cuba, many miles to the eastward. Commodore Schley was now sent out to bring the truth to light, were it possible to do so.

The rainy season, as it is termed, was at its height in this vicinity, and the showers came down nearly all day, striking the hot metal decks, and converting the water into something closely resembling steam. It was so muggy and uncomfortable that hardly any of the jackies could sleep, and more than one poor fellow was overcome and had to be carried to the sick bay for treatment.

"If that Spanish squadron has passed Santiago and Cienfuegos, and is crawling up around the western turn of Cuba, it won't be long before we see some hot work," observed Caleb, as he lounged at a porthole, devoid of any clothing but his shirt and trousers.

"Any kind of work would be hot," said Walter, laughingly. "Why, I think a fellow could cook eggs on deck."

"Puts me in mind of a voyage I took to South America," put in Si, who had just soused his head into a bucket of water, and was dripping from nose, ears, and chin in consequence. "We lay off the mouth of the Amazon for two days, waiting to get on a cargo of rubber. It was right under the equator, and the tar just poured out of all our seams. One afternoon I ran across the deck in my bare feet, for I was taking a swim, and as true as I live I blistered my feet."

"Oh, that's nothing," returned Caleb, dryly. "I was under the equator once, off the coast of Columbia in the bark *Sally D*. The captain let us go fishing in the jolly-boat. We caught about a dozen fish and threw 'em in the bottom as fast as they came in, and when we got back to the bark hang me if the first two fish we had brought up weren't baked as nice as you please, all fit for the captain's table." And Caleb turned away and began to whistle softly to himself, while Si continued his ablutions without another word. Among old sailors, "matching yarns" is a constant pastime, and the stories sometimes told would shame even a Baron Munchausen.

The watch on board of the warship was now more strict than ever, and the men slept at their guns, sometimes not seeing a hammock for several nights. Everybody, from the captain down to the apprentices, felt that a crisis could not be far off.

It must not be imagined that while Commodore Schley was skirting the southern coast of Cuba, the northern coast was neglected, for such was not the case. The blockade of Havana and vicinity still continued, and in addition Rear-Admiral Sampson took his own flagship, the *New York*, and several other warships, and sailed eastward, thinking to occupy the St. Nicholas Channel. Thus, if Admiral Cervera tried to gain the vicinity of Havana by the northern coast, he would be likely to fall in with Sampson; if he took the southern way, Schley would intercept his path. By keeping his ships in the St. Nicholas Channel Sampson remained ever ready to dash northward should the Spanish destroyers take a new course and show themselves along our own coast.

"We are coming in sight of land," cried Walter, toward nightfall, two days after leaving Key West. "I suppose this is some port on the southern coast of Cuba."

"It is Cienfuegos Bay," returned Caleb. "I just heard one of the officers say so. We're to lie at anchor until morning, and then perhaps the fun will commence."

At this announcement Walter's heart beat quickly, and it must be admitted that he did not sleep a wink that night for speculating on what the morrow might bring forth. In this particular, his thoughts were not far different from those of every one else on board.

Daybreak brought more rain, and the big warship rode on the long swells of the ocean grim and silent. Not far away lay the *Texas*, and several newcomers could be seen approaching from a distance. "This looks like business," observed Si to Walter, and the boy nodded.

Immediately after breakfast the signal was hoisted to clear ship for action, and once more the jackies rushed to their various places and got into fighting trim. Then the great engines of the *Brooklyn* began to work, and they crept slowly toward the entrance to the harbor.

"If Cervera is there, he keeps himself pretty well hidden," remarked one of the officers, within hearing of Walter. "I don't see anything that looks like a warship."

Presently the flagship came to a halt, and the *Texas* steamed past her and quite close to the harbor. Here the Spaniards had a small land battery, but it kept silent. The inner portion of the bay was hidden from view by a high spur of land.

What to do next was a problem. If the Spanish squadron was really there, it would be foolhardy to rush in and do battle while the enemy would have the support of the shore battery. Commodore Schley thought the matter over and, ever on the alert, decided to play a waiting game.

Sunday passed without anything unusual developing, and so did the day following. The strain on the men at the guns was great, for they were on duty constantly. Night and day the bosom of the outer bay was closely watched, for it was known that Cervera had with him one or two torpedo-boat destroyers, and these were dreaded more than anything else.

"Let one of those torpedo destroyers get near us, and we'll go up as quickly as did the *Maine*," said Caleb. "I'm not afraid of the dagos, but let me get out of the way of a torpedo boat every time." And this opinion was shared by all Walton's messmates.

"There's another boat coming up," announced Si, at six o'clock on Tuesday morning. "Walton, what do you make her out to be?"

"She's the *Marblehead*," was the old gunner's answer, after a long look at the craft. "And she's got despatches for the commodore," he added, as the signal went up and a small boat put off for the *Brooklyn*. Soon Commander McCalla of the *Marblehead* came on board, and a long conference with Commodore Schley resulted, after which the newly arrived officer departed for his own warship with all possible speed. McCalla's mission was to communicate with the Cuban insurgents who were encamped near Cienfuegos, with a view to ascertaining if Admiral Cervera's ships were really in the harbor.

The morning passed quietly, and by noon the *Marblehead* and her commander returned. The Cuban spies had made an investigation, and not a single ship of war belonging to Spain had been found, outside of a little harbor vessel of small moment.

It was now thought that if Admiral Cervera was not at Cienfuegos he must either be on his way hither or at Santiago. Accordingly, toward evening, the squadron received orders to sail for Santiago.

"We're off for Santiago Bay," said Caleb. "And if we don't find the dagos there, I'll give up where they are. Perhaps they have gone back to Spain." He continually alluded to the Spaniards as dagos,—a term which became quite common among soldiers and sailors during the war, although many referred to the enemy as the Dons.

It had cleared off, and the sun shone down fiercely on the deck and elsewhere. Inside of the steel turrets the air was stifling, and no one could remain at his post over a couple of hours. From below, the engineers, firemen, and coal-heavers came up constantly for a whiff of fresh air.

"We're badly enough off," remarked Walter. "But look at those poor chaps. Why, some of the firemen look ready to melt."

"Yes, and the worst of it is they never get any credit when it comes to a battle," added Caleb. "Now to my mind, the engineer who sticks to his engine during a battle, obeying orders and running the risk of having a shot plough through a boiler and scald him to death, is just as much of a hero as the chap behind a gun—and in one way he's more of a hero; for if the ship should start to sink, a gunner has got the chance to leap overboard and swim for it, while the man below is likely to be drowned like a rat in a trap."

"And the coal-heavers work harder than negroes," put in Paul. "Just think of the tons and tons of coal they shovel every twenty-four hours when we are under full steam. I'm quite certain such work would break my back."

"Oh, life on a warship isn't all a picnic," was Si's comment. "If a fellow enlists to have an easy time of it, he deserves to get left. I enlisted to serve Uncle Sam, and I'm going to do it—if Providence will give me the chance."

As Commodore Schley sailed toward Santiago from Cienfuegos, Rear-Admiral Sampson, gaining additional information concerning the whereabouts of the enemy, moved slowly and cautiously eastward toward Cape Maysi and the Windward Passage. Thus, if Cervera was where he was supposed to be, he was bound to be discovered before many more days passed.

"Do you know anything about Santiago Bay?" asked Si of Walter. "I've travelled to South America and Central America, but I never stopped anywhere in Cuba."

"I know only what the geographies teach," answered Walter. "It is on the south side of Cuba, a hundred and some odd miles from the eastern end of the island. It is said to be a very pretty harbor, about eight miles long and one to two miles wide. Santiago, which is the next largest Cuban city to Havana, is located on the northeast shore. I heard Caleb say that the entrance to the harbor is shaped like the neck of a crooked bottle, and that on the eastern side there is a strong fortress called Morro Castle, and opposite to it a heavy concealed battery called La Zocapa. Somehow, it's in my mind that we'll see a good deal of the harbor before we come away," concluded the boy.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FINDING OF ADMIRAL CERVERA'S FLEET

"Well, this doesn't look much like fighting."

It was Paul who uttered the remark. The youngest member of the gunners' crowd rested in the shadow of one of the long guns, half asleep. Near by sat Walter and Si, each writing letters, although there was no telling when the communications would be taken from the *Brooklyn* and sent home. At Key West Walter had looked for some word from Ben and from Job Dowling, but none had come.

"I'd like to know if my uncle went to Boston, and if he learned anything concerning that Deck Mumpers and the stolen heirlooms," Walter observed to Si, after nodding to Paul, in agreement that it didn't look like fighting.

"Well, you'll have to possess your soul in patience," answered the young Yankee. "But oh, this is dead slow!" And thrusting his letter into an envelope, he addressed it and laid it away.

Several days had been spent around the mouth of Santiago Bay, without anything being brought to light. If the Spanish fleet was within the harbor, it knew enough to keep out of sight, that was certain.

"If I was Commodore Schley, I'd rush past old Morro and make short work of this," grumbled Paul, stretching himself and yawning. "Why, we'll all die of laziness if this keeps on."

"I hear the *Merrimac* has broken down," put in Caleb, who had just come below. "That means another wait of twenty-four hours or more, even if Cervera isn't in the harbor. Why under the sun must those dagos play such a game of hide-and-seek? Why can't they come up and fight like men?"

"Perhaps Admiral Cervera is bombarding some of our cities at this very moment—" began Si, when a sudden loud hurrah caused all hands to leap up and make for the deck.

"What's up?" came from a hundred throats.

"The *Iowa* has just signalled that she has seen a big Spanish warship showing her nose around the harbor point!" was the wild answer. "We've found the Dons at last!"

And then came another hurrah and a wild yell. "Let us get at 'em! Down with the Spaniards! Remember the *Maine* and Dewey's victory at Manila!"

Commodore Schley was on the afterbridge of the flagship. As the yelling broke loose, he smiled grimly. "Yes, they must be in there," he said to Captain Cook. "And if they are, they'll never get home." Prophetic words, as the events of just five weeks later proved.

Owing to the heavy swells of the ocean, the warships under the commodore's command had drifted somewhat apart, but now, when it was known definitely that Admiral Cervera's ships were in the harbor before them, the various craft were signalled to draw closer, until they lay within four to six miles of the entrance. This may seem a long way off to some of my readers, but it must be remembered that guns of the present day can carry as far as ten to twelve miles when put to it, and a destructive fire can be maintained at seven or eight miles.

The night that followed was a trying one, for no one knew but that Admiral Cervera's warships might come dashing out of the bay at any instant ready to do them deadly battle. The *Brooklyn* had long since been stripped for action, many articles of wood being thrown overboard, to avoid splinters when shot and shell began to fall. The small boats were covered with strong nets, also to keep splinters away, and everywhere throughout the ship the hoses were connected with the water-plugs, to be used in case of fire, and all water-tubs were kept filled for a like purpose. The magazines were kept open, and every gun, big and little, stood ready to be fired at the word of command. Even the wardroom tables were cleared off and covered with the sick-bay cloths, and the surgeons saw to it in a quiet way that their bandages, knives, and saws were ready to hand.

"Say, but that looks like war, eh?" whispered Paul, jerking his thumb in the direction of one of the improvised operating tables. "Gracious, it's enough to give a fellow a cold shiver."

"Then don't look that way, Paul," answered Walter. "As Si said, life here isn't expected to be a picnic. We may gain lots of glory, but we'll have to work for it,—and maybe suffer, too."

It was the 30th of May, Decoration Day, but no services of a special character were had, although the Civil War was talked of by a dozen veterans of both the North and the South, who were now standing once more shoulder to shoulder, as Washington, Jefferson, and a hundred other patriots of old had intended that they should stand, once and forever. "We're under the stars and stripes to stay," said one man who had worn the gray at Gettysburg. "Just let those Dons show themselves, and we'll lick 'em out of their boots." The man's name was Berkeley, and he was as good a soldier as he was a sailor, and wore both Union and Confederate medals for bravery.

Walter had just fallen into a light doze early in the morning when a dull booming awoke him with a start, and made him leap to his feet. "What is that—guns firing?" he asked.

"That's it, lad," came from Caleb. "The commodore is giving his defiance to the enemy, I reckon. There she goes again," he went on, as half a dozen sullen reports rolled over the water. "I just wish we were in this."

A Spanish warship, the *Christobal Colon*, had again showed herself at the entrance to Santiago Bay, and the *Iowa*, the *Massachusetts*, and the *New Orleans*, had been ordered to move to within seven thousand yards and open fire. Away they darted, and passed and re-passed the harbor entrance twice, firing as they sailed. What damage was done it was impossible to tell, but that the *Colon* was hit seemed very probable, for she soon disappeared. The shore batteries also took part, and sent one big shell directly over the *Iowa*, where it burst with a noise that was deafening, but without doing any damage.

"Gracious! what a racket!" exclaimed Walter, as he watched the bombardment from afar.

"Racket!" repeated Caleb, who stood beside him. "Why, lad, this is nothing to what we'll have when we get mixed up. I only hope the commodore signals us to line up for the scrap," he went on, for Commodore Schley had left the *Brooklyn* temporarily, and hoisted his pennant on the *Massachusetts*. But the signal did not come, much to the old gunner's disappointment.

By dark the bombardment was at an end. It had been brought about by the commodore with the view to ascertain the strength of the enemy, his ability to shoot straight, and the number and location of the shore batteries. Now this information was gained, and it was likely to be of great value in the near future.

It had been decided, should Admiral Cervera's fleet be discovered in Santiago Bay, that Commodore Schley should unload the collier *Merrimac* as quickly as possible, and then sink the craft directly across the channel at the narrow entrance. If this was accomplished, it would make it impossible for the Spanish warships to escape until the sunken wreck was blown up and cleared away, and in the meantime several other available American vessels could be hurried to the scene of action. A number of spies had been sent ashore, and at last the commodore was positive that the enemy was just where he wanted him. "And now we'll sink the *Merrimac* and bottle him up," he said.

The *Merrimac* was an iron steamboat of five thousand tons' burden. She had previously been a "tramp" steamer; that is, one going from port to port, picking up any cargo that came to hand. She carried a large quantity of coal for the various ships, and, as we already know, had followed the Flying Squadron from Key West to Cienfuegos and the present ocean territory. She was a heavily built craft, carrying two masts, and just the right sort for the plan now at hand.

A heavy salute on the morning of June 1 announced the coming of Admiral Sampson with a number of additional warships,—the *New York*, *Oregon*, *Mayflower*, *Porter*, and others. The *New York*, it may be added here, was a cruiser, similar to the *Brooklyn*, only somewhat smaller. The *Oregon* was a battleship of the first class, of over ten thousand tons' displacement, and carried four 13-inch, eight 8-inch, and four 6-inch guns in her main battery, over twenty guns in her secondary battery, besides several Gatling guns and three torpedo tubes. This noble vessel had just made a record for herself by steaming, at full speed, from San Francisco, around Cape Horn, to our eastern coast, without a break-down,—a journey without precedent for a heavy battleship, so far as our own navy was concerned. In the past, foreign critics had imagined that our vessels were not quite as good as theirs in thoroughness of build; now these critics were silenced, and they stood looking on, and wondering what those "clever Yankees" would do next.

The *Merrimac* had been under the command of Captain James Miller, but now she was eased of a large quantity of her coal, and turned over to Lieutenant Richmond P. Hobson, an assistant naval constructor. Hobson had his plans arranged in detail for sinking the *Merrimac*, and all he asked for was a crew of six or seven men, to aid him in running the collier into the harbor channel. "I know it looks like certain death to go in," he said, "and therefore I want only volunteers with me."

"You can get them easily enough," said Rear-Admiral Sampson, with a smile. "I know a hundred men on the *New York* who will be only too anxious to go, no matter how dangerous the mission." Volunteers were called for, and, to the credit of our navy, be it said, that the crews of the different ships offered themselves almost to a man.

"We can die only once," said one old gunner; "take me!"

"I'd like to go, captain," said Caleb, appealing to Captain Cook. "Can't you put me on the list somehow?"

"I'll go," said Walter, readily, and Si said the same. Paul was so young that he knew they would not take him.

Of course where only seven men were wanted and hundreds had begged to be allowed to go there were numerous disappointments. At last the list was made up of the following—names to be remembered by every patriotic young American: Lieutenant Hobson, in command; O. W. Deignan, helmsman; G. F. Phillips, engineer; F. Kelley, fireman; J. Murphy, coxswain; G. Charette, mine batteries; D. Montague, anchor hand; R. Clausen, extra wheelman. The men were all experienced sailors, and fully realized the extreme peril which awaited them, when they should run the *Merrimac* in directly under the fire of Morro Castle and the La Zocapa battery.

A start was made late on Wednesday night, the *Merrimac* cruising up and down before the harbor entrance, trying to gain a favorable opportunity for entering. But none showed itself, and by orders of the rear-admiral the attempt was postponed until the night following. In the meantime a catamaran was built and attached to the *Merrimac's* side, to be used in getting away in case the small boats became disabled when the craft was wrecked.

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHICH THE "MERRIMAC" IS SUNK

"It's too bad we can't get places on the *Merrimac*," observed Walter to Si, as the two walked to their quarters after the selection of men had been made. "If Lieutenant Hobson succeeds in getting the collier up in the harbor entrance and sinking her, it will be a big feather in his cap."

"My idea is that the heavy guns of old Morro will blow the *Merrimac* clean out of the water before she gets within quarter of a mile of where she is to be sunk," answered the Yankee lad. "Those on board are running the greatest risk of their lives."

"But the glory, Si!"

"No glory if you're killed."

"But you said you would go."

"So I would—but I wouldn't expect to come back alive. I'll wager we never see Hobson again, nor none of his men."

The fierce heat of the day had given Walter a headache. As evening came on it grew worse, and he was not able to sleep during the night.

"I hope I'm not getting the Cuban fever," he remarked to Caleb, who had offered several simple remedies ready at hand.

"Better report and go on the sick list," advised the old gunner. "If it's fever, the sooner you take it in hand the better."

At first Walter demurred, but finally, as the ache in his head began to creep all over him, he reported to one of the surgeons. "I don't want to go into the sick bay," he said, "but I wish you would give me something."

"Yes, you need something," was the answer. "We don't want any men to get down so soon. We may have to stay on the blockade here for some time, if Cervera refuses to come out and fight us."

