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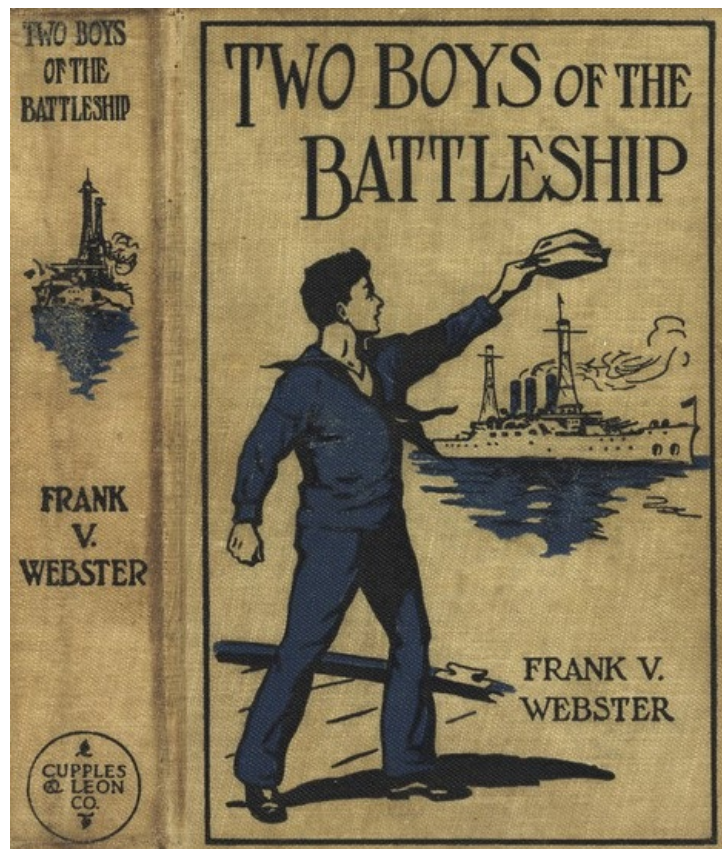
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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TWO BOYS OF THE BATTLESHIP; OR, FOR THE HONOR OF UNCLE SAM \*\*\*





AN INSTANT LATER THERE WAS A VERITABLE FOUNTAIN  
OF EARTH AND STONES SENT UP INTO THE AIR.

## TWO BOYS OF THE BATTLESHIP

Or

For the Honor of Uncle Sam

BY

FRANK V. WEBSTER

AUTHOR OF "ONLY A FARM BOY," "THE NEWSBOY PARTNERS,"  
"AIRSHIP ANDY," "TOM TAYLOR AT WEST POINT,"  
"COWBOY DAVE," ETC.

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BOOKS FOR BOYS

By FRANK V. WEBSTER

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THE BOY FROM THE RANCH  
THE YOUNG TREASURER HUNTER  
BOB, THE CASTAWAY  
THE YOUNG FIREMEN OF LAKEVILLE  
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TWO BOYS OF THE BATTLESHIP  
JACK OF THE PONY EXPRESS

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TWO BOYS OF THE BATTLESHIP  
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"Say, Frank, it's certainly getting pretty bad; isn't it?"

"Well, Ned, it surely isn't getting any better. I'm positive of that. Look out! Here comes a big comber!"

There was a surge of green, foam-capped water, which looked as if it would engulf and overwhelm the dory motor boat, in which crouched two youths, one about eighteen, and the other slightly older.

"Hold her nose right into it, Frank!" cried the younger lad, who was bending over the laboring motor.

"That's what I'm doing," was the answer of his brother, "Whoop! Some water came aboard that time!"

The dory, built for rough work in the open sea, did not actually ship the wave, for her high and peculiarly built bow and stern were intended to meet just such emergencies, but there was a heavy storm brewing, and the wind whipped enough water off the top of the big wave to make three or four inches in the bottom of the craft.

"Think we can make the inlet, Frank?" inquired Ned Arden rather anxiously, as he straightened up, for now that the one big wave had been successfully coped with, there would be a short period of calm in the turmoil of the sea.

"Sure we'll make it!" asserted Frank, as he shifted the wheel slightly to meet another comber, though not so large as the former one. "Of course we'll make it. But I don't mind admitting that I wish we were in the bay right now. The storm broke sooner than I thought it would."

"But we've got a good boat," Ned remarked, as he made a slight adjustment to the oil cups, to feed a little more of the lubricant to the toiling motor, which was enclosed in a sort of box amidships of the dory. Ned replaced the cover of the motor compartment and braced himself on a locker seat near his brother.

"Yes, a fine boat," agreed Frank. "She'll weather a worse storm than this."