"Or we block him in with the wreck of the *Merrimac*," said Walter, with a faint smile.

"Oh, that will be only a temporary check, to give Admiral Sampson time to get his fleet into shape and give the army authorities time to send on an army of invasion. The army is already gathering at Tampa," replied the surgeon.

The medicine was forthcoming, and Walter was at once given a big dose and told to repeat every two hours. "It has quinine in it and will make your ears ring and your head buzz, but that won't hurt you," said the surgeon. "If you feel worse by to-morrow morning, report to me again."

This was at eight o'clock. By noon Walter felt as if a buzz saw was in full operation in his head, while he could not hear at all. But he continued to take the medicine, and rested in a hammock slung up in the coolest spot to be found between decks.

"Oh dear!" he murmured, when left alone. "How my head does spin around! If I get very sick, whatever will become of me?" And he buried his face in his jacket sleeve, to suppress a groan that was bound to come.

By nightfall he was worse, if anything, and both Caleb and Si advised him to go into the sick bay for further treatment. But he shook his head. "No, I reckon I can stand it till morning," he said. "There may be a turn for the better by that time."

Midnight found him on deck, under the impression that the fresh night air would do him some good. To tell the truth, he was hardly responsible for what he was doing, for his head was in a worse whirl than at any time previous. He staggered to the side and leaned over. The warship rose and fell on the bosom of the ocean, and the water danced and twinkled before his eyes. Nobody was near him.

How it all happened he could never tell afterward. He must have leaned over too far, or slipped, for suddenly he seemed to awake as by a shock, and felt himself going down and down into the greenish element which washed up against the *Brooklyn's* sides. He tried to scream, but his mouth filled with water and he could only splutter.

When at length he arose to the surface, the waves had carried him a hundred feet away from the ship. He tried to cry out, but he was too weak to utter more than a whisper. He threw out his hands and began to swim in a mechanical way. But instead of carrying him back whence he had come, the mighty waves lifted him closer and closer to shore.

Ten minutes had passed, and Walter felt that he could keep up no longer, when he came into contact with a large box which had at one time been filled with naval stores, but which, on being emptied, had been thrown overboard from one of the warships. The box was over four feet in

length and built of heavy slatting, and afforded a fair degree of buoyancy. Lying across the top of the receptacle he floated on, wondering in a bewildered way how this strange adventure was going to end.

"If only I could get to one of our ships," he thought. "If I don't, I must either drown or else be cast up on the coast, in which case the Spaniards will most likely capture me. If I—Oh, there is a ship now!"

Walter was right; a two-masted vessel was bearing directly down upon him. The vessel carried no lights and moved along as silently as a ghost.

"I'll be run down!" was the boy's agonizing thought, when, on coming within a few hundred feet, the craft began to turn in a small circle. Then, when halfway around, her engines came to a stop and she drifted idly on the waves.

A chain was dangling from the vessel's stern. It was but three yards away, and making a frantic leap Walter clutched it and hung fast. Scarcely had this been accomplished than the steamer moved off again, dragging him behind her.

In his weak state it is a wonder that Walter was not compelled to relinquish his hold; but life is sweet to us all, and he hung on grimly, and setting his teeth, began to climb up the chain hand over hand. In a few minutes he reached the taffrail, fell, rather than climbed, over, and dropped unconscious on the deck.

How long he lay in this state Walter did not know. He came to his senses to find himself being shaken by somebody bending over him.

"What are you doing here?" was the rough demand. "Don't you know that all of the regular crew were ordered off at three o'clock?"

"I—I—where am I?" stammered Walter, sitting up.

"Where are you? Don't you know?"

"No, sir."

"You're on board of the *Merrimac*."

"The *Merrimac*!" echoed the boy, and attempted to rise to his feet. He was still very weak, but otherwise his involuntary bath had done him much good.

"Exactly; the *Merrimac*. How dare you remain on board against orders?"

"I didn't remain on board. I—I fell off of my own ship, the *Brooklyn*, and came near drowning, when this vessel came along and I managed to catch hold of a chain that is dragging over the taffrail. I climbed up and then—then I don't remember anything more."

"Humph! that's a likely story. How did you happen to fall overboard?" went on the man, who was one of the volunteers on this never-to-be-forgotten expedition.

In a few words Walter told him. By this time the youth felt stronger, and got up on his feet. "I hope I shan't be in the way," he said, as he concluded.

"You had better keep out of the way," was the grim return. "Come forward, and I'll report the matter to Lieutenant Hobson. If you have to go in with us, the best thing you can do is to strip off your clothing, and buckle a life preserver around you—just as the rest of us have done. Of course if you were on the *Brooklyn* you know what we intend to do, and let me tell you we've some mighty hot work ahead of us." And throwing him a life preserver, the man stalked off, leaving Walter standing on the forward deck of the collier in the darkness.

It was a little after three o'clock in the morning, and the *Merrimac* was headed north-northeast, directly for the harbor entrance. From far ahead shone a Spanish flashlight, located on a hill, and by steering for this, Lieutenant Hobson knew the craft would be taken just where he wanted her.

Walter was but lightly attired, and without stripping off any more clothing he placed the life preserver around him, under the arms. "When the *Merrimac* goes down, we may not even have the catamaran to fall back on," he thought.

Boom! It was the report of one of the Spanish guns on shore, and a heavy shot whizzed over the bridge of the *Merrimac*, where Lieutenant Hobson and the helmsman were standing, and fell into the waves on the starboard side. The aim was so close that the wind from the shot carried off the helmsman's cap!

Other shots soon followed, and in the excitement of the moment Walter's presence on board was forgotten. The *Merrimac* was now running at a tremendous rate of speed, her fires roaring fiercely and her boilers threatening to burst at any instant. Quivering from stem to stern under such high pressure, she shot into the harbor entrance and straight for the narrowest part of the channel. By this time the Spanish guns from all sides were sending down on her a shower of shot and shell, awful to contemplate. Seeing he could do nothing, Walter ran for the shelter of one of the companionways.

"Put the wheel hard a-port!" came the order from the bold commander, who, if he was excited did not show it. "Lively now!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" came from the helmsman, and the wheel went over, and was lashed fast.

"She isn't coming over!" came another cry, a moment later, and while shot and shell were flying, in all directions.

"What's the matter there? Charette, go down and look at the steering gear."

At once Charette ran off at his best speed. He was gone but a moment, and came back all out of breath.

"One of the rudder chains has been shot away, sir," he reported.

"Shot away!" came from several. "That's bad."

To this Hobson did not answer, but instantly ordered the engines stopped. "And open the sea-valves and come up," he added. "There is not a minute to lose now, lads, if we want to sink her and escape alive."

Morro Castle and the battery opposite had heretofore been firing alone, but now came shots from Smith Cay, up the harbor, and from a Spanish warship which was bearing down upon the scene.

"We must fire the mines now!" Walter heard somebody say. "Fire them as closely together as possible, and then make for the starboard side amidships."

This order had scarcely been given when the wires attached to the mines were touched off. A sullen roar from beneath the *Merrimac* followed, and the vessel was thrown high up in the air, while great columns of water spouted up on every side. Then slowly but surely the collier began to sink.

CHAPTER XVIII

WALTER'S ADVENTURE ON SHORE

Although the *Merrimac* had been blown up and was sinking, the Spaniards continued to fire upon her without interruption, and as before, the air was filled with solid shot, bursting shells, and the whistling of leaden messengers from rapid-firing rifles.

The order to gather at the starboard was a wise one, for this spot was the best protected on the deck, as the port side was settling rapidly. To take to a small boat or the catamaran would have been the height of foolishness, for a strong searchlight was being thrown on the scene, and the men would have been picked off by the Spanish gunners at will.

With the others Walter rushed to starboard and found a hiding-place close to the rail. "I wonder what will happen next," he muttered. He was certain that something would take place very soon, for the waves of the harbor channel were already rolling over a portion of the *Merrimac's* deck.

A few anxious minutes passed, when suddenly the doomed collier gave a heavy list to starboard, and Walter found himself sliding along the rail and unable to stop himself.

"Hold on!" shouted somebody. "Who is that?"

Still weak, and with the flying spray drenching his face, Walter could not answer, and in a second more the questioner had disappeared amid the gloom, smoke, and flying water. Again came a lurch of the collier, and Walter was hurled flat and sent spinning against the smoke-stack. As he arose he saw Lieutenant Hobson and his men climbing over the starboard rail. Realizing, even in his bewildered state of mind, that he could not do better than to follow them, he, too, made for the rail, going over at one point as the courageous commander of the expedition went over at another. The crew were swimming for the catamaran, which had been shoved off from the *Merrimac's* side, and Walter came after them. Hardly had the catamaran been gained, than, with a final lurch and quiver, the *Merrimac* went down, partly across the narrow channel, but not exactly in the position in which she would have been placed had not the rudder chain been shot away.



WITH A FINAL LURCH THE MERRIMAC WENT DOWN.

As the craft sank, a yell came from the Spanish battery nearest at hand, the gunners thinking they had sunk an American man-o'-war and not dreaming that the sinking had been done by those on board and purposely. But none of the Americans paid any attention to these cries, all thinking only of escape, now the work of the night was over.

A steam launch under the command of Ensign Joseph Powell had been moving up and down the harbor waiting for a chance to pick Hobson and his men up. But a Spanish picket boat lay between those on the catamaran and the launch, so escape in this direction was now cut off.

The float was still attached by a long rope to the wreck of the *Merrimac*, and the men were now ordered to remain where they were, clinging to the catamaran with only their heads showing above water. "If you try to swim away, the Spanish sharpshooters will pick you off as quick as a wink," was the word passed around.

Thus cautioned, all the brave crew remained where they were until daylight began to show itself. Then a large launch steamed up, carrying several oarsmen, half a dozen sharpshooters, and Admiral Cervera himself.

"Do you surrender?" came in Spanish, while every sailor on the catamaran was carefully covered.

"We surrender as prisoners of war," was Lieutenant Hobson's reply, and then he and his men were ordered to swim to the launch one at a time and give up their arms, if they had any. This was done, and the steam launch returned to the *Reina Mercedes*, one of the Spanish warships. Later on, Hobson and his men were sent ashore under a strong guard, marched up a hill to Morro Castle, and turned over to General Toral, the military governor of Santiago Province.

When he made the leap for the catamaran Walter was not as fortunate as those around him. He entered the water close to the *Merrimac*, and when the great collier sank, the suction drew him under, and he went so far down that he fancied he would never come up. His breath was gone, a gulp partly filled him with water, and when at last the surface of the bay was again reached he came up more dead than alive.

He set out to swim instinctively, the life preserver holding him up, although it had not been light enough to counteract the suction of the sinking ship. Where he was going he did not know, for the glare of the searchlight and the splashing of shots on the water was perfectly bewildering. "I'm lost!" he thought a dozen times. "O God, help me to get out alive!" And that prayer was answered, for presently his foot touched bottom and he saw land ahead,—a bit of sandy beach between Morro Castle and a battery located on Estrella Cove, for the tide was coming in, and had carried him up the harbor instead of down.

As Walter waded out of the water he heard several pickets shouting to each other in Spanish. Without waiting for them to come nearer, he dove out of sight in some bushes back of the beach, and then started to walk to a woods still further inland.

So far, the intense excitement had kept him up, but now came the reaction, and he felt as sick as he had while on the *Brooklyn*. His head began to spin and strange lights flashed before his eyes,

while chills crept up and down his backbone. "I reckon I'm in for a spell of sickness, whether I escape or not," he groaned, and reaching the woods, threw himself down under a mahogany tree to rest.

Walter thought he could not sleep, but presently the pain became less and he sank into a troubled slumber. He roused up to find a tall, fine-looking negro shaking him. As soon as he opened his eyes, the negro began to question him in Spanish.

"I can't understand you," said the youth, and shook his head.

"*Americano*, mistair?" questioned the negro, and Walter nodded. "You come from big fight, maybe?" he went on, brokenly.

"What fight do you mean?"

"Fight down by Morro last night. Spanish sink your ship, maybe, not so?" And the negro laughed.

"Our men did the sinking. But who are you? a Spaniard?"

"No, me Cuban, Carlos Dunetta."

"My name is Walter Russell, but I suppose it might be Smith for all the difference it makes to you," replied Walter, moodily. "What do you intend to do? turn me over to the Spanish authorities?"

"To de Spanish? No, no!" Carlos Dunetta leaned forward. "*Cuba libre!* 'Member de *Maine!* Not so?" And he smiled broadly.

"Now you are talking!" ejaculated Walter, joyfully. "You are an insurgent, I suppose. Do you belong to General Garcia's troops?"

Again the negro leaned forward. "Carlos Dunetta spy for de general," he whispered. "Come, want to get away, must hurry!" And he took hold of Walter's arm.

Their course was directly into the woods, under broad mahogany and grenadillo trees, and over rough rocks overgrown with rank vines. Insects and bugs were numerous and spider-webs hung everywhere.

"Udder men all caught and taken to prison," said the Cuban as they progressed. "I hear dat from udder spy."

"Well, I'm not out of the woods yet," said Walter, seriously.

"Woods safe place in daytime," answered the negro, not catching his true meaning.

They had progressed less than half a mile when Walter began to lag behind. "I can't go any farther," he declared. "I've been sick and I'm about used up."

"Sick? What is de mattair?"

"I don't know—unless it is malarial fever."

At the word "fever" Carlos Dunetta drew down the corners of his broad mouth. "Fever? Dat is werry bad—*Americano* canno stand dat. Maybe I best carry you to Josefina's hut. Josefina she my sistair. She take care of you if so you be sick."

The tall negro took Walter upon his back with ease and continued on his way. Presently they reached a trail, and passing along this for the distance of a hundred yards, came within sight of a long, low hut, thatched with palm.

The negro gave a peculiar whistle, and immediately a short, fat negro wench put in an appearance, followed by a man of twenty-five or thirty. The man was fairly well dressed, and evidently a Cuban of Spanish descent.

"It is all right, Carlos!" cried the wench. "This is Señor Ramona."

"Señor Ramona!" exclaimed the negro, and rushing up he dropped Walter and took the outstretched hand of the Cuban gentleman. A long talk in Spanish, followed, of which Walter understood hardly a word. Yet he felt certain the pair were talking about the American warships outside of the harbor, the blowing up of the *Merrimac*, and about himself. Suddenly the negro ran back to him, at the same time calling the wench.

"You sick—I forget," he said. "Come; nice bed here." And he pointed to a grass hammock suspended from one of the rear corner posts of the hut to a near-by tree. "You lay dare; Josefina make good drink for you; den you feel bettair."

Walter was glad enough to accept the invitation, for standing unaided was now out of the question. As soon as he was in the hammock the negro woman ran off for a wet bandage, which she tied tightly over his forehead.

Carlos Dunetta evidently had an important message for Señor Ramona, for no sooner was the talk between the pair at an end, than the Cuban brought out a horse from the shelter of the trees, and dashed down the trail at a breakneck speed.

"Me watch, warn you if any Spaniards come," said Carlos, on returning to Walter's side. "You

bettair rest, or get fever worry bad."

"Do you suppose there is any hope of my getting back to my ship?"

"De ship dat blow up?"

"No, a big warship out there," and Walter waved his hand in the direction of the coast.

At this, the tall negro shrugged his shoulders. "Carlos can take you to de shore—but no got boat. Maybe you swim, not so?"

"Well, hardly," answered Walter. "I may be a pretty good swimmer, but four or five miles is too much for any man."

The negro retired, and Walter lay back watching the woman, who had brought out several bags filled with herbs. Selecting some of the herbs, the woman steeped them in water, and poured the tea into an earthen bowl, sweetening the concoction with sugarcane ends. Bringing the bowl to Walter, she motioned for him to drink.

The youth had expected an unsavory mess, but he found the tea very pleasant to the taste, and ten minutes after he had taken half the contents of the bowl he was in a sound slumber, from which he did not awaken until nearly nightfall. In the meantime Josefina removed the life preserver and made him otherwise as comfortable as possible, proud to think she was serving *un Americano* who was battling against the enemies of her beloved Cuba.

"You had bettair come into de house now—night air worry bad for you," announced Carlos, as Walter sat up in the hammock and stared around him. "How feel now? weak?"

"I—I dreamed I was back on the *Brooklyn* and sailing for home," was the hesitating reply. "My head feels better, but I'm afraid my legs have gone back on me," Walter went on, as on trying to stand he found he must support himself against the tree. "This is the queerest spell of sickness I ever had."

"Never mind—if only so be dat de fever is broken," said Carlos, seriously. "Come." And he about carried Walter into the hut. Usually negro huts in Cuba are dirty and full of vermin, but this was an exception. In her younger days, Josefina had worked for a titled lady of Santiago, and there had learned cleanliness quite unusual to those of her standing. In a corner of the hut was a pile of fresh sugarcane husks covered with a brown spread, and to this she motioned Walter, and here he rested until the following morning.

CHAPTER XIX

CARLOS, THE REBEL SPY

"Well, I'm not out of my troubles yet, but I suppose I'm better off than those fellows who were captured and taken off to some Spanish dungeon."

It was Walter who mused thus, as he sat up and rubbed his eyes. The herb tea Josefina had made for him had "touched the spot" and he felt quite like himself again. The native Cubans have to fight fevers constantly, and, consequently, know a great deal about proper remedies.

"Will you eat?" questioned Carlos, who sat by, smoking a cigarette, while Josefina busied herself in preparing a morning meal of rice-cakes and strong coffee.

"I haven't much appetite, but I suppose I ought to eat if I want to get back my strength. But see here," Walter went on. "I can't pay you a cent for what you are doing for me, for I have no money with me."

"Dat's all right; Josefina and me no want pay—we glad to do for you," answered Carlos; and Josefina smiled so broadly that her eyes were fairly closed.

The rice-cakes were well done, and Walter ate several of them, and also sipped at the heavy black coffee, sweetened with sugarcane drippings. The meal over, Carlos leaped up and lit a fresh cigarette.

"You stay here and I go to shore—see if you can get to ship," he said. "If Spaniards come, Josefina show you where to hide, so no can find you."

"I'll have to stay, for I can't walk the distance to the shore—yet. By the way, where am I?"

"Dis place back of Estrella, 'bout halfway to Aguadores, on the Guama River. Can see warships from mouth of Guama."

"Yes, I've heard of the Guama. Some of the fellows on board ship said we might capture that point, or Guantanamo Bay, so as to have a place to coal when the ocean was rough. You are going to the shore?"

"If Spanish pickets let me," grinned Carlos. "Worry strong Spanish guard around here now. Worry much afraid American soldiers come."

"Perhaps they will come, if Sampson needs help," replied Walter, but without knowing that the army of invasion at Tampa was already preparing to leave for Cuba, and his own brother Ben with it.

After Carlos was gone, Walter tried to carry on a conversation with Josefina, but as the wench's English vocabulary was as limited as was the boy's knowledge of Spanish, the talk soon lagged. "*Cuba libre!* 'Member de *Maine!*" she said over and over again, and smiled that awful smile that almost caused Walter to burst into a fit of laughter. During the morning she made him some more tea and insisted upon his drinking it, greatly to the benefit of his health and strength, as he soon realized.

It was growing late in the afternoon, and Walter was wondering when Carlos would get back, when the sound of a rifle-shot from a distance startled him. Before he could get to the doorway of the hut, Josefina was outside and speeding up the trail in the direction her brother had taken.

"Get back!" It was the voice of Carlos, and he was running beside his sister, who kept up with him, despite her weight. "The Spaniards are coming."

"Soldiers?" gasped Walter.

"Yes; ten or fifteen. They caught me going through de pickets, but I knocked one so, and anodder so, and got away. Come wid me, before da catch you!" And he took hold of Walter's arm and turned him to the back of the hut.

Wondering what would happen next, but remembering what had been said about a hiding-place, the youth followed Carlos to the rear wall of the structure. Here, directly against the logs, grew a tall ebony tree.

"Dat tree hollow," explained the Cuban. "Climb to limb and drop inside. Josefina haul us out when Spanish go 'way." And he gave Walter a lift up.

The lower branches were but twelve feet from the ground, and were easily gained. Carlos came up also. "Let me drop first," he said. "Den you come on top of me. Be quick, or too late!" And down he went into darkness, and Walter came after.

The hollow portion of the tree was not over twenty inches in diameter, and it was a lucky thing for both inside that neither was stout nor broad of shoulder. As it was, they stood breast to breast with difficulty, and yet not daring to make a sound.

A shout came from the trail, sounding in strange contrast to the song Josefina had begun to sing—an old-fashioned Cuban ditty about a sailor and his lass. Soon the soldiers drew closer, and several came around to the side of the hut.

"Ho! within there!" came in Spanish. "Where is that wretch we are after?"

"Wretch!" answered Josefina, in pretended surprise. "Whom do you mean, kind sirs?"

"You know well enough—the tall fellow who knocked over our guards and ran in this direction."

"I have seen nobody; I have been busy washing," answered Josefina, pointing to a few articles of wearing apparel which lay soaking in a water-butt.

"You cannot humbug us!" cried the leader of the Spanish detachment, in a fury. "Tell me where they are, or I'll run you through!" And he ran at Josefina with pointed sword. It is doubtful if he intended to carry out his threat, but the wench thought him in earnest, and the yell she gave would have done credit to a cannibal of the South Sea Islands.

The cry of terror from his sister was more than Carlos Dunetta could stand, and in a twinkle he placed his hands on Walter's shoulders, shoved himself upward, and showed himself at the top of the opening.

"Let my sister alone, you dogs!" he burst out. "Let her alone!" And leaping to the ground, he made after the Spaniard with a drawn machete, a long knife used in the sugarcane fields and employed by the insurgents as a favorite weapon.

There was a cry of alarm, and then came two shots in quick succession, followed by a fall close to the foot of the tree.

"You have killed my brother!" shrieked Josefina. "Oh, Carlos, Carlos, what shall I do now?"

"Back with you, you good-for-nothing woman!" came from the leader of the Spanish detachment. "I thought we were on the right trail. We ought to shoot you for lying to us."

At that moment came a deep groan of pain, showing that Carlos was not yet dead. He had been shot in the arm and through the back, but the wounds were not dangerous, although painful.

Without paying attention to what more the Spaniards had to say, Josefina busied herself over the body of her brother, laying him out on the grass and binding up his wounds with such rags as were handy. While she was doing this the Spaniards began an excited conversation among themselves, of which, of course, Walter understood not a word.

"Your brother had a very convenient hiding-place in the tree," suggested the leader of the detachment, a greasy, lean-faced corporal, who rejoiced in the name of Pedro Ruz. "Had he not

shown himself, it is doubtful if we should have located him."

"You are bad men to shoot him—I want nothing to do with you," was Josefina's only response. "Go—and leave my brother to me."

"Leave him here!" burst out Pedro Ruz. "No, no, he goes with us as a prisoner. If I am not mistaken, he is the spy Captain Coleo has been after these many days."

"You cannot take him away—a journey will kill him."

"He must go—whether it kills him or not. He can ride on the back of the horse one of my men is bringing up. Captain Coleo will want to interview him before nightfall. And let me tell you, if it is discovered that he has been carrying information to the rebels or those Yankee pigs out in the waters beyond the bay, why, so much the worse for him, that's all." And Corporal Ruz shrugged his shoulders suggestively.

In a moment more the horse was brought forward, a beast as lean as its owner, since fodder in that territory was becoming a scarce article. Since Carlos could not move himself, he was lifted up to the saddle in anything but a gentle fashion. Josefina began to expostulate, but the only attention paid to her was by one of the men, who snatched at her arm and hurled her backward.

"You must learn to mind your betters," said the soldier. "Our worthy corporal knows his business."

"I will search the man, to see if he carries any despatches," put in Corporal Ruz. "Ha, you rascal, let me get at that breast pocket of yours. And, Camara, climb up into the tree and look into that hole. There may be something worth finding there."

CHAPTER XX

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY

As Walter did not understand what was said, he was not aware of his peril until the Spanish soldier began to climb the tree. Then he realized the truth, and his heart sank within him.

"It's all up with me now," he half groaned. "I wonder what they will do with me after they find me."

Reaching the top of the opening, the soldier paused and shouted something to his companions regarding the darkness of the hole below.

"Light a match and drop it down," ordered Corporal Ruz. "This rascal carries nothing," he went on, disappointedly, having found Carlos's pockets empty of anything of value. The negro did carry a message, but it was on a small patch of thin paper, which had been rolled up tightly and concealed in his thick woolly hair.

The match was lit and dropped, and all ablaze it landed upon Walter's head. He caught it in silence and put it out, but the movement was noticed from above.

"There is some one else in the tree—a white man," cried the soldier. "Come out of that!" he continued.

Walter guessed what the command meant, and as further concealment would have been useless he attempted to crawl from the hole. But this was not so easy, and in the end the soldier had to lend a hand, and then both leaped to the ground together.

"*Un Americano!*" ejaculated Corporal Ruz. "*De donde viene V.?*" he added, asking Walter where he came from.

At this the boy shook his head. "I don't understand you," he said.

"*No habla V. castellano?*" continued the corporal, asking if he did not speak Spanish.

Again Walter shook his head.

"Yankee pig!" murmured the corporal, using a term quite common in Cuba during the war. "Why does he not learn our beautiful language? Does he expect we will learn his dirty English?"

He turned to the soldier who had discovered Walter, and between them they searched the lad's clothing thoroughly, and even took off his shoes and stockings.

"Nothing," growled the under-officer. "It is strange."

Carlos had been almost unconscious, but was now recovering. "We are in serious trouble, I am afraid," said Walter, addressing him; but Carlos pretended not to understand, not wishing the Spaniards to know that he spoke English, for then they would have been more certain than ever that he was a spy.

In a few minutes the entire party had left the hut and was making its way along the trail, Carlos

on horseback and the others walking, Walter between the corporal and a Spanish private, and Josefina bringing up in the rear as if unwilling to leave her brother.

The soldiers were eight in number, and each was armed with a Mauser rifle of recent pattern. They were a hungry-looking set and their uniforms were sadly in need of repair. Six were of middle age, but the other two were no older than Walter, for conscription into the Spanish army begins at as early an age as it does in the navy—some of the soldiers and sailors being scarcely fifteen to sixteen years old!

The course of the party was upward, over rocks and trailing vines, and through a woods where hardly a breath of air was stirring. The heat soon made Walter's head ache again, and he was glad enough when a small Spanish camp was gained and he was allowed to sit down in the shade of a plantain and rest.

The encampment was in the open, the only shelter being that provided for the officer in charge, Captain Coleo—a bit of dilapidated canvas stretched between four trees fifteen or twenty feet apart. Under this shelter were located a couple of hammocks, a small folding table for writing, and a camp chair.

Walter found Captain Coleo a thorough gentleman despite his surroundings. He was well educated and spoke English fluently, with a soft accent which under other circumstances would have been quite pleasing.

"So you are an American youth?" he said, after he had listened to his corporal's report and examined Carlos. "And where did you come from, and what are you doing here?"

Feeling there would be no use in concealing the truth, Walter told his story. At the mentioning of the *Merrimac* the Spanish captain's brow grew dark.

"It was a brave deed, but it will do your countrymen small good," he said. "The boat is not directly across the channel, so the harbor pilots have discovered. All of your comrades are now prisoners in Morro Castle, and I presume that is where I shall have to send you."

"As a prisoner of war?"

"As a prisoner of war. And you can be thankful that in trying to escape you were not shot down," continued Captain Coleo.

Walter was very thirsty, and said so. "You look as if you were getting ready to have the fever," was the captain's comment, and he had a soldier bring Walter a tin cup full of *guarapo*, water sweetened with sugarcane ends, and said to be healthier than the plain article. Good water in Cuba is scarce, and although Walter did not know it, it was only the captain's natural good-heartedness that obtained for him what he wanted.

It had threatened rain for some hours, and as nightfall came on, the first drops of a violent tropical storm descended. Soon from a distance came the rumble of thunder, and spasmodic flashes of lightning lit up the woods. The soldiers huddled under the shelter of a clump of low trees, while Captain Coleo sought the protection of the canvas, accompanied by Walter, Carlos, and a guard. Walter's hands had been bound behind him, and he was allowed to sit on a small block of wood beside one of the hammocks in which the wounded negro reclined.

"We will not move to Santiago to-night," said the Spanish captain. "I think the storm will clear away by morning."

He was busy making out a report, and sat at his little table for the purpose, a spluttering Mambi taper fastened to a stick driven into the soil being his only light. The taper went out half a dozen times, but there was nothing to do but to light it again, and this Captain Coleo did without the least show of impatience. To him war was a business, and he was satisfied to take matters just as they came.

The guard trudged around and around the patch covered by the canvas, his rifle on his shoulder and the never-failing Spanish cigarette in his mouth. Occasionally he glanced toward Walter and the negro, but his interest in the prisoners soon gave way to his own discomforts, and he gave them no more attention.

Presently Walter felt a hand steal over his shoulder. "What you think—we run for it, maybe?" whispered Carlos.

"I'd like to run, but we may get shot," whispered Walter in return.

At this Carlos shrugged his shoulders. With two Mauser bullets in him the tall negro rebel was still "game." It was such men as he who had kept this unequal warfare in Cuba going for three long years despite Spain's utmost endeavors to end the conflict.

"Raise up a bit and I untie rope," he said, as the guard made another round and walked from them. "Maybe we can go when big thunder and lightning come—not so?"

"All right—I'll go you," cried Walter, lowly, and in a bit of Western slang. "A fellow can't die but once, and I have no desire to be taken to the dungeon of Morro Castle, or to any other Spanish lockup."

He raised up, and in a trice Carlos had the cords about his wrists unloosened. Captain Coleo still

sat writing. But now the taper went out again and he paused to relight it.

At that instant came a blinding flash of lightning and a loud peal of thunder which startled the few horses the camp possessed and caused them to prance about madly. "Now!" cried Carlos, and with one quick leap he cleared six feet of ground between the hammock and the nearest patch of woods. Walter also leaped, and away they went side by side through the wind, rain, and darkness.

Crack! crack! It was the reports of two Mausers, and the ping of a bullet from the Spanish captain's pistol followed. Walter felt a strange whistling by his ear, and putting up his hand found it covered with blood. The bullet from the pistol had scratched the side of his head. Had his aim been an inch closer, gentlemanly Captain Coleo would have killed the youth on the spot.

"You are hit?" queried Carlos, breathing heavily, for loss of blood had made him weak.

"I—I reckon it's not much!" panted Walter. "But hurry up—they are coming after us!"

The boy was right; both the captain and the guard were following the pair with all possible speed, while three others brought up in the rear, the other soldiers remaining behind to manage the horses, three of which had broken their tethers and were bounding down the trail at a breakneck speed.

Could he manage to escape? Such was the one question which Walter asked himself as he stumbled on in the darkness. A very few minutes would suffice to answer the all-important query.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FLIGHT TO THE SEACOAST

Carlos knew the wood well, and now he took hold of Walter's hand. "Put udder arm up, or get hurt maybe," he said. "Nasty trees around here." And Walter found this was true, for presently a low and twisted branch caught him and flung him flat on his back. Had his arm been down he must have been knocked senseless.

The Spanish captain and the guard came crashing along behind them, shouting "*Alto!*" (Halt) at the top of their lungs. Captain Coleo was very much chagrined that they had gotten away so easily, and blamed the guard roundly. The latter did not dare to answer back, and felt he must catch the fleeing prisoners or suffer for it.

The course had been straight ahead, but now Carlos turned to the southward. Presently they came to a halt at the edge of a mountain torrent. The pursuers were still on the track and drawing closer.

"Jump and go ahead; I will come after," panted Carlos, who could run no more. "Don't wait!" he added, as he saw Walter hesitate.

"But yourself—" began Walter.

"Never mind—go!" broke in the negro; and Walter made the leap over the stream and ran on. Instantly Carlos sought the shelter of a near-by tree and became silent.

"I do not see them, *capitan*," observed the guard, as he and Captain Coleo reached the spot. "Have they crossed, do you think?"

"I will see, Rampo," was the answer, and the captain hurried on in the direction Walter had taken. Scarcely was he out of sight than with set teeth Carlos came forth from the shadow of the tree and crawled up behind Rampo as silently as a panther seeking its prey. A quick, nervous clutch and the negro had the soldier's Mauser. Then came a heavy swing of the butt, and with hardly a groan the Spanish guard went down with a broken skull. "*Cuba libre!*" muttered Carlos, grimly. "That for Maceo, our fallen hero!" referring to Antonio Maceo, the patriot who had led the rebels in eastern Cuba for several years, only to be shot down at last in ambush.

In the meantime Walter ran on, not knowing where he was going, and hardly caring, if only his liberty might be assured to him. Occasionally a flash of lightning lit up the scene, but this only served to make the general darkness more intense. Soon his foot caught in an exposed tree-root, and he went headlong, and rolled over and over to the bottom of a hollow filled with rank vegetation, foul-smelling moss, and brackish water.

Before he could collect his scattered senses he heard the Spanish captain coming up. He arose slowly to his feet, but, struck by a sudden idea, remained in the hollow, ankle-deep in water, and screened from view by the vegetation previously mentioned.

A flash of lightning revealed the captain and at the same time uncovered the youth. For a second both stood spellbound, then the Spaniard drew his pistol.

"Surrender!" he shouted; and the former mildness in his tone of voice was now missing. "Surrender, or I'll shoot you where you stand."



"SURRENDER, OR I'LL SHOOT YOU WHERE YOU STAND."

"Don't shoot," answered Walter, readily. "I'll come out."

"Where is that Cuban rebel?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know? Ha! don't fool with me, lad—I am in no humor for it now."

"Well, I don't know, and that is all there is to it. We separated several minutes ago."

"I do not believe you—he is hiding somewhere in the hollow. Tell me where, or as sure as I stand here, I will put a bullet through your head." And the pistol was aimed straight at Walter.

Before the youth could remonstrate, indeed, before he had time to think, the crack of a Mauser penetrated the damp air. A second of silence followed, and then, to Walter's amazement, Captain Coleo sank down where he stood, a ball through his brain.

"I hit him! what a fine shot!" The words came from Carlos, as he emerged into the opening, the rifle still in hand. "That makes number two, for de udder rascal is laid low with a broken head. Señor, we are in luck, but let us make de most of our chance."

"But—but—is he dead?" asked Walter, in a hoarse whisper. To him such a proceeding seemed little less than murder.

"Dead? To be sure he is dead. But don't let dat worry you. See de blood on your left ear, where he tried to serve you as I served him. Come, before de udder soldiers arrive." And, catching Walter by the arm, Carlos hurried him away.

"And this is war!" thought the boy. "Oh, how cruel! how barbarous! But Carlos is right, the captain tried to kill me." He drew a long breath. "I'm glad I wasn't the one to knock him over."

The pair had gone on about a hundred yards further when they came out on a broad highway, used principally as an ox-team road. Here Carlos called a halt again, to get his breath and take a view of the situation.

"Hark—a horse come!" he ejaculated suddenly, and slipped a cartridge into the Mauser rifle, for he had taken the ammunition box from the dead soldier. "Back, out of sight—ah!"

Walter ran to the shelter of a tree. But at the same time the negro bounded forward, throwing the rifle to the ground. It was no horseman approaching, only one of the animals that had broken away during the heavy thunder and lightning. Making a clutch at the beast's bridle, Carlos held fast and brought the horse to a sudden halt.

"We in luck," he observed, as Walter came out of hiding. "Mount wid me, and we'll soon be miles away!"

"You get into the saddle, and I'll ride behind," answered Walter, who saw how weak Carlos now was. And thus they went on until several miles had been covered. Presently, from a distance, the youth heard the booming of the surf.

"Is that from the seacoast?" he asked; and the negro nodded. "And where are we?"

"We close to de ocean, two or three miles east from San Juan hill. We stop pretty soon—werry much tired." And Carlos closed his eyes. He would have fallen from the horse had not Walter held him fast. "Turn to left at first cross-road," he muttered, and then fainted.

"Poor chap!" thought the boy. "He kept up well, with two bullets in him. I must do what I can for him." And he urged the horse on, at the same time keeping his eyes open for the side road mentioned. Soon it came into view, and five minutes later he found himself at the entrance to a hut similar to that occupied by Josefina, who had now disappeared entirely from the scene. Beyond the hut the road lost itself in a wilderness of small brush.