"Not worse than this is going to be," insisted Ned, as he looked up at the gray and leaden sky above them. The strong wind was sweeping along, snipping off patches of salty spray from the tops of the waves, sending it with stinging force into the faces of the two boys. Overhead masses of black clouds scudded across the general gray surface of the sky. As yet there had been no rain, but Frank and Ned Arden were as wet from the spray as though there were a veritable downpour.

"Well, I'd trust this tub almost anywhere," Frank said, rising slightly to peer ahead that he might see where to steer, for the atmosphere was thickening as the storm developed more and more. "She's proved what she can do, Ned, and we don't need to be afraid as long as she holds together and the motor keeps working."

"That's the only trouble," Ned replied; "the motor. If she goes back on us and we lose headway, we'll get into the trough of the sea, and then it will be all up with us," and he laughed grimly.

"Don't borrow trouble," advised the elder lad. "The motor isn't going back on us. She isn't that kind."

"One cylinder missed a couple of times, though."

"Yes, the gasoline isn't as good as it ought to be. I'm not going to get any more of it from Pierson. Look out, Ned! Here comes another!"

The boys crouched and turned their backs as their boat went slapping her way through another big wave. For a moment they could scarcely see because of the salty spray that filled the air, but they shook their heads to rid their faces of water, and looked eagerly, and somewhat anxiously, first into the interior of their craft to see how much water she had shipped, and then both peered, somewhat apprehensively, toward a long, low-lying body of land toward which they were urging their boat.

"It's a good bit off yet," said Ned, as he pointed toward Fire Island.

"Yes, but don't worry. We'll make it," his brother reassured him. "Guess I'll start the bilge pump. No use having all this water sloshing around our feet."

"I'll start the pump. You keep to the wheel," answered Ned. "I don't want to try my hand at steering just at the present time. Say, this is some storm!"

The younger lad threw into gear a small auxiliary pump attached to the motor. This pump was designed to free the boat of water, for Frank and Ned Arden often went some distance out to sea in their craft, and more than once they had shipped enough water to make them not only uncomfortable, but to put them in danger. So, to avoid the heavy and tiring work of baling, they had installed a small but powerful pump.

This the motor was soon operating, sending the water over the side by means of a small hose.

"That's better," observed Frank, when the interior of the dory was almost free from the fluid. "Shut off the pump now, Ned. I want all the power of the motor I can get."

"Why, aren't we holding our own?"

"Yes, but not much more than that. The tide's running strong, and it will be worse when we get to the inlet."

Ned peered through the gloom caused by the lowering storm-clouds, and sought to read his brother's face. Ned was not afraid, nor a coward, but if there was danger ahead he wanted to be prepared for the worst. However, the countenance of Frank showed no unusual anxiety, though his lips were firmly and grimly closed. Frank would drive on through the storm, and if it were humanly possible he would bring the boat safely through the inlet of Fire Island and into the quiet and protected waters of Great South Bay.

Frank and Ned Arden lived with their uncle, Philip Arden, just outside the town of Ipswich, Long Island. Their home was a large, old-fashioned house, and the grounds extended down to the beach of the Great South Bay, on the waters of which the lads spent much of their time.

They loved the sea, and from the time they were small boys and could barely swim, they fairly reveled in its saltiness, and were out on the bay or ocean in calm and storm.

At first they had been allowed to go only a little way from shore in a safe, but big and clumsy row boat. Then, as they became older and more experienced, they secured a better craft, and even ventured to cross the stretch of water which lay between the mainland of Long Island and Fire Island, that long, narrow strip of land which has been the cause of so many wrecks. On one side of Fire Island pounds the never quiet waves of the ocean, while on the other side, only a few minutes' walk distant, are the calm and shallow waters of the bay. The bay and ocean are connected by several inlets, and the one for which Frank and Ned were heading was the one near Fire Island Light.

Once through that and in the quiet bay, it would be a small matter to make the run to their dock in their speedy motor dory.

They had had this boat about six months, purchasing it for their pleasure, for they were quite well off. It was not the first motor craft they had owned, but it was the one they liked best, for they could venture out on the open sea with it.

"And in quite a storm, too," said Frank, speaking of the matter. "But we certainly have given it a good test to-day," he added to his brother. "She's shown what she can do."

"That's what she has, old man. But we're almost at the inlet now; aren't we?"

"Yes, a few minutes now. Wow! Here comes the rain!"

The storm, having lashed itself up to a certain point, now added a deluge of rain to the gale of wind, and the darkness increased.

The dory rose and fell, occasionally her propeller being out of the water so that it raced. Frank and Ned braced themselves against the rolling, pitching and tossing motion, Frank now and then raising himself to peer ahead to mark a course for steering.

"Better start the pump again!" he shouted into his brother's ear. "We've more water in her than I like to see."

"Thought you said we'd need all our power to make the inlet."