The hoof-strokes of the horse had been observed, and soon several men, Cubans and negroes, came from the building. "Carlos!" cried several. They turned to Walter. "What does this mean, señor?" came in Spanish.

"Spaniards," answered Walter, and pointed behind him. Then he pointed to the gun and to the wounds Carlos had received, and also showed his own bloody ear and scalp.

The dumb language was instantly comprehended, and two men carried the unconscious negro into the hut, while others took charge of the horse and conducted Walter inside. The lad found the small abode crowded with insurgents, who had come in to escape the drenching rain, and the air was heavy with the smoke of cigarettes and the smell of a stew seasoned with garlic, which was cooking over a lire in the rear. A constant flow of conversation was kept up, of which he understood only an occasional word.

Poor Carlos was in a bad way, and by morning it was easy to see he could be removed only with difficulty. Yet he was cheerful, or tried to be so, and smiled when Walter came to him.

"I have news for you," he said, in his broken English. "Your warships fight, bang, bang, bang! down by the water, at Aguadores and udder places. Think ships go up by Guantanamo Bay, maybe. If sailors land, you have a chance to join them—not so?"

"I just hope some of our boys do land, and that right away!" cried Walter. "Can't I get somebody to show me the way to the seacoast?"

"Gilberto, my brudder, show the way. But not to-day. Maybe to-morrow or next day—when it is safe."

Gilberto had just come in; a stout negro as short as his brother was long, but a rebel fighter to the core. He, too, could speak a little English and said he had been a sailor.

"Sail from Santiago to Philadelphia twice with ore," he said. "Very nice country, America; me like de people. Only werry cold in winter; no like dat—make go dis way." And he gave a shiver. Later on, Walter learned that the entire district was rich in minerals and that large quantities of these were shipped from Santiago and from a near-by town called Baiquiri.

The day passed slowly, and so did the next. In the meanwhile the Cubans came and went. They were a detachment of Garcia's army, the main body of which was located many miles further northward. They were watching the seacoast and trying to communicate with the American ships of war, which could be seen on fair days lying in the offing. They knew that once a landing was effected by the Americans, Uncle Sam would speedily supply them with what they so greatly needed—clothing, guns, and ammunition. Once these were obtained, they felt that they could secure their independence. They had yet to learn that the trained soldiers of Spain could be conquered only by the equally, or better, trained soldiers of the States.

On the morning of the third day, and while they could distinctly hear the sounds of heavy firing in the vicinity of Morro Castle and the Estrella battery, Walter and Gilberto started off, each on horseback. The youth felt once more like himself, for the Cubans had continued to give him drinks of herbs which had entirely banished the lurking fever in his system. Before leaving Walter heard from the negress Josefina. She had escaped injury, and fled to the northward, there to join a great number of women and children, the wives and young people of the insurgents.

The course lay along a stretch of tableland and then up the side of a small mountain. At one point on the mountain top there was a clearing, and here a distant view could be obtained of the ocean to the south of the "Pearl of the Antilles," as Cuba had often been termed.

"Your ship's over dare," explained Gilberto, pointing with his long fingers. "Might see dem if we had glass like dis." And he shut up one hand and placed it over the other, in imitation of a spyglass.

"Do the Spaniards guard the coast?"

"To be sure, señor, very heaby guard, too, at Aguadores and Guantanamo Bay."

"Then we'll have to go slow when we get near the water's edge."

"We nogo to water right away, señor—wait till we see de coast clear. Gilberto find you good

hiding-place and bring eating, and there you stay till I say come—not so?"

"I suppose that will be best. I'm sure I don't want to be taken prisoner again," concluded Walter, very positively.

On they went, down the opposite side of the mountain. They were now travelling in an easterly direction, and before night many miles were covered. At last they came to a series of rocks overlooking the ocean, but situated at least a quarter of a mile back from the beach proper.

"Here is a good place to hide; Gilberto know it well," said the guide, and pointed out a rude cave. "Here *Americano* can stay many days and Spaniards not find him. You take it easy, and I bring food to you." And then Gilberto hurried off alone.

Walter was glad to rest, for the travelling even on horseback had been very trying. He sat down, and in half an hour Gilberto returned with some bread, some jerked beef, and a number of other eatables, done up in a bit of coffee sacking.

"Dere, dat last two, t'ree days," said the guide. "Now lay low, as *Americano* say, and Gilberto come back one day or udder. I take horses, and say *buenas noches*." And with this good night, Gilberto disappeared down the trail, leaving Walter to himself. Strange as it may seem, the youth never saw or heard of either Gilberto or Carlos again.

CHAPTER XXII

THE LANDING OF THE MARINES AT GUANTANAMO

While Walter was in the depths of the Cuban wilderness, trying to escape from the Spanish soldiers, history, so far as it concerned our war with Spain, was moving forward rapidly.

As soon as it was felt that Cervera could not escape from Santiago Bay without running the risk of a fearful battle with Admiral Sampson's or Commodore Schley's squadron, preparations were made to send an army of invasion forward.

For such an army a safe landing-place must be secured, and with this in view, the American warships began the bombardment of various places along the coast, from Santiago Bay to Guantanamo Bay, twenty odd miles farther eastward.

The first of these heavy bombardments took place on the sixth of June, and was directed against Morro Castle, the batteries at Punta Gorda and Zocapa, and at the village of Aguadores, already mentioned. Aguadores is several miles to the eastward of Santiago Bay, to the rear of the rocky promontory upon which Morro Castle is located, and it was felt that if once a footing could be obtained here, the actual invasion by the soldiers would become an easy matter. The bombardment lasted many hours, and the various batteries were much damaged and the Spanish warship, the *Reina Mercedes*, was so badly riddled that she was later on sunk in the channel, thus blocking the outlet to the bay more completely than ever. No damage was done to the American ships.

Through this bombardment a landing was effected at Baiquiri, not far from Aguadores, by a small body of marines, who burned up some Spanish stores and spiked a number of old-fashioned guns.

Following this attack came one upon Guantanamo and the other settlements clustered around the shores of the bay of that name. Here the fighting was as fierce as before, but before it was over a body of marines from the *Oregon* were landed, and later on came six hundred marines from the *Panther*. The Spaniards stood their ground for only a short while and then fled to the mountains, and the American flag was hoisted amid a wild cheering from the troops at hand and those on the warships. No sooner had the landing-places at Guantanamo, Baiquiri, and Aguadores been secured than the army of invasion under General Shafter left Key West for these points, the particulars of which expedition have already been related in "A Young Volunteer in Cuba."

Walter slept "like a rock" during the first night in the cave, being thoroughly exhausted by his long ride. He did not awaken until long after the sun had come up, and for the moment could not realize where he was.

A scanty breakfast was speedily despatched, and he walked out to inspect his surroundings. Mindful of what Gilberto had told him about the enemy, he was careful how he exposed himself, and at the first sign of anything suspicious he ran to cover.

Thus the day passed away slowly. In vain he tried to make out some of the warships far out at sea. To his naked eye they were but specks on that ceaseless tide which glared like molten lead in the fierce rays of the sun.

On the following night the youth underwent a curious experience. He had just thrown himself down to rest when, without warning, the cave was filled with a light that was dazzling. Thinking a fire must have suddenly descended upon him, he leaped up, when, as silently as it had come, the light disappeared.

"Now, what in the world does that mean?" he asked himself, and started for the cave opening,

when, swish! the light came back, almost blinding him. Then he understood it all.

"It's a searchlight from one of our ships!" he cried, half aloud. "If only they could see me and take me on board!" He watched for the light to reappear, but it never showed itself again, being trained upon Morro Castle and the entrance to Santiago Harbor.

On the third day in the cave Walter's stock of provisions gave out. No one had come near him, and the loneliness of his situation was maddening.

"I can't stand this any longer," he mused. "I must get out, if only to hunt for something to eat."

Fortunately for him, Gilberto had left him a pistol and several rounds of cartridges. To be sure, the weapon was an old-fashioned affair, but it was better than nothing, and soon the youth was out in the woods to the rear of the rocks trying to scare up something to shoot.

The woods had been well ransacked by both Spaniards and Cubans, but several hours' hunt yielded two birds, besides some half-ripe plantains and some nuts. Walter was about to return to the cave to cook the birds when from a distance he heard loud shouting, and presently came the rapid discharge of firearms.

"A battle of some kind is on," he thought, and ran to where he had discovered an ox-cart trail. He had scarcely reached the shelter of a clump of bushes, when a detachment of Cubans, closely followed by two companies of Spanish cavalrymen, rushed past, both parties firing as they moved.

"This is getting hot," thought the youth, and started to retreat, when he heard more soldiers coming from the direction of the cave. As there now seemed no help for it, he crossed the trail and plunged along a side path, leading eastward,—a trail running directly to Guantanamo.

Walter felt that the best thing to be done was to put distance between himself and his enemies, and he did not stop running until several miles had been covered. He had, meanwhile, crossed one small mountain stream, and now he found himself on the bank of another. There was no bridge, and the watercourse looked rather dangerous to ford.

"I might as well follow the bank down to the ocean," he reasoned. "But I must have something to eat first." And finding a secluded nook, he built a tiny fire and broiled his two little birds, both of which made hardly a meal. Then, obtaining the purest drink possible from the river, he continued his journey.

By nightfall Walter had covered many miles, yet no ocean came to view, and now he felt that he must be lost in the wilds of the island. As this conclusion forced itself home to him he smiled grimly.

"Lost in Cuba, and I came down here to help man a gun on the *Brooklyn*," he muttered. "Was there ever such a turning-around before! I wonder what I had best do next."

This was not an easy question to answer. It was already dark under the thick trees, and to spend the night in such a spot was not pleasant to contemplate.

At last he came to a clearing. Here he was about to settle down, under the shelter of a small cliff of rocks, when something appeared that caused him to yell with all the strength of his lungs. It was a snake, five feet long, and it advanced rapidly, hissing as it came.

Walter had met snakes before, harmless reptiles not half as big as the present one. But he did not know but that this reptile might be poisonous, and gaining the top of the rocks he blazed away with the pistol, not once, but several times. The last shot hit the snake in the tail, and away it darted, out of sight and into the river.

"Ugh! what a horrible creature!" he murmured, as he stood still, watching for the possible reappearance of the reptile. "I wish I was out of this. I'd give a year's wages to be safe on board of the *Brooklyn* once more."

The words had just left Walter's lips, when he heard a movement behind him. Turning swiftly, he beheld a Spanish soldier gazing at him from a distance of less than fifty feet. The soldier had his rifle, and now the weapon was aimed at the boy's head.

"*Alto!*" came the Spanish command to halt. "*Americano!*"

Walter's surprise was complete, yet he kept his wits about him. As the Spaniard raised his gun, the youth made a quick leap for the shelter of a near-by tree.

Bang! went the Mauser, and the bullet clipped the tree bark. Then Walter took aim, and trembling in spite of himself, pulled the trigger of his pistol. The enemy was hit in the shoulder, and uttered a deep cry of pain.

"If there are others with him I'm in for it now!" thought the boy, and took to his heels along the bank of the watercourse. From behind came a cry for help and another to arms, and in less than a minute a whole company of Spaniards were in wild pursuit. A dozen shots rang out, but Walter was not hit, and plunged on. But he was no match for his pursuers, and they gradually drew closer and closer. Then the youth stumbled and fell, and ere he could arise he found himself surrounded.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN A SPANISH PRISON

The Spaniards who had taken Walter a prisoner were the most villainous the youth had ever beheld. They were all short, thin, and exceedingly yellow, as though suffering from tropical complaints, and looked more than half starved. Their clothing was in rags, for they had been in the wilds of the island, thousands of miles from home, for nearly two years, and a heartless, or poverty-stricken, military department had failed to supply them with what they absolutely needed.

None of them could speak English, and several talked volubly in Spanish, at which Walter could do nothing but shake his head and shrug his shoulders. He was motioned to arise, and as he did so his pistol was taken from him, and presently his hands were fastened tightly behind his back.

The course of the party was along the river to a rude bridge, over which Walter was marched in double-quick time. They emerged upon a narrow highway, along which they encountered half a dozen detached Spanish companies, some moving eastward and others in the opposite direction. "I'm in for it now," thought the youth. "Escaping from this crowd will be out of the question."

Night was well advanced when they turned into a small settlement fronting Guantanamo Bay. Here were half a dozen log houses thatched with palm, while not far off was the office of a mineral company, now deserted by the proprietors, for business in this section of Cuba had long since come to a standstill.

Without ceremony Walter was taken to one of the log huts and thrust inside. The place was scarcely twenty feet square and was crowded with fifteen or sixteen insurgents, whites and negroes, who huddled on the floor, making themselves as comfortable as possible in their miserable surroundings. On the outside of the hut eight Spanish soldiers stood on guard, with rifles ready to shoot down the first prisoner that attempted to escape.

"*Un Americano!*" exclaimed one of the prisoners, a bright looking Cuban, as he edged his way to Walter's side. "You are in a sorry plight, boy."

"What a vile-smelling place!" murmured Walter. "How long have you been here?"

"Two days and nights, with only some stale bread and soup to eat,—and the soup was made of mouldy meat. Oh, that we were free!"

"*Silencio!*" roared one of the guards, and poked his rifle end into the doorway. "I will shoot the first prisoner who dares to speak again!" he added in Spanish.

Walter wished to question him, but did not dare, and so remained silent. It was past midnight, and presently most of the prisoners went to sleep. Huddled in a corner, the lad gave himself up to his dismal reflections.

Daybreak found the Spanish soldiers very active, and catching a glimpse of them through the open doorway, Walter felt that some important movement was contemplated. As a matter of fact the marines from the *Panther* had landed, and the Spaniards were going to do their best to either capture them or drive them back to our warships.

Before noon the firing in the distance was heavy, and the Spaniards could be seen rushing their commands hither and thither, as though hardly knowing how to conduct the campaign which had been thrust upon them. Evidently they realized that landing force was too large for them, for they gradually fell back, occupying that night the settlement where the prison was located.

On the day following, the attack upon both sides was renewed. The rattle of musketry was almost constant, and before long several bullets hit the prison itself. The prisoners were about to remonstrate at this when, on looking out, they discovered that their late guards had fled, leaving them to do as they pleased.

"*Cuba libre!*" yelled the insurgents and lost no time in piling into the open air. Not far away lay several dead Spaniards, and rushing up to the corpses they stripped them of their arms, after which they disappeared into the brush.

"I wonder if the army of invasion has come," was Walter's thought, as he, too, sought the open air. A short sword lay beside a writing-table under a near-by shelter, and he appropriated the weapon. "I'm going to join our men or know the reason why!" And away he went toward the water, which could now be seen quite plainly between the rocks and hills.

The marines, after fighting from early afternoon until the following morning, were now intrenched on a small hill, protected in front by a dense chaparral. They were utterly worn out, and it was found necessary to reënforce them by men from the *Marblehead* and other vessels. Several field-guns had been brought ashore, and although the firing from the Spaniards was heavy, our gallant men held the ground they had first claimed.

"Halt! Who comes there?" came the command, from a thicket, and Walter stopped short, although the words, spoken in true English, filled him with joy.

"Are you an American?" questioned the youth, eagerly.

"I am, and who are you?"

"Walter Russell, cruiser *Brooklyn*. Oh, but am I not glad to get back among the boys again!"

"From the *Brooklyn*? What are you doing ashore here?" questioned the marine, a bronzed but evidently a good-natured man of middle age.

"It's a long story. I've been a prisoner twice, and I was afraid I was about done for when the guards up and ran away from the prison and let me and a crowd of Cubans escape. How can I get back to my ship?"

"You're asking me too much now. Go down yonder and report to our commander. I reckon there ain't no call to rouse up the corporal of the guard, with everybody utterly worn out. You're true blue—I can see that by the cut of your jib."

Inside of five minutes more Walter found himself surrounded by half a dozen officers, including a major of marines, who questioned him closely regarding his adventures and concerning the various detachments of Spanish soldiers that he had encountered.

"You've been through a good deal, lad," said the major, slapping Walter on the shoulder. "I dare say you wouldn't like to go through it again."

"No, indeed! The Spaniards are—are brutes!" exclaimed the youth. "I only hope we send them from Cuba a-flying. I think they and the Cubans must have been fighting for the past three years like a lot of cats and dogs. It's high time Uncle Sam took a hand." This reply brought forth a hearty laugh from those gathered around. Walter, young as he was, had hit the nail right on the head, as later events proved.

The major of marines did not see how the lad could be transferred to the *Brooklyn*, which was a good many miles off, in the direction of Santiago. "You'll have to remain here until some boat bound for Commodore Schley's flagship chances along," he said. "At present only the *Marblehead*, *Suwanee*, and *Porter* are here, but others are coming and going constantly."

"And what of the army of invasion?" asked Walter, with keen interest.

"I believe it has already left Key West. I know it started from Tampa several days ago."

"Was the Seventy-first New York with the troops?"

"They were. Why do you ask?"

"My brother is a member of that regiment. Hurrah! He'll be down here soon," concluded Walter.

He was now dismissed, and lost no time in hunting up one of the marines' cooks, who speedily filled him up with meat, bread and butter, and coffee. "We're not living like kings, you see," said the cook, but grinning to see how the food disappeared.

"You're living like kings in comparison to the way the Cubans and the Spaniards are living. If the army comes up and besieges Santiago, I'll wager the city will go hungry in no time," returned the boy.

During the balance of the day the marines were kept busy resisting several additional attacks from the Spaniards. The onslaughts were heavy and determined, but each time the enemy was beaten back, and at nightfall Old Glory still waved from the flagstaff where it had originally been run up. A foothold had been gained by our side which was not to be taken from us.

Walter had selected a cosy corner to rest in and was sleeping soundly when a sudden alarm rang out. "The Dons! They are coming over a thousand strong! To arms, everybody!" And then came a grand rush.

The report was true; the Spanish column had organized a midnight attack, feeling they knew the ground much better in the dark than would their opponents. On they came, yelling like demons, while the marines stood their ground firmly and fearlessly.