"So we will. But you can run the pump a few minutes before we'll have to buck the tide. Shut her off when I tell you."

The two boys gave their attention to managing their craft now. Gradually she was emptied of water again, and, at a nod from Frank, Ned disconnected the pump gears. As he stood up after doing this, he saw, on the open sea back of him and about two miles off shore, a dark mass which seemed shrouded in smoke.

"Look Frank!" he cried. "A ship on fire!"

Frank gave a quick glance.

"No!" he answered, raising his voice to make it heard above the roar of the wind and the swish of the rain, "that's a battleship—the *Texas*, I think. I read she was to pass down this way. Yes, that's what it is—one of Uncle Sam's battleships! Say, I wish we were nearer and could get a better view. Isn't that great!" and Frank, with shining eyes, looked earnestly in the direction of the big craft which moved along over the tempestuous sea as though no strife nor storm could produce an impression on her.

"It sure is great!" agreed Ned. "Say, Frank, do you know what my one ambition is?"

"Well, you change so often that it's hard to keep track."

"I've never changed from this one. I'd like to be a sailor on a battleship."

"So would I, Ned! I've never talked much about it, because it didn't seem of much use. Uncle Phil would never let us. But if I ever get the chance I'm going to have a try at life on a battleship."

"And I'm with you, Frank!" Ned eagerly cried. "Only I guess there isn't much chance. We've got to finish at college, I suppose, and then buckle down to business. But it's the sea for mine every time, and every chance I get!"

"Same here. Now look out for things, Ned. We're going through the inlet. And say, maybe the tide isn't running strong!"

With one last and lingering look at the battleship, which was now almost lost to sight in the spray and spume of the sea and the mist of driving rain, Ned crouched down in the dory and watched his brother at the wheel, as the older lad turned the craft to make the trip through the inlet.

Ned crouched to keep as much as possible out of the way of the flying spray, and also to bring his weight low-down in the craft and thus make her more seaworthy. For though it was not likely that the dory would capsize, it was not wise to offer too many chances to the sea.

"Can you make it?" shouted Ned.

Frank nodded his head. It was no time for talk now.

The stanch craft rose and fell on the waves. She tumbled and tossed about, but dories are made for rough weather and heavy seas, and the boat of the two boys was no exception.

Once again Ned lifted off the cover of the engine box to see that the oil was being properly fed to the machinery, for the gasoline motor was under a severe strain now, forcing the boat through the inlet against the power of the out-rushing tide.

"All right?" asked Frank, snapping out the words, but never taking his eyes from the course ahead.

"All right," Ned answered.

On through the storm, through the driving rain and the stinging salt spume, labored the dory, until she was in the more quiet waters of Great South Bay, and then, for the first time since they realized that they were caught in a bad storm, our two heroes breathed with comparative freedom.

"Whew!" exclaimed Frank, with a sigh of relief as he allowed his tired legs to stretch a bit, for he had sat in a braced position to manage the wheel. "Whew! That was *some* storm!"

"It was great!" declared Ned, laughing now. "I love a good blow!"

"So do I, and now that we have tried out the *Ellen* and know what she can do, we'll not have to worry so much. It sure is some great little boat!" and Frank patted the wheel affectionately, as one might caress a favorite horse or dog. The motor boat really seemed a thing of life to the boys.

Their hard work was not yet over, however, for Great South Bay is very shallow, and it does not take much wind to roughen the water there. But, of course, the waves were nothing like those out on the open sea, and, as Ned remarked, "it was pie"; meaning, in his own way, that it was easy navigating.

"Well, we're almost in now," Frank remarked, a little later, as he nodded in the direction of the tall wireless mast at Sayville—the wireless by which messages are sent directly to and from Germany. The mast is a landmark for miles around.

"Yes, we'll be at the house shortly now," agreed Ned. "Let me take the wheel awhile. You must be tired."

"I am," Frank admitted, as he surrendered the spokes to his brother. The latter steered to where their row boat was moored at the anchorage, and having made everything aboard the dory snug for the coming night of storm, and having anchored her, bow and stern, Frank and Ned rowed to shore and started up the walk toward their uncle's house.

The two boys were orphans, their mother having died when they were respectively nine and eight years old. Mr. Arden was an importer of coffee and other tropical and South American products, and had, at one time, been wealthy.

But the death of his wife seemed to deprive Mr. Arden of some of his business ability. Perhaps he lost heart, and had little ambition left. Whatever the cause, he gradually lost money and curtailed his activities until he was in danger of bankruptcy. Of course Frank and Ned were then too small to know about this.

Then Mr. Arden's brother Philip, a shrewd business man, stepped in to the aid of the sorrowing man. Philip Arden knew little or nothing of the importing trade, but he had good natural abilities, and he gave his whole attention to his brother's affairs.