"I must do my share of fighting," thought the boy, and bounced up with the rest. He had already been supplied with a carbine and ammunition, and now he lost no time in attaching himself to the nearest company at hand. "Don't send me back, captain; I can shoot as well as the rest, I think."

"All right, lad, come on," was the answer. "Company, attention! By columns of fours—forward, march!" And away they went, up a small hill. Then came the order to halt, and the company broke up into a broad skirmish line. "Take aim! Fire!" And then and there Walter did his first actual fighting for Uncle Sam and our own glorious stars and stripes.

The determined front shown by our marines non-plussed the Spaniards for a few minutes, and they came to a halt. But then they advanced again, and the fire from each side became hot and irregular.

The battle had thus waged for the best part of an hour, and the Americans felt that they must be beaten back by sheer force of numbers, when reënforcements came up, and in addition one of the warships steamed close to shore, and threw the rays of her powerful searchlight upon the enemy. As soon as the Spaniards were located the warship trained its rapid-firing guns inland, and then

the enemy beat a hasty retreat.

"Hurrah! The fight is ours!" shouted Walter, enthusiastically. "See them run!"

"It was lucky for us the warship came up," put in a marine beside him. "Those dagos ain't going to give ground without a big fight, that's certain."

It was nearly daylight when the company returned to the camp and was dismissed. Walter was more worn out than ever, but too excited to sleep. "At present I'd just as lief be a marine," he observed to his side partner in the contest.

"Oh, don't worry, your ships will have their hands full when Cervera takes it into his head to come out and fight," was the answer. "You'll have no such walkover as Dewey had at Manila—I'll promise you that."

At noon a lieutenant of marines came up to where Walter stood, watching a drill which was in progress. "Are you Walter Russell, of the *Brooklyn*?" he asked.

"I am, sir," and Walter saluted.

"Then you had better hurry down to the shore. There is a steam launch there, and I heard the officer in command say he was bound for the *Iowa* and the *Brooklyn*. If you want to get on your ship, I presume he will take you along."

Walter waited to hear no more, but ran for the landing-place with all possible speed. The boat had come in with despatches and was to leave again inside of ten minutes. The officer in charge was close at hand, and the youth's situation was speedily explained.

"All right, I'll take you," was the brief answer. "Go aboard and forward." And the officer turned away. Walter did as directed; and a few minutes later the steam launch left the landing-place and steamed down Guantanamo Bay toward the ocean, or to be more particular perhaps, the Caribbean Sea.

CHAPTER XXIV

BACK TO THE "BROOKLYN" AGAIN

The steam launch was the neatest craft of the kind Walter had ever seen, and he had come in contact with a great number while sailing on Lake Erie. It was fifty-five feet long, about twelve feet wide, and as beautiful a boat as a designer could plan. It was manned by eight stalwart men, all well drilled to their duties, and carried in addition six marines, each of whom was a sharpshooter, and also a rapid-firing gun of small caliber.

The launch rode the waves like a thing of life and easily made ten miles an hour. Soon Guantanamo was left behind, and they began to creep up the coast in the direction of Baiquiri. In the bow was a lookout, who had a marine glass which was constantly turned shoreward.

"A flag!" said the lookout, about noontime, and immediately the launch came to a stop.

"Where is it, Parkhurst?" asked the officer in charge of the craft.

"Yonder, just below that stretch of rocks, sir," answered the lookout, and handed over his glasses. The commander of the launch took a long look, then ordered the craft turned to starboard, and they steamed into a little harbor not a great distance from a tiny Cuban settlement. A small boat was thrown out, the commander and two launch hands leaped in, and it at once advanced. Then those on the larger craft saw a dozen men rush from the shelter of some brush, one holding a white and the other a Cuban flag.

The small boat was beached in true nautical style, and the Cubans and Americans entered into a conversation lasting the best part of half an hour. Letters were exchanged, and then the party broke up as rapidly as it had gathered. Although Walter did not know it, the letter delivered by the American commander was for the rebel leader, General Calixto Garcia, while that received in return was for Admiral Sampson and General Shafter. All related to the landing of the army of invasion, now so close at hand.

The conference over, the launch darted on her way, and dinner was served, to the officers and sharpshooters first, and then to the crew and Walter. "Oh, we're doing some fine work along this coast," said one of the crew to the youth, while eating. "Those Dons will be greatly astonished some day—when our boys in blue fall on 'em."

It was night before the *Brooklyn* came into view, looking exactly as she had when Walter had so unceremoniously left her. How the youth's heart beat at the sight of his ship! How would those on board receive him, and what would they say when his story was told?

"Russell!" exclaimed the officer of the deck, when he came up over the side. "Why, we all thought you had fallen overboard and been drowned."

"I came pretty near being drowned," was the reply. "You can't imagine, sir, how glad I am to get

back!"

"But where have you been?"

"I've been on the *Merrimac*, among the Cubans and the Spaniards, and in a Spanish prison, besides being down to Guantanamo Bay with the marines from the *Panther*, sir."

"Great Scott, boy, do you expect me to believe all that!" burst out the officer, in sheer astonishment.

"As you will, sir; it's true, though."

"But—but—let me see; you said you were on the *Merrimac*?"

"Yes, sir."

"And on shore among the Cubans, and then among the enemy?"

"Yes, sir."

"And then among the marines at Guantanamo Bay?"

"Exactly, sir. I escaped from a Spanish prison, and was lucky enough to fall in with the marines by accident. I fought with them too, sir."

"Russell, after you disappeared Surgeon Barker said you had been sick—had been troubled with some sort of fever in your head. Don't you believe you went out of your head entirely, and imagined all this?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I reckon that's the truth of the matter, and the best thing you can do is to turn yourself over to the surgeon again for further treatment. How is your head?" And the officer of the deck placed his hand on Walter's forehead. "Ah, rather hot, as I thought. You had better go to bed." And he turned away.

"I don't think I'll go to bed just yet," murmured Walter, and lost no time in reaching the berth deck. Here he came up behind Si and Caleb playing one of their favorite games of checkers, while Paul stood looking on.

"Crown that man," Caleb was saying, when he chanced to glance up, "Walter! or is it a ghost?" he fairly yelled, and leaped up, scattering board and men in all directions. "Walter, where on earth did you come from?" And he reached out his hand.

"It is Walter, back from the grave!" ejaculated Si, and grasped the other hand, while Paul caught the youth by the neck.

"We thought you were drowned!" said all three, simultaneously.

"They said you had gone out of your mind, and committed suicide," added Paul.

"Well, I didn't commit suicide, and I'm as well as ever," was the merry return. "But—but—I don't believe you'll think I'm telling the truth when I give you my story."

"That depends on what sort of a yarn you spin," returned Caleb, dryly. "Where have you been—sinking Cervera's fleet single-handed?"

"Not quite, but I've been pretty close to the fleet, and pretty close to the Spaniards." And dropping on a box Walter told his story, interrupted every few minutes by some newcomer who advanced to shake him by the hand, for since joining them he had made many friends among the jackies and petty officers.

"I don't wonder the officer of the deck wouldn't believe you, lad," remarked Caleb, when he had finished. "It's a big yarn; beats Jonah and the whale all to pieces—not but what *that's* a true story, seeing as how it's in the Good Book. You are certain you wasn't taken down with the fever while you were on shore?"

"Not enough to lose my mind."

"I believe Walter," put in Si. "But if I were you I wouldn't tell this tale to the others," he added in a lower tone. "They'd be jealous of you, you know."

"I don't care, I'm telling the simple truth," answered Walter, stoutly.

That evening word was passed to him to report at the captain's cabin, and he went, just as soon as he could slip on his best suit of clothing, wash up, and comb his hair, for on board of every man-o'-war a visit to "headquarters" is a big thing to any of the crew, and a "sprucing up" is, consequently, indispensable.

This was the first time Walter had visited the cabin of the *Brooklyn*, and the elegant surroundings immediately caught his eye. But in days gone by, before he had been compelled to live with the miserly Job Dowling, he had been used to a home furnished just as handsomely, and therefore the surroundings did not overawe him.

There was a small table in the centre of the cabin, at one end of which sat Commodore Schley,

looking over a map of the Cuban coast. At the other end of the table sat Captain Cook, the firm and strict, yet well-beloved commander of the flagship.

"You sent for me, sir," said Walter, as he came in, "toed the mark," and saluted.

"You are Walter Russell?" asked Captain Cook, while Commodore Schley dropped the map and looked on with interest.

"Yes, sir."

"You have been absent from the ship ever since June the second, or third?"

"Yes, sir. But I couldn't help it. I was sick and fell overboard,—and I've had a whole lot of adventures since."

"So the officer of the deck tells me," answered the captain, dryly. He looked at the commander of the squadron. "Commodore Schley, would you like to ask Russell any questions?"

At this the commodore smiled and pulled meditatively at the little goatee he wore. "Russell, you can tell us your story in detail. But do not take over ten minutes," he said, and covered his eyes with his hands, as if in deep thought—one of his favorite attitudes.

Standing as before and still "toeing the mark," Walter told his story again, simply but forcefully. Whether his hearers were listening or not he could not tell, for not a word was said until he had finished.

Then, however, came a flood of questions concerning the spot at which he had landed after leaving the *Merrimac*, the names of the various Cuban and Spanish leaders that he had encountered, and the names of the marines with which he had fought. He was also questioned about the trails and their conditions.

"Could loaded wagons get over them, in your estimation?" asked Commodore Schley.

"Not very well, sir. In one place I saw an ox-team with a load of fruit, and the load was in danger of being dumped every minute. Some of the paths are not fit for a pack-mule to use."

"What of the Cubans you met? Were they well armed?"

"A few of them had guns, but most of them had nothing but their machetes, sir. Ammunition, I was told, was very scarce."

"What of food?"

"That was scarce, too." And Walter smiled. "A good eater would starve to death on what both the Spaniards and the Cubans have to offer."

"Do the Spaniards expect an army of invasion—that is, did you hear any talk on the subject?"

"I caught a few words, sir. I cannot speak Spanish myself."

Commodore Schley mused for a moment. "That is all," he said, addressing Captain Cook. "The boy has certainly had some remarkable adventures. He is better off than poor Lieutenant Hobson."

"That's true," responded the commander of the *Brooklyn*. He turned to Walter. "You can go, Russell; if we want you again, we will send for you."

"Yes, sir," was the youth's reply, and, saluting, he turned and left the cabin. The interview had been a very formal one, but he was proud to think that he had come into personal contact with his gallant captain and his equally gallant commodore.

CHAPTER XXV

THE BOMBARDMENT OF THE SANTIAGO BATTERIES

When Walter returned to his friends he was immediately surrounded and asked what had happened in the cabin. "Did the commodore slap you on the back and call you a bully boy?" queried Si.

"Well, hardly," answered Walter, with a quiet smile. "They plied me with questions and said I had had some remarkable adventures; that's all."

"Didn't praise you?" queried Caleb.

"No."

"Didn't rush up and shake hands even?" put in Paul.

"Not at all. I saluted and toed the mark, and kept toeing it until I left."

At this Paul's face fell. "Why, I thought you would be right in it, Walter," he said.

"I guess you've been reading some dime and half-dime colored-cover novels, Paul. I imagine that is the way they do in such books."

"That's it. Why, I've got a story about 'Dewey's Boy Bodyguard.' The hero in that overheard a plot against Dewey, and Dewey clasped him to his breast and made him a captain of marines."

"Indeed! And you believe such a yarn?"

"Dewey couldn't make the boy a captain of marines, not if he was an admiral twice over," put in Caleb. "Those yarns are pure trash. Paul, you had better study some good book on gunnery, and try to become a gun captain."

"I thought the story was slightly overdrawn," said Paul, growing red in the face. "There is another about the 'Boy Hero of Havana,' who saves General Lee's life at the time the Americans are getting out of Havana. I suppose that is untrue, too."

"To be sure, Paul. General Lee was in no great danger at that time. Of course some of the sensational papers had to make the most of it, and they reported that he was travelling around with a six-shooter in his pocket, and a detective dogging his footsteps. As a matter of fact he walked around with nothing but a white cotton umbrella, to keep the sun off."

"I'll burn the whole batch of colored stuff up," cried the apprentice; and he did, at the big galley fire. No one on board ever caught him reading dime and half-dime novels again.

Although the marines had established themselves fairly well at and near Guantanamo, the Spaniards were determined to drive them off, and to hold this landing and a number of others, several of the warships were kept busy bombarding the enemy's strongholds and in firing with Gatling guns at the Spanish soldiers whenever they put into appearance along the coast.

The day after Walter came on board the *Brooklyn*, which remained on the blockade off Santiago Bay, the *Texas*, *Marblehead*, and *Suwanee* ran into Guantanamo Bay and attacked the fort at Caimanera, a small village not far from Guantanamo. The attack began at two o'clock in the afternoon, and in less than two hours the fort was in ruins, and those who had garrisoned it were fleeing inland for their lives.

Caimanera was thus taken, but to hold it was as difficult as it was to hold Guantanamo. Many of the people were in sympathy with the Spanish government, and some went so far as to soak the streets and some of the houses with coal oil that the town might be burned down at a minute's notice.

While this was going on, Admiral Sampson determined to make another attack on the outer defences of Santiago Harbor, only sparing Morro Castle, in which it was understood that Lieutenant Hobson and his men were confined. It was weary waiting for the transports to arrive with the army, and something must be done to tear down the numerous fortifications the Spaniards were constructing.

The orders for the bombardment were issued on Wednesday evening; and at once a subdued but excited talk took place among the various crews of the blockading squadrons, which now numbered the following ships, along with a few others of lesser importance:—

First squadron, under the direct command of Admiral Sampson, the flagship *New York*, battleships *Iowa* and *Oregon*, protected cruiser *New Orleans*, gunboat *Mayflower*, torpedo boat *Porter*, and the sprightly *Scorpion*. The second squadron, under Commodore Schley, embraced the flagship *Brooklyn*, battleships *Massachusetts* and *Texas*, and the *Marblehead* and *Vixen*. Other vessels, such as the *Indiana*, *Dolphin*, and *Suwanee*, were kept busy plying between the blockading fleet and Guantanamo Bay and surroundings.

It was half-past three in the morning when the men were called up and served with coffee. Among the first on hand was Walter. "Now for a first real use of our gun," he said to Si. "I've been aching for this ever since I enlisted."

Before four o'clock came the call to quarters, and the men ran to their various stations, and stripped for action, most of them wearing little more than an undershirt and a pair of trousers. The weather was frightfully hot, and the interior of the cruiser was little better than a bake-oven. Possibly this was one reason why the thoughtful admiral planned the attack for so early in the day.

Silently the warships steamed for the mouth of the harbor, and took up their various positions in a grand semicircle, the heavy fighting ships in the centre, and the torpedo boats on the ends, ready to take care of any infantry fire, should the Spaniards hurry their soldiers to the shore. The big ships kept at a distance of three thousand yards—not quite two miles.

"We're a long way off," observed Walter, as he assisted in loading the "Polly," as Caleb had named his gun.

"Twenty-nine hundred yards!" came the report from the range-finder; and the crew went to work to elevate the gun accordingly. In the meantime, the magazines had been opened, the ammunition hoists set in motion, and powder, shot, and shell were delivered everywhere from barbette to fighting-top.

"We're near enough to blow 'em sky-high if we strike 'em right," muttered the old gunner, who,

with the smell of powder in the air, was in his element. "How about that hose, Stuben?" he went on to the hose-man.

"Dot hose it's all right alretty," answered Carl Stuben, a round-faced German, who was an American citizen, even though he did speak the language but brokenly. Heretofore Walter had had but little to do with the man, yet they got along very well together.

It was too dark to begin firing, and for half an hour the ships lay quiet, every man ready to obey a command the instant it was given. This was a nerve-trying test for Walter, who wondered how the thing would sound when all of the ships began firing.

Slowly it grew lighter, and the men became more anxious. The guns were trained on the shore batteries to the west of the harbor entrance, while other ships covered the batteries on the east.

Boom! It was a broadside from the *New York*, directed against the battery below El Morro. Instantly every other warship present responded in a deafening crash and a shock to be heard many miles away. At once the air became filled with the smoke, and on shore the dirt and masonry of the batteries were seen to fly in all directions.

"Oh, my!" gasped Walter, as the gun before him belched forth its mass of flame and smoke. "What a noise! Did—did we hit anything?"

"I hope we did," answered Steve Colton, the second gun captain, laconically; and then came the order to unlock the breech of the gun. As the breech fell back a cloud of smoke swirled into the sponson hood, impregnated with the odor of saltpetre, which caused Walter and several of the others to cough violently. "Never mind; you'll get used to it before you die," went on Colton.

The gun being opened, Carl Stuben caught up his hose-pipe, turned on the nozzle and sent a stream of cold water through the gun, to both clean and cool the interior. By the time this was accomplished the hoist had another shell ready, and this was shoved in by the mechanical rammer. Brown prismatic powder followed, with a small quantity of black prismatic powder behind it, as a primer. Then the breech-block was swung into position and locked again, and the electrical connections were adjusted.

All this had been done almost in the time it takes to tell it, but the next shot was not discharged at once, since the various gunners had strict orders to take their time and make every discharge count. It was not like a pitched battle where every moment counted.

But though the gunners took their time, there were so many ships and so many guns that the firing was continuous—a spiteful cracking of rapid-firing guns, mingled with the thunder-claps of the gigantic thirteen-inch guns and the solid banging of the eight-inch and eight and ten pounders.

"This is war and no mistake," remarked Walter. In ten minutes his undershirt had become as black as a stove-cloth, and he himself looked almost like a negro. In the meantime the perspiration was streaming from every pore of his body.

"War!" shouted Caleb. "Why, lad, this is nothing. If only Cervera would come out, then you would see some fun."

The order had been passed to lessen the charges in the big guns and elevate them more, in order to secure a plunging fire. The effect of this change in tactics was soon apparent, as shot and shell began to drop directly into the Spanish strongholds or behind them. Soon one of the batteries was completely silenced, and a cheer went up from the warship nearest to it.

It must not be imagined that the Spaniards took this attack quietly. No sooner had the American warships opened than they returned the fire with equal fierceness. But although at an elevation, and using guns which were stationary, their aim was wild, and only a few of their shots took effect.