The effect was to save a business on the verge of ruin, and for some years the two Arden brothers were in partnership. For a time the father of Ned and Frank seemed to regain his old-time manner. But he really was a man with a broken heart, and five years after the death of his beloved wife he gave up the fight and died, after a brief illness.

Frank and Ned were thus left orphans, but, thanks to the business ability of Philip Arden, the boys were heirs to a considerable fortune. It was natural that they should now make their home with their uncle. The latter had never married, and for the last few years he had taken up his residence with his brother and nephews at Ipswich, where the Ardens had lived for many years in an old homestead on the bay.

Of course Frank and Ned grieved sorely over the death of their father. They did not remember their mother quite so well, though often they would go into the parlor and look at the picture of a woman with a sweet, but rather sad face. It was a picture before which they had often seen their

father stand with bowed head and hands clasped behind his back. And often, when he came softly out of the room where the portrait hung, there was a suspicious moisture in Mr. Arden's eyes.

But Frank and Ned were healthy, hearty lads; and at fourteen and thirteen grief does not last very long. Kind Nature did not intend it so. And in a little while Ned and Frank at least partly forgot their sorrow in the activities of life.

Their uncle carried on their father's business, though on a smaller scale, and their money, inherited from their father, was in Philip Arden's hands, as the guardian of the two boys. Frank and Ned never asked how their fortune was invested. They took it for granted that it was safe. They always had, within reason, all the spending money they needed, and they were well supplied with the things that go to make life enjoyable.

Their tastes were simple, however, and the most that they asked for was something connected with boats. They seemed to live on the water, especially in the summer.

Both boys attended Columbia University, in New York City, and were doing well in their studies. They had no special profession in mind, but their uncle rather took it for granted that they would, after their graduation, take up the importing trade with him.

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"I suppose we might as well do it as anything else," Frank said.

"Yes, for perhaps we can get a chance to make a trip to South America," Ned agreed. "I've always wanted to see foreign countries."

They spoke of this again as they hurried on through the storm to the shelter of the big white house.

"I tell you what would be better than going to South America on importing business," said Ned.

"What?" Frank inquired.

"Going down there, or for that matter, to any foreign country, on a battleship!"

"Cracky! I should say so!" exclaimed the older lad. "I wonder if we'll ever actually be on one?"

"Well, we were on one once," Ned remarked.

"The *Nebraska*, yes. But only on a tour of inspection with a lot of fellows of our class. I want to actually belong to the battleship myself—I don't want to be just a visitor."

"How about firing the big guns?" asked Ned.

15

"Yes, I'd want that, too! Oh, say, but what's the use of talking about it?"

"None, I guess."

But had Frank and Ned only known it, they were nearer to their hearts' desire than ever before.

"Oh, how wet you are!" exclaimed Mrs. Brun, the housekeeper, as the two brothers entered the house. "Why, you're soaked!"

"Yes, we are a bit damp," admitted Frank. He was putting it mildly, for the water was dripping from him and his brother in streams as they stood in the middle of the kitchen, having entered through the rear door with due consideration for the front hall rugs.

"Get your wet things off at once," said Mrs. Brun, "and I'll make you some hot tea."

"Oh, we're not cold," Ned answered. He and Frank took off their coats and shoes, and the housekeeper took charge of their garments while they hurried to their room to change to dry things.

"Your uncle has been asking for you," Mrs. Brun called to them as they went upstairs.

"We'll see him in a few minutes," Frank called back.

A little later, dry and comfortable, they went to the library. They found their uncle pacing up and down the room, evidently in a highly nervous and excited state. He glanced up as they entered, and exclaimed:

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"Boys, I am quite worried!"

"Worried about us?" asked Frank. "Why, we were out in the dory. It was a bad storm, but—"

"No, I wasn't worried about you. I felt you could take care of yourselves. But, at the same time, I am glad you have returned safely. No, I am worried about other matters. Boys, I have a confession to make to you."

"A confession, Uncle Philip?" repeated Frank.

"Yes. I had rather you heard the truth from me, than to get a garbled account from some one else, as you are sure to do sooner or later. Boys, I am likely to be taken away at any moment by the authorities!"

"Uncle Philip!"

"Oh, don't look so alarmed," and he smiled at their blank faces. "It isn't for anything disgraceful, nor on a criminal charge."

"But what other charge can they arrest you on?" Frank demanded.

"On a political charge."

"They don't do such things in this country!" cried Ned.

"The charge doesn't come from this country, boys. Sit down and I'll tell you as much of it as you need to know."

### CHAPTER III—UNDER ARREST

17

Mr. Arden ceased his pacing up and down the library, and taking up a bundle of papers from a table—papers that seemed fairly to bristle with red seals—he sat down in an easy chair. But he was anything but at ease himself.

"Boys," he began, while Ned and Frank wondered what was in store for them, "there is no need of going into too many details, or in saying I am sorry for what has happened. I am more sorry than I can ever tell you, for it looks as though I had betrayed the trust my dead brother left to me—the trust of bringing up you boys as he would have done himself had he lived." As he spoke tears came into Mr. Arden's eyes.

"Don't worry," said Ned, warmly. "Whatever you have done, Uncle Phil, we know it was done with the best intentions."

"That's right!" chimed in Frank.

"Well, it's good to hear you say that, for others might judge me more harshly," went on the importer. "And I really acted from the best motives and for your interests. I may have made a mistake—I don't claim to be infallible—but I intended no wrong."

18

"And now, boys, for the worst of it. It may happen that at any moment your fortunes, as well as mine, will be wiped out—lost."

"Lost!" echoed Frank.

"All our money?" added Ned.

"Yes. There is no use concealing anything," their uncle said. "All our fortunes are in jeopardy and may be swept away if the political situation in Uridio does not clear up."

"Uridio! Where is that?" asked Frank.

"It is a small South American republic," was the answer. "There was trouble some years ago in one of the many states that go to make up Brazil. Some of the inhabitants set up a sort of independent government under a new political leader. Then another man had ambitions to become president of the same little republic, and he organized an army and took control."

"The republic is really too small for Brazil to worry about, and that is why the affair never created much of a stir, at least up in this part of the world."

"But how are you—or we—interested in Uridio?" asked Frank.

19

"Because your money and mine is tied up there in certain concessions," said Mr. Arden.

"But I thought our fortunes were invested in father's importing business," said Frank.

"They were. But the importing business has changed greatly of late years. There is not so much money in it as there used to be. I saw that situation arising, and gradually I curtailed the business. Then I became interested in this South American republic of Uridio. It has great natural resources and varied products, and, best of all, it touches the sea coast, so we can ship direct, though the harbor is a miserable one, and unsafe in stormy weather. But still it was profitable to do business there. At least until recently."

"And what happened recently?" asked Ned.

"Well, it seems there was another change of government down there. Another man wanted to be king, or president, or whatever they call themselves, so he started a revolt, and there was a small revolution."

"Say, that sounds like a story from a book!" exclaimed Ned, his eyes sparkling. He did not seem to think of his lost fortune.

"I wish it were just a story in a book," went on his uncle ruefully. "The trouble is it is all too true. Now to resume: When this revolution came my interests happened to be partly with the losing side. I had many concessions and rights to trade and do business from the man who lost out."

20

"Mind you!" said Mr. Arden, earnestly, "I have nothing to do with the politics down there. I'd never risk your money or my own in a political game. It was straight business with me, buying and selling. But the trouble was I had to do business with one side or the other, and luck has turned against me. I am with the losing party."

"But maybe fortune will turn," said Frank. "And if you do lose our money—and yours—why it might have happened in the importing trade."

"Yes," admitted his uncle, smiling a little at the lad's optimism. At nineteen several fortunes may be won and lost, at least so a strong, healthy lad may think. "Yes," went on Mr. Arden, "I might



have lost all our money in some other venture, but I didn't. I chose to take chances in this South American republic, and I suppose I should not have done so."

"But where does the arrest come in?" asked Ned. "I can't see that losing your money, or ours for that matter, is any reason why you should be arrested. It's our own affair. Of course, it isn't going to be any fun to lose money. I don't think that for a minute. But we have our health."

"And our motor boat," added Frank. "They wouldn't take that, I suppose?" he added, a bit apprehensively. 21

"No, I don't suppose they'd take that," his uncle replied, "though you may not have money enough to buy gasoline."

"We can take out fishing and excursion parties, and make money that way," laughed Ned. Really it did not seem so bad as it had at first.

"I guess you won't have to do that right away," said Mr. Arden. "Though if the money goes, all will be wiped out and we'll lose everything—including this house."

The boys rather gasped at that. It was the only home they had ever known.

"But you haven't yet told us why they can take you away," insisted Frank.

"I'll tell you directly. It seems that the political party in power in Uridio has accused me of having furnished arms and munitions of war to their enemies, the revolutionists. It is a political trick, but I am not, at present, able to prove my innocence."

"Did you help take part in a real revolution?" asked Ned. "If you did—say—cracky! Why didn't you tell us?" His eyes sparkled.

"No, I had no part in the revolution, either actually or in furnishing money or arms," said his uncle. "I was simply doing business with the revolutionary party—buying and selling goods and trying to make an honest living. But for some reasons of their own, the political tricksters down there are making trouble for me. 22

"It seems that the property of some United States citizens was damaged in some recent fighting, and they have demanded money satisfaction. Our government has taken up their claims, and they look to me to settle the loss."