As one battery after another was silenced, several of the warships elevated their guns still more and put in large charges of powder, and, as a result, one shell was carried far up the harbor to where the *Vizcaya* lay and burst directly over her deck, doing considerable damage and injuring several sailors and an under-officer.

Presently a terrific explosion rent the air. One of the shots from the *Texas* had landed in a powder magazine and sent it skyward. The spectacle thus caused was magnificent, and for a moment all in the squadrons watched the timbers, rocks, and dirt as they sailed through the air, some coming down inland and some falling with loud splashes into the sea.

"That's a shot worth making!" cried Caleb. "Hurrah for the man as trained that gun!"

And the cheer was given with a will.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN WHICH THE ARMY OF INVASION ARRIVES

"Maybe I ain't hot and tired, Walter. I could sleep standing up and go in an ice-house and do it."

It was Si who spoke, as he was washing himself in a bucket of water set on the gun-track. The water had been fresh when Si began his ablutions and was now dirty, but the Yankee youth was still far from clean, for gun smoke and gun dirt have a disagreeable knack of getting into the pores of one's skin.

The bombardment had lasted over an hour and every land battery had been silenced. Yet, as the American ships drew away, one or two guns spat out spitefully after them.

"You'll feel all right in an hour or two, Si," answered Walter. "Oh, but wasn't it glorious! I could stand such bombarding for a week. What a sight it was when that powder magazine went up."

"Such a bombardment costs Uncle Sam a good many thousand dollars," put in Caleb, leaving the gun to get a drink of water from the tub standing by. "A week of it would put a big hole in his pocket, large as it is."

"I presume that is so, Walton. But say, why don't we run in and finish things, now we have knocked the batteries out?"

"Better ask the admiral, lad; he's the one who knows. Remember, we didn't touch Morro Castle nor that fortification on Smith Cay,—and those Spanish warships are somewhere around the bend, out of sight. I reckon the time ain't quite ripe for running in yet. If we run in now and do up that Spanish fleet, we haven't men enough to take Santiago itself. We must wait until Shafter arrives with his army."

"But why did we go at them at all for, then?"

"To keep 'em from becoming too well fortified. Now they'll have their hands full for several days repairing damages, and in the meantime our army may arrive—at least, I hope it does."

Si had been right about the heat. Even in the United States we had a spell of uncommonly hot weather, and down here, under the tropical sun, it was "sizzling," as Walter expressed it. During the noon hour no one thought of going on deck unless it was absolutely necessary. Refreshments of any kind were at a premium, and when a society known as the Colonial Dames sent on a number of boxes of oranges and lemons for distribution, the jackies could hardly contain themselves for joy. Cuban sugar was easily obtained, and lemonade and orangeade became the order of the hour.

Having been away on shore, Walter had not felt the monotony on shipboard so much, but those who had been on the blockade for nearly three weeks felt fearfully bored, especially as reading matter was scarce. Every scrap of a newspaper was saved and passed around, and poor Paul was collared and tossed up in a canvas hammock for having burnt the penny-dreadfuls previously mentioned.

"Mail! mail! mail!" such was the welcome cry which rang through the *Brooklyn*, several days after the bombardment just described. The news caused a commotion, and all who could rushed on deck and peered eagerly over the side as several heavy mail sacks were hoisted on board. Hardly anybody could wait for the mail to be distributed.

"Three letters for me, and a bundle of newspapers!" cried Walter, joyfully. "Here's luck and no mistake." He studied the various post-marks for a moment. "One from Boston, in my uncle's handwriting; one from Tampa, Florida, and that's from Ben; and one from—yes—Hong Kong, China, and that must be from dear old Larry. Now which shall I read first? Oh, I must hear from Larry first." And dropping on deck he tore open the letter from the other side of the world and perused it eagerly.

"Well, I never!" came from him, a few minutes later. "Si, Walton, listen to this! My brother Larry was with Dewey at Manila and helped whip the Dons! Oh, but Larry's the boy, after all! Just read the letter for yourselves." And he tossed it over.

Ben's letter came next, a rather short communication, for Ben had never been much of a boy to write.

"I am high private in the best company of the Seventy-first regiment of New York," he wrote. "We are down here at Lakeland, near Tampa, getting into condition to invade Cuba. At present things are slow and awfully hot, but we look for livelier times ahead and that keeps up our spirits. My chum, Gilbert Pennington, has joined Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders. I hope we go to Cuba together.

"I suppose you are quite a jack tar by this time and walk with a regular swagger. Larry is now a bigger fellow than either of us, for he was on the *Olympia*, Dewey's flagship, at the battle of Manila Bay. He wrote me all about it and said he would write to you, too, so I suppose you already have the letter.

"Uncle Job seems to be coming around to his senses—with giving both you and me permission to take care of ourselves. If I were you, I would not let up on him about going to Boston. Those heirlooms ought to be located, and he is the man who must push the work, even if it does cost a few dollars. I want father's watch, and I am sure you and Larry want the wedding rings.

"I have made many friends while in the army, but I also have two enemies, Gerald Holgait and Dwight Montgomery, and I am afraid that sooner or later they will try to play me some mean trick. However, I will be on my guard against them. Good-by and good luck to you."

"I hope Ben does come down," mused Walter. "And if he has any enemies of the Jim Haskett sort he had better look out." And then he turned to the communication from Job Dowling.

"My dearest nephew," began the guardian, and the term of address made Walter smile. "Your letter was a big surprise to me, and I ain't over it yet. That you should meet that thief gets me, and I don't understand it nohow. However, I packed my valise (my new one that cost me a dollar thirty-five, although Wilson says it is worth the money) and the next day I took the cars for Boston on a ticket I got at cut rates, although it was tolerably dear even at that. When I got to Boston I introduced myself to Mr. Phil Newell, the one-legged man you used to work for, and he took me to police headquarters, and now I am stopping here at a boarding-house on Hammond Street. The police sent a detective to me, and he is going to find them heirlooms and that rascal of a Deck Mumpers, or whatever his name is, or know the reason why. If he finds the things, I'm to give him two hundred dollars in cash; if he don't, I pay his travelling expenses and no more. I wouldn't make such a bargain, but I know all you boys want the things back and I can't do the running after the thief. It's a waste of money, but it can't be helped. I want to show you and Ben and Larry that your uncle means well in spite of what you think of him.

"Newell says for me to tell you he will send you a bundle of newspapers. He says he knows how lonely life on board of a man-of-war gets sometimes. I hope you don't get hurt, if you get into a fight down in Cuba. Keep out of the sun, and write when you can, care of Newell's news-stand—for I stop there every day, after the detective's report. The detective hopes to get the things back before this week is out.

"Your loving uncle,

"JOB DOWLING."

The letter was a mere scrawl, horribly mis-spelled, and it took Walter fully quarter of an hour to decipher it. "Well, Uncle Job is turning over a new leaf," he thought, as he put it away. "I only hope that detective is all right, and don't hoodwink him into paying over his money for nothing. I reckon the letters Ben and I wrote him scared him pretty well, otherwise he wouldn't agree to pay two hundred dollars if the heirlooms are recovered."

Caleb had read Larry's letter with much interest. One portion of it, relating to the narrow escape from disaster during the battle, interested him not a little.

"Your brother had a close shave," he said. "To fire a gun when the breech is unlocked is a fearful thing."

"I don't see how it could happen on board of such a ship as the *Brooklyn*," answered Walter. "Everything works like clockwork here."

"You don't know how a thing would work in the middle of a battle, lad. Men get excited, and sometimes the jarring of the shots breaks the electric connections. More than likely that gunner was firing his piece by hand at the time. I've done the same, when the electric connection gave out. Last month I heard from a friend of mine, a gunner on the *New Orleans*, that used to be a Brazilian warship. They couldn't get their electric-firing apparatus into shape nohow, and had to do everything by hand,—and that is the time accidents occur. But somebody ought to have been watching that breech-block—your brother or somebody else." And then Caleb turned away to his duties.

Larry had written that he was now in Hong Kong, and did not know whether he would go back to Dewey's squadron, or return to the United States. "You'll hear from me again soon, one way or another," he added in a postscript.

For a day or two, all of Walter's spare time was spent over the newspapers his former employer had been kind enough to send him, but drills and other duties must not be neglected, and now that the army of invasion was hourly expected, discipline on the warships became more rigid than ever.

At last, one clear morning, a cry echoed and reëchoed from one warship to another:—

"The transports are in sight! General Shafter's army has arrived!"

What a shouting, cheering, and yelling broke loose! Jackies flew to the deck, and up the military masts, and all other points of vantage. Yes, the news was true, over thirty transports were coming up from the direction of Guantanamo Bay, having rounded Cape Maysi some hours previously. The army of invasion had really arrived, nearly seventeen thousand strong. As that vast fleet came up, convoyed by fourteen warships, it presented a most imposing appearance, and guns boomed loudly to welcome it.

"Is the Seventy-first on board?" was Walter's question; and when at last he heard that it was, his heart beat quickly. "Ben must be there!" he thought. And Ben *was* there, and thinking of Walter

at the same time.

"Santiago is doomed now," said Caleb, as he surveyed the scene.

"That's so," put in Si, tossing up his cap. "And old Cervera must either come out and fight, or haul down his colors. Oh, but won't we just smash things when that army is landed!"

And Walter agreed with both of them.

As soon as it could be arranged, the army was landed at Baiquiri, Siboney, and other points, Guantanamo being reserved as a coaling station for the warships. After the first landing, a strong detachment of regulars and Rough Riders was thrown out, and then followed the battles of La Guasima, San Juan, and El Caney, described in detail in the previous volume of this series. The soldier boys fought bravely, and Ben Russell and his chum, Gilbert Pennington, were well to the front, as we know.

The landing of the troops was no easy matter, for the surf ran high, and it was feared that the Spaniard might make a heavy onslaught at any instant. All the small boats of the warships were called into use, to land men and army stores, and while this work was in progress, many of the ships began to bombard various points along the coast, for the purpose of confusing the enemy, so that they would not realize the truth of what was taking place. The ruse succeeded, and during the landing the Spaniards remained comparatively quiet, hardly knowing in what direction to turn, or what to do, since the Americans were covering over a hundred miles of rugged coast-line.

The debarkation at an end, the *Brooklyn* returned to her position on the blockade. All hands knew that something important would soon happen, and, consequently, everybody slept thenceforth "with one eye open." "Cervera must not be allowed to escape, night or day, under any circumstances," was the order passed, and it was to be obeyed to the letter.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SPANISH FLEET AND ITS COMMANDER

"Now that we are so anxious to catch Admiral Cervera and smash his ships, I should like to know something about the man and his command," remarked Walter, a few days after the army had landed. He addressed George Ellis, who, in his quiet, gentlemanly way had taken a liking to the youth.

The two were seated in the shadow of one of the forward guns, taking it easy, for the morning drills were over and it yet lacked half an hour to mess time. Slowly the *Brooklyn* rose and sank on the waves of the Caribbean Sea, four miles outside of Santiago Bay. This was the usual distance in the daytime. At night, despite the danger of an attack by a torpedo destroyer, the warships came in much closer, and the glare of the searchlights never left Morro Castle or the narrow harbor entrance.

"I know very little about Admiral Cervera excepting that he has been in the Spanish navy for many years and is said to be one of the finest gentlemen that ever trod the deck of a ship. Why he ever allowed himself to be bottled up like this is more than I can understand. I imagine, though, that he was on his way to Havana, to break the blockade there, when he heard that Admiral Sampson was coming for him one way and our commodore the other, and he concluded that the best thing he could do would be to scoot into the bay yonder and save himself and possibly Santiago. They say he carried a lot of guns and ammunition for the Spanish army. He can distribute those as well at Santiago as he can at Havana, for I understand General Toral here is as hard up as Blanco is at the other city."

"And what of the ships under him? They say he has six. Do you know how big they are?" went on Walter.

"He has four warships and two torpedo destroyers," answered the chief yeoman. "I got that straight from Lieutenant Blue, who went ashore for Admiral Sampson, made a detour of seventy miles, and from the top of a high hill saw the ships in the harbor through his powerful glasses."

"Somebody said all the big ships were armored cruisers."

"That is true, and three of them, the *Vizcaya*, the *Almirante Oquendo*, and the *Maria Teresa*, are sister ships, of seven thousand tons each. Each is about three hundred and sixty feet long and can speed at eighteen to nineteen knots an hour. They carry about five hundred men each, and every one has a main battery of two 11-inch Hontoria and ten 5.5-inch Hontoria guns, with a secondary battery of eight 6-pounders, ten 1-pounders, several machine guns; and they also carry six torpedo tubes each."

"And what of the fourth cruiser?"

"She is the *Cristobal Colon*, the fastest of the lot, even though her displacement is two hundred tons short of the others. They say she can run eighteen knots an hour with ease and twenty knots if she is put to it. Her armor belt is six inches thick, alongside of twelve inches on the other

cruisers. She also carries about five hundred men, and she has a main battery of two 10-inch and five 6-inch guns, and a secondary battery of rapid-firing rifles, 6 and 10 pounders and two Maxim guns. Her torpedo tubes number four."

"Then they are no small fry to battle with," observed Walter. "When their batteries break loose they ought to do some talking."

"They will talk. We mustn't expect any walkover, if Cervera ever comes out of his hole."

"And what of the two torpedo boats?"

"They are sister ships, the *Pluton* and *Furor*, each of three hundred and eighty tons displacement. They say that each has a speed of twenty-seven knots an hour, and both are equipped with the latest appliances for such crafts, carrying regular, automatic, and rapid-fire guns, and also fourteen-inch Schwartzkopff torpedo tubes."

"I should say they would be good things to keep out of the way of," exclaimed Walter.

"We've got our eyes wide open for them, lad. To be sure, one or another of them may play us some dirty trick of a dark night—but that is one of the risks to be taken in war times," concluded the chief yeoman, as a petty officer called him away.

All on board the warships waited eagerly for news from the army of invasion. It was known that the Rough Riders had had a severe skirmish at La Guasima, but that was all, so far as the jackies went. Possibly the officers knew more, but if so, they kept the knowledge to themselves.

"Another dull week will come to an end to-morrow," remarked Si, as he and Walter were on their way to the mess table. "Oh, but I'm sick of laying around looking at old Morro. If only those ships would come out, we'd sink them all in less than two hours; I feel sure of it."

Si's growl was becoming a universal one, even the officers grumbling a good deal. All wanted to fight Cervera's fleet, and the more the Spanish admiral kept himself hidden, the more angry did they become. Many almost begged to have their ships forced into the harbor, no matter what the consequences—they stating that anything would be better than this everlasting waiting. The blockade had now lasted five long weeks.

In the meantime, matters elsewhere had not been idle. Chagrined over Dewey's victory at Manila, Spain resolved to send another fleet to the Philippines by way of the Suez Canal, taking, for this purpose, almost all the warships left in her home waters. As soon as this was brought to light, our own naval board decided to send an American fleet to the coast of Spain, and Commodore Watson was placed in command of the expedition. But before the American warships could sail, the Spanish fleet, having gone through the Suez Canal, turned back for home, and the American warships remained where they were, and Dewey was left unmolested at Manila, so far as Spanish operations were concerned, although the insurgents under General Aguinaldo soon began to give him a great deal of trouble.

Saturday morning dawned misty but hot. From a great distance could be heard the rattle of musketry, showing that the army of invasion was slowly but surely advancing.

"They're in it all right enough—" began Si, when there came a sudden call to quarters, and at the same time the *Brooklyn's* engines began to move and she headed for Santiago Bay. "Hullo, what does this mean?"

"Perhaps we are going to force an entrance!" ejaculated Walter. "Hurrah, if we do!"

"Better not count your chickens before they are hatched," remarked Caleb, who had just rolled from his hammock.

They soon learned the truth of the movement. The shore batteries were again to be bombarded, and this time not even Morro Castle was to be spared, it having been ascertained that Hobson and his men had been removed to safe quarters.

"Down with old Morro; we'll show the Dons a thing or two!" was the cry, and off rushed the men to their guns, their eyes brighter than they had been for many a day, for Morro Castle had been an eyesore to all.

The flagship *New York* was leading the fleet, which, as before, soon ranged up in a semicircle. Inside of five minutes every vessel had her station.

"Cast loose and provide!"

The now familiar cry was scarcely needed, for the jackies were already at work, stripped, as before, of all their superfluous clothing. Shot and powder were quickly handled, and the flagship began the firing, which immediately broke forth in all its fury, deafening everybody and sending forth a great cloud of smoke which hung over the warships like a pall.

"Morro's flag is down!" came the shout. It was true. A gunner on the noble *Oregon* had taken careful aim and cut the flagstaff in two. The falling of the Spanish emblem was greeted with a wild cheer. At once the Spaniards tried to put another flag up, but it was some time ere they succeeded, and then it was a tiny affair, hardly visible excepting with a glass.

"We'll try for that battery yonder!" exclaimed Caleb, during the height of the bombardment. "I

think those fellows have been firing this way ever since they started."

He had scarcely spoken when bang! something hit the armor plate directly under their gun, hurling the gunner, Walter, and several others back by the shock.

"They've struck us, but the shot didn't pierce our armor," remarked Caleb, calmly, as he got up. "All right, you villains, here's the compliment returned!" And he made his preparations with care.

The shot following was the best they had yet placed. It struck into a battery on the west shore of the harbor entrance, ploughed up the foundation of a six-pound gun, and sent the piece flying high into the air.

"My, but that was immense!" cried Walter, while Si and the others cheered wildly. "Give them another!"

And they did give the battery another, and then a dozen more, until at last the place was silenced, showing that what was left of the gunners had fled.

At half-past seven came the order to cease firing, but it was fully twenty minutes later before the last of the warships' guns were discharged. By this time not only the batteries but also old Morro were filled with gaping holes. It is more than likely that if the fleet had sought to enter the harbor at this time it could have done so with comparative ease.

The work at the gun had been very hot, and as soon as they were able to do so, Walter and Si scurried to the upper deck to get a bit of fresh air.

"It fairly stews the fat out of a fellow," grumbled Si, running the perspiration from his forehead with his forefinger. "I'll bet I'm ten pounds lighter than before this blockade began."