"Why to you?" asked Frank.

"Because it is falsely asserted that I financed the revolution. It is all pretty complicated, and I don't expect you boys to understand it all. But the pith of the matter is right here. The United States citizens who have suffered losses in Uridio are trying to make me pay. To do so would take all your money and mine that is invested down in the South American republic, and we would be ruined."

"And if you fight the claim?" asked Ned.

"I have fought the claim, but witnesses were suborned and I cannot prove that I was in no way responsible."

Frank whistled.

"It looks serious," he said.

"It is serious!" declared his uncle. "I have been served with legal notices, and the time limit is almost up. I must either settle or go to jail."

"Jail?" cried Frank, stung by the word. 23

"Well, that's what many persons would call it," said his uncle, with a grim smile. "Really, it will be a federal prison, for it is the United States federal authorities who are acting against me. I won't actually be locked up in a cell, I suppose, nor set to breaking stone, and I may not have to wear stripes. You see it is a sort of political business accusation against me."

"But why do you have to go to jail, or to a federal prison, at all?" asked Ned. "Can't you be bailed?"

"Too late for that after conviction. What I need now is money to continue the fight."

"Use your own money—or ours!" cried Frank, eagerly. Both lads loved their uncle almost as a father.

"The trouble is that your money and mine will be attached—held in escrow, I believe they call it—to settle for these damages in case I can not prove my innocence of having financed a revolution," Mr. Arden declared. "So with our money tied up that way, none will be available, and I'll have to be—well, let us call it detained—for years," and once more he smiled grimly.

Ned and Frank did not know what to think. They asked their uncle many questions, and he answered them as best he could; but they did not understand all the details.

"As near as I can figure out," said Frank, when he and his brother went up to their rooms just before supper, "Uncle Phil is accused of starting a revolution, which he didn't. And in the revolution some damage was done that must be paid for, and they're looking to him to put up the money. If he doesn't they'll lock him up, and put his money in their own strong boxes, where he can't use it to fight the case further." 24

"That's about the way it sizes up," agreed Ned.

"Well, what's the next move?" asked his brother.

"Hanged if I know," said Ned. "I can't think of anything. And I haven't got any too much cash on hand," he added, as he went over to a box on his bureau, where he kept his money.

"It sure is a queer situation," conceded Frank. "If we were only on a battleship now, we could go down to that little measly one-horse South American republic, unlimber our big guns and tell 'em to fork over our money, and dig up evidence to clear Uncle Phil, or we'd shoot!"

"Yes," sighed Ned, "we might do that. But the chances of our getting on a battleship are about a thousand to one."

If he had only known what was coming!

After supper the boys had another talk with their uncle, and he showed them some of the legal papers that had been served on him that day just before they came in out of the rain.

"How long before you may be confined?" asked Frank.

"Three days," was the answer. "But I'm going to try and stave it off."

It was a vain attempt, however. Three days later, when the storm had cleared, the boys came in from a fishing trip and found Mrs. Brun weeping, and the servants very much upset.

"What has happened?" demanded Frank of the housekeeper.

"Your dear—uncle—they came and took him away," she sobbed.

"Took him away! Who?"

"I don't know. But he told me to tell you he was under arrest, and that you would understand."

"Under arrest!" exclaimed Frank, and as Ned echoed the words the brothers looked apprehensively at each other.

## CHAPTER IV—SHIFTING FOR THEMSELVES

Gradually, from the very much upset housekeeper and from the servants, Ned and Frank obtained an account of what had happened. Their uncle, who had been busily engaged in the intervening days in trying to straighten matters out, had arrived from New York in the early afternoon.

He had been busy in the library over papers and documents, when two strangers called and spent some time with him. There were loud words, the housekeeper said, and then Mr. Arden had come out, accompanied by the two men.

"He told me to tell you," Mrs. Brun said, "that they were taking him to Atlanta."

"Atlanta!" exclaimed Ned.

"There is a federal prison there," said Frank. "Well, what happened next?" he asked the housekeeper.

"Your uncle begged and pleaded for time, saying he wanted to see you, and tell you of certain matters. But the men—they must have been detectives I guess—"

"Probably secret service men," interrupted Frank. "But go on, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Brun."

"They took him away," said the housekeeper. "That's all there was to it. They said there was a train they could get from New York to-night, and they hurried off. Your uncle only had time to pack a suit case of clothes, and they took him away. And what's to become of all of us, or who's to look after things, I don't know!" she sobbed.

"Well, there's no use worrying," said Frank. "I'll go to see Mr. Thursby. He's a lawyer, and Uncle Phil has consulted him on some matters. He can tell us what to do. If worst comes to worst we'll let this house, get rent for it, and shift for ourselves. You can easily get a place," he said to the housekeeper, "and so can the other servants, probably."