"Never mind; it's one of the fortunes of war—" began Walter, when of a sudden a strange whir and a singing sound filled the air. It was a shell, fired from Morro Castle, just as the *Brooklyn* was turning away.

"Look out!" yelled Si, and dropped down, but the words were still on his lips when the shell exploded, sending the fragments flying in all directions. Both boys were struck, and with a groan Walter fell senseless to the deck.

CHAPTER XXVIII

"THE ENEMY IS ESCAPING!"

"Is he dead, surgeon?"

"Oh, doctor, he'll live—say he'll live!"

Caleb and Si had followed the senseless form of Walter to the sick bay of the warship, the Yankee youth with the blood streaming from a deep cut in his left cheek. Both were in distress for fear their comrade was seriously injured.

"Yes, he'll live, but he has had a narrow escape," was the reply of the medical man in charge of the case. "The bit of shell scraped his left temple, as you see. Had it come a little closer, it would have gone through his brain."

Walter had been placed on a swinging cot, and now his head was bound up. Before this operation was over he opened his eyes.

"Whe—where am I?" he stammered. "Wh—what hit me?"

"Praise God, he's himself again!" murmured Caleb, reverently. "I was afraid he was a goner."

"So was I," whispered Si. "And I don't know how I could spare Walter—he seems so like a brother."

"You must lie quiet for a while," said the surgeon. "You'll be all right by to-night." And then he gave Walter some medicine to brace his nerves, for they had been sadly shattered by the shock. The remainder of that Saturday was spent in bed.

On this memorable day the fighting on land had been even more fierce than on the sea. The army of invasion had taken the various outposts of Santiago, and the very city itself now lay at General Shafter's mercy. It was felt that a day or two longer would bring matters to a climax.

When Walter joined his comrades after supper he looked rather pale and scared. Almost silently he took Si's hand and wrung it.

"You are all right?" he whispered.

"No hurt to speak of," was the answer.

"But we were pretty close to death. Oh, Si, I never realized before how quick one could be put out of this world!"

"Neither did I, Walter. After this I'm going to—well—I'm going to attend church more regularly, that's all. I never did take much to sech matters afore, like you do."

"It's always well to be prepared for death, Si—I'm going to try to be prepared after this," was Walter's low answer, and in the darkness of the berth deck they clasped hands again. They understood each other pretty well, these boys.

On Sunday morning the sun arose clear and strong, and early in the day an awning was spread over the quarterdeck of the flagship *Brooklyn*, and preparations were made to pass a hot day as comfortably as possible. "We will rest to-day," was the word passed around, and the jackies were not sorry, for the bombardment on Saturday morning had tired them out.

The *Brooklyn* rested about three miles out from Santiago Bay, and not far off lay the *Texas*. Between the two ships the long, green waves rose and fell, only making a soft slish-slish as they struck the vessels' sides. The jackies lolled here, there, and everywhere, some talking, some reading old newspapers which from frequent handling would scarcely hold together, while a few studied the Bibles they had brought with them.

Presently from the *Texas* came the musical bugle-call for church service. "I'd like to go on board of her once," said Walter to Si, as they listened to the bell that followed. "She's certainly a fine-looking craft."

"Three bells," put in Caleb, as he came up. "Come on, lads, first Sunday in the month, remember, and the Articles of War have got to be hearkened to."

"That's so; I had forgotten," answered Walter. And he and the others dropped below, to don their cleanest and neatest "rigs," for general muster. Soon the call came, and from all parts of the big cruiser the men hurried to their various divisions, while the higher officers buckled on their swords, and the executive officers prepared to make their inspections.

On the quarterdeck, near the hatchway, sat Commodore Schley, musing thoughtfully, as he gazed over the waters in the direction of Morro Castle. The fighting commodore undoubtedly felt as hot as anybody, for he wore a thin, black alpaca coat and an equally thin, white summer hat. He was now in sole command of the blockading fleet, for the *New York* had carried Admiral Sampson many miles away, to confer with General Shafter.

For some time there had been smoke in the harbor entrance in front of the warships, and many were wondering what it meant. "Must be a supply boat for the batteries," said several under-officers, and this theory was accepted as correct. Nevertheless, Commodore Schley glanced toward that smoke more than once.

"We are going to have general muster, commodore," announced Captain Cook, as he presented himself, followed by Executive Officer Mason, and the commander of the fleet *pro tem.* nodded. But those keen eyes were still bent shoreward.

Suddenly, from the forward bridge there came a yell through a megaphone, a yell that electrified everybody who heard it.

"After bridge there! Report to the commodore and the captain that *the enemy's ships are coming out of the harbor!*"

There was no necessity to report, for commodore, captain, and all others heard the cry. There was a second of silence. Could this news be true? Then came the command of the executive officer.

"*Clear ship for action!*"

"Hurrah! the enemy is coming out at last! To your guns, boys! Remember the *Maine!*" These and a score of other cries rang out, while men rushed hither and thither, dropping one garment or another as they ran, and kicking shoes right and left, for no jackie will do work worth the counting unless he is barefooted. Everybody had on his best clothing, but that did not matter, and down into the grimy depths of the big vessel dropped the firemen, coal heavers, and all the rest of the "black gang," as they are termed, for steam must be gotten up in a tremendous hurry or the enemy would surely get away. Ton after ton of coal was thrown onto the fires, and the firemen coaxed and coaxed until the black lumps grew first red and then white, and converted the water in the boilers into high-pressure steam. "Fire up! for the sake of the ship's honor, fire up!" came in a hoarse cry down the speaking-tube, and the men did fire up as never before, until all were ready to drop from the terrific heat. And all this while the engineers were watching their engines, oiling this part and that, and making every pound of steam do its utmost to send the great armored cruiser dashing and hissing through the sea to that point where the Spanish fleet was trying to escape.

For Admiral Cervera could stand it no longer inside of the harbor. With the army of invasion at the very outskirts of Santiago, and with the American fleet beyond his bay of refuge, something must be done, and done quickly. He would run for it,—run at the top of his speed—and trust to luck, if not Providence, to get out of range and reach Cienfuegos or Havana. Santiago Bay was "too hot to hold him."

It was the big prow of the *Maria Teresa* that first showed itself, quickly followed by the *Vizcaya*, *Oquendo*, and *Colon*, with the torpedo boats *Pluton* and *Furor* bringing up closely in the rear. All

were under a full head of steam, and the thick smoke shot up in heavy clouds from every funnel. For an instant all seemed to pause at the gateway to the sea, then, led by the *Maria Teresa*, they turned westward along the coast. To this side of the blockade now lay but three American warships, the *Brooklyn*, *Texas*, and the little *Vixen*. If he could only get out of range of these, Admiral Cervera felt that he would, for the time being at least, be safe.

Boom! It was a three-pounder, fired from the *Iowa*, lying some distance to the eastward of the *Texas*. She, too, was flying the signal, "The enemy is escaping," in red and white and blue flags. Beyond the *Iowa*, still further eastward, lay the pride of the western coast, the mighty *Oregon*, and it was this ship that first started up her engines in pursuit, having, by chance, a good head of steam up. And as the *Oregon* turned in one direction, the little *Resolute* turned in the other, to carry the news to the absent rear-admiral.

Three minutes had not yet passed, yet a complete transformation had occurred on the *Brooklyn*. Five hundred men had scuttled to as many different directions, battle hatches had been lowered, water-tight compartments closed, hose attached and decks wet down, fire tubs filled, magazines opened, hoists put into operation, and ammunition delivered to turret, decks, and to the fighting-tops. Down below, fire had been started under four fresh boilers, and a dozen different connections between engines made.

Nor was this all. Splinter nets had been spread as before, all useless woodwork thrown overboard, and the surgeons' operating tables made ready. The warning gun from the *Iowa* was followed by a gun from the *Texas*, and then the *Brooklyn* helped to "open the ball" with her forward eight-inch guns. Another great naval battle, fully equal to that of Manila Bay, was now on.

"It's a question of do or die, boys!" cried Caleb, as he worked over the heavy gun before him. "Hustle now, as you never hustled before, or the dagos will get away. Now then, Polly, do the best you can!" And *bang!* went the gun, with a noise that was deafening. Ten minutes later Walter felt as if his hearing had left him entirely, so incessant was the firing.

The first fire from the enemy came from the *Maria Teresa*, and was an eleven-inch shell directed at the *Brooklyn*. Hardly had this been discharged when the *Indiana*, coming up behind the *Iowa*, took a long-range chance and sent a shell directly upon the *Teresa's* deck, doing not a little damage. Then the firing became general, and shot and shell was hurled in every direction.

So far, the *Brooklyn* had been headed directly for the harbor entrance, commodore and captain being intent upon cutting off the enemy's westward flight, if possible. This course soon brought the *Maria Teresa*, *Vizcaya*, and the *Brooklyn* into close proximity, and presently all were lost to view in a dense cloud of smoke, from which shot long streaks of fire, as battery after battery was discharged at close range.

"Give it to 'em!" was the cry that rang throughout the *Brooklyn*. "Don't let up on 'em! We must do as well as Dewey did, and better! Remember the *Maine*, and three cheers for Uncle Sam!" Such cries were truly inspiring, but presently the men became silent, as the work began to tell upon them, and they realized what a fearful task still lay before them.

"The second ship's flag is down!" was the welcome news which soon drifted down from the fighting-tops. It was true, the *Vizcaya's* big silk flag had been riddled completely and the halyard shot away; but soon another flag was run up. Later on the *Brooklyn's* flag also came down, but it did not remain so more than two minutes before a jackie had it up again.

The battle had but fairly begun, and the *Brooklyn* and the *Maria Teresa* were having it "hot and heavy," when suddenly the bow of the *Vizcaya* began to turn swiftly. At once a cry rang out. "That ship is going to ram the *Brooklyn!* See, she is turning full toward her!"

The warning proved true. The *Vizcaya* was turned fairly and squarely for Commodore Schley's flagship. Bells were ringing on board of her for "Full speed ahead." On and on she came, like a demon of the deep, in one wild, terrible effort to ram the vessel Walter was on and sink her!

CHAPTER XXIX

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SPANISH FLEET

"We are lost!"

"That ship will cut us in half!"

"Give her a broadside, boys, before we go down!"

These and a hundred other cries rang out, as the *Vizcaya* came leaping over the waves on her awful mission of death and destruction. Then gun after gun roared out, sending shot and shell on the enemy's deck. If this was their last hour on earth, these brave jackies were going to make the most of it.

But commodore, captain, and executive officer were all on the alert and were not to be caught

napping. As the *Vizcaya* came on, the necessary orders were given, and the *Brooklyn* began to turn in a twelve-point circle to starboard. Like a flash she swept past the warship dashing on to destroy her, and then the command rang out, "Give her another broadside!" And the port guns, twenty in number, vomited out their death-dealing shots and shells, raking the Spanish deck from end to end, and killing and wounding a great number of sailors and officers. To this awful fire was added that from the *Oregon*, which now came up to assist the flagship. Realizing that the plan to ram the *Brooklyn* was a failure, the *Vizcaya* started westward once more.

It was now high time to turn attention to the two torpedo-boat destroyers, *Pluton* and *Furor*, that were coming out of the harbor at a speed of twenty knots per hour. Once these destroyers gained the open sea, to catch them would be impossible. Like long, steel arrows glistening in the sunlight, they darted through the greenish waves and for a moment hid themselves behind their big sisters.

Then on came the *Gloucester*, a converted yacht, commanded by Lieutenant Wainwright. Wainwright had been executive officer of the *Maine* when she was blown up in Havana Harbor, and had vowed more than once to sink something if only he were given a chance. Like an avenging angel the *Gloucester*, but lightly armed, bore down upon the torpedo boats and sent shot after shot into them. Then the destroyers began to turn, as if to sink the little enemy who dared to molest them, but now it was too late,—the big warships were coming to the *Gloucester's* aid.

It was the *Oregon* and the *Iowa* that first came to the converted yacht's assistance, and as the destroyers turned, first one way and then another, as if to ram or to run, a perfect hailstorm of shot and shell landed on their sides and decks, churning up the water into a milk-white froth, and causing the destroyers to look like gigantic whales lashing themselves in their death throes. The noise was even greater than it had been before, and the smoke made the heavens above look as if a violent thunderstorm was at hand.

Finding they could not withstand such a combined attack, and with the *Texas* hurrying to the scene, the destroyers turned tail, as if to make for the shore. As the turn was made a huge shell, flying over the masts of the *Gloucester*, hit the *Pluton* directly amidship, and with a crash and a splutter she broke and sank, leaving the still living members of her crew struggling in the boiling waters for their lives.

Left to herself, the *Furor* again paused, like some wild animal seeking in vain for cover. She started to get behind the *Oquendo*, but, in spite of the fire from the shore batteries, the *Gloucester* went in after her, with every available gun doing its utmost, and fairly filling her with small holes. At last the destroyer could stand it no longer, and with a lurch she struck on a reef and began to break. In a moment more the water poured over her sides, and her crew was compelled to surrender. The instant the surrender was made, the converted yacht, from being an angel of vengeance, became an angel of mercy, and to gallant Lieutenant-commander Wainwright fell the honor of rescuing hundreds of wounded and drowning Spaniards who must otherwise have perished.

Such was the close of this running fight. At the front, the four big warships were still trying to push on, with the *Brooklyn*, *Oregon*, *Iowa*, *Texas*, and *Indiana* in the chase. With a full head of steam the noble *Oregon* reached a position between Commodore Schley's flagship and the *Texas*, and every vessel in the line belched forth its messengers of death and destruction.

Presently a cry echoed throughout the squadron regarding the *Oquendo*. "She is on fire! See, she is burning in three places!"

The report was true. A shell had burst near the quarterdeck of the warship, and now high to the sky arose a column of yellowish red smoke. Then the flames burst out of her bow. In vain the Spaniards tried to man their fire-hose. A shower of projectiles from the fighting-tops of our own ships assailed them and drove them to shelter, while the big guns continued to "pump up" shot and shell as never before.

But the *Oquendo* was no worse off than the *Maria Teresa*, if as badly. She staggered on, and a few minutes later passed her sister ship as if looking for aid, when aid could not be given.

"The *Maria Teresa* is on fire!" was the next cry, but a few minutes later. "Down goes Cervera's flag! Hurrah, boys, we've got em 'on the run! Give it to 'em hot!"

Yes, the admiral's flag was down, and so was the mast that had held it. Would the Spanish emblem go up again? All watched anxiously, and meanwhile the *Brooklyn* continued to pour in her hottest fire.

"She's going ashore!" rang through the American flagship. "She's burning up!" and then came a heavy shot from the *Brooklyn*, another from the *Texas*, and staggering like a thing of life, the *Maria Teresa* ran for the beach, a mass of seething and roaring flames. Admiral Cervera's doom was sealed. Five minutes later the *Oquendo* was also cast on the shore.

Four of the enemy's ships had been laid low, but the great fight was by no means over. Shot and shell were flying around the *Vizcaya* and *Cristobal Colon*, but both warships kept on their way, the *Colon* slowly but surely forging to the front. Both Spanish ships were returning the Americans' hot fire, and many a shot hit the *Brooklyn* and many a shell burst over her deck. But as yet no serious damage had been inflicted.

But a calamity was at hand, as rapid in its execution as it was appalling. Near the forward eight-inch turret George Ellis was standing, watching the struggle of the enemy's ships to escape.

"Ellis, give us the range again!" shouted Captain Cook.

"I'll have it in a moment, captain," answered the chief yeoman, and took up his stadiometer. Making his calculation, he turned to Commodore Schley, who was but a short distance away. "It is fourteen hundred yards to the *Vizcaya*, sir," he said.

These were the last words he ever uttered, for an instant after there was the whistling of a shell, and those standing around were horrified to see Ellis's headless body drop to the deck below. The poor fellow had been killed instantly, in the very midst of his duties. What a shock this was to those about him I will leave my readers to imagine. Never until now had they realized what this awful war meant. "Poor Ellis, he was such a fine man!" murmured one comrade as he turned away. And then his face grew even more sober. "But he's the first on board of this ship. What of those poor Dons yonder, who are going down by the wholesale?" And though they were enemies, his heart beat in sympathy for the poor wretches who were struggling madly amid shot, shell, fire, and water for their lives. Fortunately the *Iowa* was already coming to the succor of the defeated ones.

"We're going to catch it now, lad," remarked Caleb to Walter, as he pointed through a rift in the cloud of smoke hanging over the gun. "There are two of the enemy's ships, and they are both going to pound us. Where in the world are our other vessels?"

"The *Oregon* is coming up!" came from the after-deck, a minute later. "And the *Texas* isn't far behind."

Around the gun it was suffocating, and every hand was ready to drop. Indeed, fainting fits were frequent, but the most that could be done for a sufferer was to either throw some water over his head or yell out to the surgeons' helpers to carry the men to the ward room for treatment. As the *Brooklyn* was struck here and there, splinters began to fly, and a number were injured, although no one seriously.

The *Texas* had done wonderful work on the *Maria Teresa* and the *Oquendo*, and now did her best to keep to the front of the chase. But the speed was too great for her, and gradually she dropped behind, although still continuing to throw shot and shell after the *Vizcaya* that had dropped some distance behind the *Colon*. It was now apparent to all that if any vessel was going to get away it was to be the *Colon*, for her speed was greater than the *Vizcaya* and as yet she had hardly been touched.

"The *Vizcaya*, boys, the *Vizcaya*!" came the cry from the quarterdeck. "Don't let her screen the *Colon*!"

"We'll pound 'em both!" was the answer. "Remember the *Maine*! Remember Manila Bay!"

And then the mighty guns of the *Brooklyn* and *Oregon* roared out swifter than ever, and the *Vizcaya*, doing her best to sink one or the other of the American warships, was raked as if passing through a blizzard of fire, until her men were forced again and again from their posts, and at last the guns were abandoned. Then fire caught the craft in its awful embrace, and rolling from side to side, she, too, sought for a harbor of refuge, but found none. Down came her colors, and at the same instant she struck with a crash on the rocks. The fight had started at quarter to ten. Now it was but quarter past eleven,—just an hour and a half,—and all the Spanish ships but one had been destroyed. Such is the appalling swiftness of modern naval warfare. Where in olden days jack tars had fought for hours, they now fought for minutes.

But the destruction of the *Vizcaya* had taken time, and the *Colon* was forging onward, panting and throbbing like a thing of life trying to escape from unspeakable terrors. Down in the bowels of the warship the furnaces were at a white heat, and the engineers had long since pushed their engines far past the danger point. "Faster! faster!" came the cry from the deck and tower. "It will be better to blow up than to allow the Yankee pigs to sink us. We must save at least one ship!" And the engines pounded and quivered, threatening each instant to blow into a million pieces. For once Don Quixote was making the run of his life.

Unable to stand the heat, Walter had obtained permission to lay off for a few minutes and get some fresh air. A look from the spar deck had showed him the *Colon* dashing far ahead, enveloped in a thin line of smoke. Every few seconds a flash of fire would come from her stern guns, but the marksmanship was poor and no serious damage was done to the *Brooklyn*.

The boy returned to his gun to find Caleb and the others in deep perplexity. Something was wrong with a shell, and it had become wedged in the gun and could not be pushed forward to its proper place or hauled back. "We can't use Polly any more!" groaned Caleb.

"I'll fix her!" cried Si Doring, and caught up a rammer. In a moment the brave Yankee lad was crawling out over the smoking piece toward the muzzle. But he had scarcely reached the outward end of the gun than the *Brooklyn* gave a lurch and down he slipped over the side and into space!

FINAL SCENES OF THE GREAT FIGHT

"Si has fallen overboard!"

The cry came from half a dozen throats at once, and Walter's heart almost stopped beating, so attached had he become to the Yankee lad.

"If he's overboard, he'll be sucked under and drowned," he groaned. "I wonder if I can see anything of him."

Without a second thought he leaped on the gun and began to crawl out, on hands and knees, as perilous a thing to do, with the vessel going at full speed, as one would care to undertake.

"Come back!" roared Caleb, trying to detain him. "You'll go overboard, too."

At that moment came a cry from below, and looking down the steel side of the *Brooklyn*, Walter beheld Si clinging to a rope ladder, one of several flung over, to be used in case of emergency. "Si, are you all right?" he called loudly.

"I—reckon—I—I am," came with a pant.

"But I had an awful tumble and the wind is about knocked out o' me." And then Si began to climb up to the deck.

"He's on the ladder and he's all right," shouted Walter, to those still behind the gun. Then a sudden idea struck him. "Hand me another rammer, Stuben."

"Mine cracious! don't you try dot," cried the hose-man. "You vos fall ofer chust like Si."

"Yes, come in here," put in Caleb, and Paul also called upon him to return.

"I'm all right," was the boy's reply. "Give it to me, Stuben." And catching the rammer from the hose-man, Steve Colton passed it forward. "In war we have got to take some risks," he reasoned, as Caleb gave him a severe look.

"Then why didn't you get out on the gun, Steve?" was the old gunner's dry response; and the second gun captain said no more.

Rammer in hand, Walter edged closer and closer to the muzzle of the Polly. The *Brooklyn* was moving up and down over the long green waves, sending the spray flying on both sides of the bow. He gave one look down, felt himself growing dizzy, and then kept his eyes on the gun.



RAMMER IN HAND, WALTER EDGED CLOSE TO THE MUZZLE.

At last the muzzle was gained, and not without difficulty the rammer was inserted. The projectile had not been very tightly wedged, and a firm pressure sent it backward, so that Caleb could catch it and pull it out through the breech. Then throwing the rammer aboard, Walter lost no

time in coming in again. He had been exposed to the direct fire of the enemy, but no shot had come near him.

"Boy, you're too plucky," exclaimed Caleb, catching him by the shoulder. "You ought to be flogged for your daring. Let me see your hands. Ah, just as I thought; both of 'em blistered. Go and put some sweet oil on 'em, and a bit of flour. I'll bet the end of Polly is red-hot."

"Well, it is pretty hot," replied Walter, and then he was glad enough to follow Caleb's advice, for both hands smarted a good deal. Soon Si joined him, to get something for his hands also.

The *Colon* had now drawn out of range, so firing would have been a useless waste of ammunition. Down to the gunners came the order: "Cease firing." And a moment later, "All hands on deck for an airing." What a laughing and shouting ensued as the jackies poured up, to secure the best viewing places they could within the ship's regulations. Hot, tired, ready to drop from exhaustion, they shook hands with each other, sang, laughed, and whistled.

"Three cheers for Commodore Schley!" came suddenly from somebody, and the cheers came with vigor, and a tiger, and then came a cheer for Captain Cook and a cheer for the *Oregon*, coming up with ever increasing speed. The *Oregon's* men cheered in return, and for a moment one would have thought this was holiday-making instead of grim war.

The *Colon* was close to shore, while the *Brooklyn* and the *Oregon* lay from two to three miles out to sea. Some miles farther westward the Cuban shore slopes southward to Cape Cruz. If the *Colon* kept on her present course she would have to make for the cape, thus coming down toward the American warships. "We will catch her there," said Commodore Schley, confidently.

The *Oregon* was flying the signal "Remember the *Maine*" from her masthead, and as she drew still closer to the *Brooklyn*, another shout of approval went up. The two warships would fight the *Colon* between them, if only they could get within range.

It was now noontime, and a hasty mess was served all around, and the men continued to air themselves, something easy to do with the ponderous ship speeding the waters at an eighteen-knot rate. Suddenly from the *Oregon* came the boom of a thirteen-inch gun, and the shell fell just astern of the *Colon*, sending the water up like a fountain. The battle was again on.

"Now for it!" cried Caleb, as the Spanish warship turned southward down the coast, and the Polly spoke up as fiercely as at any time during the contest.

"The Spaniards are losing heart!" came the cry, a few minutes later. "They ain't doing half the firing they were!"

It was true; the *Colon* was running short of ammunition, and her officers saw what a hopeless fight a contest with the *Brooklyn* and *Oregon* would prove to be. With shot and shell falling all around him, Captain Moreu hauled down his flag and sent his ship ashore at Rio Tarquino.

The battle was won, and Dewey's magnificent victory at Manila, which the world in general had declared was a miracle that could not be matched, had been duplicated. Henceforth American warships and American sailors would stand as the equals of any nation on the face of the globe.

And now that the contest was over what was to follow? To me, the hours that came after are even greater in honor than those glorious hours of victory. Already down the shore, the work of rescuing the sailors and marines from the *Maria Teresa*, *Oquendo*, and *Vizcaya* had begun, and now the crews of the *Brooklyn* and *Oregon* turned in to aid the wounded and the dying, and those in danger of drowning, on the *Colon*. Boat after boat went out, close to the sinking cruiser, now burning fiercely, with abandoned guns going off, loose powder and shells exploding, and magazines in danger of tearing all asunder. Amid such perils did our noble jackies work, hauling man after man from the ship, or from the water, and taking them to our own warships, there to be cared for as tenderly as though they were our own. Some of the Spaniards could not understand this treatment. They had been told that the Americans were butchers and had no hearts, and when they realized the truth many burst into tears of joy.

When the battle was all over, some of our officers and men could not comprehend what had been accomplished—that a whole fleet of Spanish warships had been destroyed, that hundreds of men had been killed and many more wounded and taken prisoners, and that the loss to our side had been but one man killed, a handful wounded, and no ship seriously damaged. "It was an act of Providence," said more than one, and Captain Philip of the *Texas* spoke thus to his crew, as he gathered all around him on this never-to-be-forgotten Sunday, so bright and clear:—

"I wish to make confession that I have implicit faith in God and in the officers and crew of the *Texas*, but my faith in you is only secondary to my faith in God. We have seen what He has done for us, in allowing us to achieve so great a victory, and I want to ask all of you, or at least every man who has no scruples, to uncover his head with me and silently offer a word of thanks to God for His goodness toward us all." The thanks were given, some dropping upon their knees to deliver them, and this outpouring of hearts travelled from one ship to another throughout the entire fleet.

"Poor Ellis!" said Walter; "the only seaman to give up his life! It's too bad!" And when George Ellis's body was buried with all naval honors he wept as bitterly as did anybody on board of the flagship.

The victory had been gained, but the work of the fleet was not yet over. The army still occupied the outskirts of Santiago, and General Shafter had sent word to General Toral that unless he surrendered, the city would be shelled Monday morning. At a conference with Admiral Sampson, later on, it was decided that the fleet should take part in the bombardment even if it was necessary to force an entrance into the harbor. Without delay our warships were gotten into condition for this task.

But the bombardment did not come—for the reason that both on land and sea the enemy had had enough of fighting. Several days passed, and the conditions of a surrender were discussed. In the meantime Lieutenant Hobson and his men were released and turned over to us in exchange for a number of Spanish prisoners. Several of the men remembered seeing Walter, and were glad to learn that the youth had escaped.

The battle on sea had taken place on July the third, and my readers can imagine what a glorious Fourth of July followed, not only among the soldiers and sailors, but among our people at large. All over the land cannons boomed, pistols cracked, rockets flared, bells pealed forth, and bands played for the marching of thousands. It was a real old-fashioned "Yankee Doodle time," as one down-east paper put it, and North, South, East, and West united in celebrating as never before. Less than two weeks later Santiago surrendered, a peace protocol followed; and the war with Spain came to an end.

CHAPTER XXXI

TOGETHER ONCE MORE—CONCLUSION

"And now that business is finished, an' I'm most awfully glad on it; yes, I am!"

It was Job Dowling who spoke. The uncle and guardian of the three Russell boys was sitting by the side window of his home in Buffalo. In his lap lay a small, flat package, which had been wrapped in heavy brown paper and well sealed. In his hand was an open letter which he had just finished reading.

"It was a dreadful price to pay thet detective," he resumed. "But I couldn't git them hairlooms back no other way, and I'm afraid the boys would raise the roof ef I didn't git 'em back. It's a comfort to know thet thief was caught and is going to be tried for even a wuss crime than stealin' them rings an' the watch an' the Australian diamond. I hope they give him about twenty years in prison." He paused to put the package away in his dilapidated secretary. "So Ben is coming home this week? I wonder what he'll have to say when he faces me? Somehow, I don't know wot I'm going to say myself." And he dropped into his chair again.

Job Dowling was a different man from what he had been. The determined stand taken by Larry, Walter, and Ben had opened his eyes to the knowledge that he had no mere children to deal with, but boys who were almost men, and who were fully capable of taking care of themselves. His visit to New York, when he was robbed of the Russell heirlooms, had caused him considerable loss of self-confidence, and the trip to Boston after the thief had awakened him to the fact that, after all, he was of but little importance in this world. His efforts to help the police recover the heirlooms had been laughed at, and even the detective had shown him plainly that he was hindering more than he was helping. Finally he had returned home in disgust, and the detective had finished the work on the case alone, recovered everything, and sent Deck Mumpers to jail to stand trial on half a dozen charges. The detective's bill had been over two hundred dollars, a sum the paying of which had nearly given Job Dowling a fit; but now the whole thing was settled and he was awaiting Ben's return, for the gallant young volunteer had been shot in the left arm on the day before Santiago surrendered, and was coming home on sick leave.

Ding! ding! it was a double ring at the front-door bell, and before Mrs. Graham, the new housekeeper, and a great improvement on the tartar-like Mrs. Rafferty, could get to the door, Job Dowling was there himself.

"Ben an' Walter!" he exclaimed, as he found himself confronted by two nephews instead of one, as expected. "Well—er, how is this?"

"How do you do, Uncle Job!" exclaimed Ben, extending his hand.

"Aren't you glad to see me too, Uncle Job?" put in Walter.

"Why—er—of course, of course!" came with a stammer; and Job Dowling held out both of his bony hands. "Come right in. This is Mrs. Graham, my new workwoman." And the lady of the house, dressed in a neat wrapper and with a clean kitchen apron on, came forward and bowed. "Knows a sight more than Mrs. Rafferty did," went on the uncle, in a whisper.

"I didn't know Walter was coming on till day before yesterday," continued Ben. "We met quite by accident in New York, and we made up to come on together and surprise you."

"I see—I see." Job Dowling was still very nervous, and he could hardly tell why. At one instant he thought he ought to quarrel with them, the next that it would be quite proper to embrace them and tell them they were forgiven and could henceforth do as they saw proper. But he chose a

middle course and did neither. "Sit down and make yourselves to hum, and, Mrs. Graham, you had best get a few extry chops—three won't be enough. Tell Boggs to send me the best on the stand."

At this order Walter nudged Ben, and both looked at each other and smiled. "He's reforming," whispered the young sailor. "Only give him time, and he'll be all right."

"Yes, Mr. Dowling," put in the housekeeper. "And you said something about pie yesterday, when Master Ben should come. What of that?"

"Ah, yes, so I did, so I did." The former miser wrinkled his brow. "How much does a pie cost?"

"Ten and twenty cents."

"Boys, do you think you could eat a twenty-cent pie?"

"Do we?" cried Walter. "Just try us and see, Uncle Job." And now he clasped his guardian half affectionately by the shoulder.

"Then get the twenty-cent pie, Mrs. Graham, and be sure an' pick out the best. You—er—have the other things?"

"Yes, sir—potatoes, green corn, and coffee."

"Very good." And as the housekeeper retired, Job Dowling turned to the boys again. "And how is your arm, Ben? Not seriously hurt, I trust?"

"It's only a scratch," was the answer.

"And you, Walter?"

"I'm all right. But how have you been, Uncle Job, and what of that stolen stuff?"

"Oh, I'm only tolerable—got quite some rheumatism. The hairlooms is all safe—but they cost me two hundred and twenty-seven dollars an' a half to git 'em!" And the guardian nodded to emphasize his words.

"Well, they're worth it," answered Ben, promptly; and Job Dowling did not dare dispute the assertion. "Where are they?"

"In the desk. I'll show 'em to you, and then ye can both tell me all about yer adventures on the water and in Cuby."

The heirlooms had just been brought out, and Ben was examining the watch, when a form darkened the window opening,—the form of a boy dressed in a natty sailor suit. All looked up in wonder, and all cried out in unison:—

"Larry!"

"Ben, Walter, and Uncle Job!" came from the youth who had fought so gallantly under Dewey at Manila. "Here's a family gathering, for sure!" And with a light leap he cleared the window-sill and actually fell into his brothers' arms, while Job Dowling looked on with a half smile on his wrinkled face.

"I couldn't remain away from the United States any longer," explained Larry, when, an hour after, all sat down to the really excellent dinner Job Dowling had provided. "While I was at Hong Kong I got a good chance to ship on a steamer for San Francisco, and we came home on the double-quick, for the government had chartered the vessel to carry troops to the Philippines. Maybe I'll go back under Dewey some time, but not just yet. I've got some prize money coming to me, I don't know yet how much, and I'll lie off to see."

"And I've got prize money coming, too," added Walter. "I like the navy first-rate, and shall stick to it for the present, even if I have a chance of being mustered out."

"I haven't any prize money coming, but I am to be a second lieutenant of volunteers," put in Ben. "Our regiment is to be mustered out very soon, and then I'm going to try for something else in the same line."

"And what is that, Ben?" asked Job Dowling and the other boys together.

"I'm going to try for a commission in the regular army."

"Hurrah! that's the talk!" came from Larry. "And if you stay in the army, I'll see what I can do toward working my way up in the navy."

Then both lads looked toward their guardian. Job Dowling scratched his chin in perplexity, and cleared his throat.

"All right, boys—I should say young men, fer ye ain't none o' ye boys no more—go an' do as ye please, I ain't got nothin' agin' it. You have all done yer duty to Uncle Sam, an' thet bein' so, it stands to reason ye are capable o' doin' yer duty to yerselves an' to me. To look back it 'pears to me thet I made some kind of a mistake at the start with ye, an' so I say, you willin' an' me willin', we'll take a fresh start,—an' there's my hand on't."

"Uncle Job, you're a—a brick!" came from Walter, and a general handshaking followed, and then,

as Mrs. Graham came on with a coffee-pot and the dessert, Ben arose with the cup in his hand.

"Boys, let us drink Uncle Job's health in a cup of coffee!"

"We will!" came from his brothers.

"And eat it, too,—in a piece of that pie!" concluded the ever-lighthearted Larry.

Here we will bring to a close the story of Walter Russell's adventures while "Fighting in Cuban Waters," which has taken us through a thrilling naval campaign and shown us what true American pluck can accomplish even under the most trying circumstances.

As my readers know, the Russell boys had a large inheritance coming to them, and now that Job Dowling had come to his senses regarding a proper treatment of them, it was to be hoped that matters would move much more smoothly for all concerned.

Through Larry it was learned that his old-time friend, Luke Striker, was still with Dewey in Philippine waters and had been promoted to the position of first gun-captain on board the *Olympia*, much to the old Yankee's credit and delight.

Frank Bulkley, Ben's soldier chum, was still sick with the fever, but was at his home in the metropolis, and was out of danger, which was much to be thankful for, considering what awful havoc that fever had made with the army of invasion.

Walter's friends were all on the *Brooklyn*, and it was not long before the lad was anxious to get back to them, for he had become very much attached to the noble flagship that had rendered such a good account of herself in the mighty conflict with Cervera's fleet.

Gilbert Pennington, Ben's friend of the Rough Riders, was in Cuba, but expected to come north shortly. Gilbert had an offer of a position as bookkeeper with an importing firm in New York, but was destined to see a good deal more of fighting ere he settled to work behind a desk.

When Ben spoke of trying for a commission, and Larry said he should remain in the navy, both thought that fighting for the American army and navy was at an end. This supposition was correct so far as Spain was concerned, but the insurgents in the Philippines under General Aguinaldo refused to recognize Uncle Sam's authority, and it was not long before a large army had to be sent to Manila and other points, to coöperate with Dewey in restoring peace and order. Ben could not resist the temptation to join these soldiers in a distant clime, and with more fighting in view, Larry hastened to rejoin the *Olympia*. In another volume, to be entitled, "Under Otis in the Philippines; Or, A Young Officer in the Tropics," we shall follow the future adventures of these two brothers, and shall also see more of Gilbert Pennington, Luke Striker, and several others of our old acquaintances.

And now, for the time being, good-by to all our friends, and especially to Walter Russell, the American lad who made such a record for pluck while "Fighting in Cuban Waters."

By EDWARD STRATEMEYER

THE OLD GLORY SERIES

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Ideas.

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BY EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

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