"Oh, yes. It isn't about that I'm worrying," she announced, drying her eyes; "it's you poor boys! What will you do without a home?"

"Without a home?" exclaimed Ned. "Why, won't we have this place?"

"Oh, no, Ned, dear!" cried Mrs. Brun, who was very like a mother to the boys. "Your uncle said this house was attached also, and that you couldn't stay here. I don't know what you are going to do. You can't rent it and use the money, either."

"Well, we'll just have to shift for ourselves, that's all," said Frank, with assumed cheerfulness. "It might be worse! We'll make out somehow, eh, Ned?"

"Oh, I guess. But say, this is sudden, all right!"

"Sudden isn't any name for it," commented Frank. "I wonder what we had really better do? I'll have a talk with the lawyer."

"Do you imagine we can stay here to-night?" asked Ned.

"I don't see why not," his brother answered. "At least I don't see any one around to put us out."

"It won't be as sudden as that," Mrs. Brun informed them. "Your uncle said it would be a week before you would have to leave here, and perhaps not then, if he could get matters straightened out."

"Well, then let's have supper," proposed Ned. "The secret service men didn't take away all the victuals, did they?"

"Oh, no; there's plenty to eat," the housekeeper said. "That is, if any one has the heart to eat."

"Well, I feel bad enough about uncle's trouble, as far as that goes," observed Frank, "but there's no use in starving. Besides, we must keep up our strength. There'll be plenty to do from now on."

"I'm with you!" agreed his brother. "I don't know just what we can do, but we'll do our best, anyhow."

The household was upset, naturally, but Mrs. Brun managed to put a meal on the table. In the evening the two boys went to see the local lawyer.

He could give them little satisfaction, however, as he knew hardly anything about Mr. Ardens affairs. He said, though, that he would do what he could to aid the boys in case further legal proceedings were taken against them or their uncle.

And there was need of his help, for the next day formal notice was served of the attachment of the Arden property for the benefit of the persons in the South American republic.

"But what does it mean?" asked Frank, when a copy of the papers had been left at the house and a surly man put in charge.

"It means that I'm in possession," was the answer. "The property has been seized, and will be held for the benefit of the damaged parties."

"Can't we stay here?" asked Ned.

"Don't see how you can very well," was the answer. "I don't want to be mean, boys, but orders is orders. If you've got any way of living I don't object to your staying in the house. It won't hurt it any, I guess. But how are you going to live?"

"That's so," conceded Frank. "There'll not be any money coming in with our uncle away. Our money is tied up, as is his. Have you got much, Ned?"

"A few dollars."

"That's the way with me. We'd better go to see that lawyer. Maybe he can fix things up."

But the legal representative was unable to do anything. The attachment was perfectly legal he said, and the boys were practically ousted. The servants took alarm at the first warning, and left to look for other situations. Mr. Arden had anticipated something like this though, and had paid them up to the end of the month, as he had the housekeeper.

"I don't like to leave you boys," said Mrs. Brun, tearfully, "but what can I do? There will be nothing for me to do with that sheriff's officer in charge. Soon there will be nothing left to cook, and if you have no money—"

"It is better that you should go," agreed Frank. "And we'll go too, Ned."

"Go! Where can we go?"

"That's what we've got to figure out. I don't see any sense in staying here, though. We can't make a living here."

"What about taking out parties in our motor boat?"

"I don't believe that would work. I think we'd better sell her and use the money."

"What! Sell that dory?"

"Well, if our fortune is gone we can't run her, and if our fortune isn't lost, we can buy another later. I say, let's get together all the cash we can and shift for ourselves."

"Where shall we go?"

"New York!" exclaimed Frank. "That's the place of opportunities. And say, Ned, I've got a scheme!" and his eyes twinkled.

"What is it?" asked the younger brother.

"Tell you later," was the answer. "If it works we may be able to see Uncle Phil again soon."

"I'm with you on anything like that!" Ned cried.

There being nothing else for them to do under the peculiar and strange circumstances, the two boys prepared to shift for themselves.

Events now began to move rapidly for our two heroes, thus left to their own resources, and at an age when they were not very well fitted to battle with the world. And they were all the more unfitted on account of the life they had previously led.

They had always been well supplied with money, and they had never had to worry about where the next meal was coming from, nor to consider what they should wear. They gave orders to their tailor for suits, and their uncle, as a generous father might have done, footed the bills. It was the same way with their college expenses.

"But I guess this is the end of college," remarked Frank, as he and his brother were each packing a small valise.

"It looks like it," Ned agreed. "Yet, maybe it will do us good to shift for ourselves."

"I'm not worrying about it," was the response of the other. "We have the best part of the summer before us and something will surely turn up before then. Besides, we'll get work in New York, I'm sure of that."

"I guess so," asserted Ned, with the easy assurance of happy, healthy youth.

The boys had carried out the plan so hastily decided on. They had consulted with their friend, the lawyer, and he had advised it. They had also written to their uncle and received a reply. He advised them not to lose all hope of some day getting back their fortunes, but he admitted that the outlook was not at all bright.

"Matters down in that South American republic are more and more complicated," he wrote. "They are accusing me of all sorts of things, such as stirring up revolutions, and supplying arms to the enemies of the government. I tell you this so you will be able to discount any stories you may read of me."

"I think your plan of going to New York, and trying for work is a good one. Certainly there will be more opportunities than in Ipswich. But take good care of yourselves. I can do nothing for you, and I can only say, over and over again, how much I regret investing your money as I did, with my own. But at the time, it seemed perfectly safe, and it would have been but for treachery. I was betrayed, and if I could get the evidence I could prove it, and regain our money. But that is too much to hope."

"Yes, I suppose so," sighed Frank.

Following the receipt of this letter the two boys sold their motor boat, and with the money thus received, and with a small supply they had on hand, they laid their plans.

The dear old house was closed, save for one room where the legal officer in possession remained, "camping out," as he expressed it. He was to stay until the property was sold for the benefit of those who claimed damages from Mr. Arden. But the sale could not take place for some time, as there were law technicalities to be observed.

The servants left, bidding good-bye to the lads. And there were tears in the eyes of good Mrs. Brun, as well as in the eyes of Ned and Frank, as she said farewell.

Their best possessions, which could not legally be included in the seizure, the boys stored with friends in town. Then they selected the most useful of their clothes, and packed them in valises for the trip to New York.

"We've got enough to live on for a few weeks, while looking for work," said Frank, as he looked at the roll of bills which meant so much to them now.

"That is if we don't try to live very high," agreed Ned, with a smile. "No expensive hotels or taxicab rides for us."

"Not much!"

So one warm June morning Frank and Ned set out for the station of the Long Island Railroad, and took a train for the metropolis.

"Some change in our prospects from what we looked forward to a couple of weeks ago," remarked Ned, as he settled in his seat.

"That's right. I'm going to miss that motor boat a whole lot; aren't you?" Frank asked.

"Don't speak of it," and Ned's voice was a trifle husky. "Remember how we were out in that storm?"

"I should say so! That's the day uncle got the bad news."

"Yes. And that's the day we saw the battleship plowing along the big waves, and had an idea we might get on one. Well, I guess that idea has gone overboard and is in Davy Jones' locker by this time."

"Oh, I don't know," said Frank, with a somewhat mysterious air.

"What do you mean?" asked Ned, quickly, as the train gathered speed.

"Tell you later," his brother responded. "I've got an idea in my head, that isn't altogether worked out."

"Well, don't crowd yourself too hard," and Ned laughed.

Really, they were in better spirits than they ever hoped to be after they had heard the bad news.

But youthful spirits are very elastic, and easily bound back after being depressed. Which is a very good thing.

Ned and Frank were familiar with New York, as they spent a great part of their time there when college was in session. So it was no novelty to them to enter the metropolis. Their thoughts were busy with various matters as the train speeded along over the flat and not very interesting Long Island plains.

At Jamaica an electric locomotive replaced the steam one, and they were soon shooting along through the East River tunnel, swallowing rapidly to overcome the pressure on the ear drums caused by the low level and the air compression in the big tube.

"Well, I'm glad that's over," Frank said, as they ran into the big Pennsylvania Station at Seventh Avenue and Thirty-third Street.

"In little old New York once more!" remarked Ned. "What's the first thing on the programme, captain? I'm going to let you lead this expedition as long as you behave yourself."

"Oh, I'll do that," promised Frank. "I should say the first thing was to look for a stopping place, and then get some dinner. It will soon be noon."

"I'm with you. Oh, say, while we're at it, let's pay a visit to the aquarium at Battery Park. I was reading about some new big fish from Bermuda they've just put in the tanks, and I want to see them."

"We'll have plenty of time to see the sights of New York; don't fret yourself about that," said his brother, with a laugh. "We aren't going to get jobs right away, unless this turns out more of a fairy story than any I've read."

"I'm not worrying," was the answer. "But come on, let's take in the aquarium."

"All right. But first let's check our grips in the station. No use carting them around with us," said Frank.

This done, they took an elevated train for lower New York, and soon were at the entrance to the aquarium, which is located in old Castle Garden, once the landing place of immigrants, before the Ellis Island station was established.

## CHAPTER VI—ROBBED

"Now for that big fish of yours—where is it?" asked Frank of his brother, as they prepared to enter the circular building which forms one of the finest educational features of New York.

"We'll find it when we get inside," was the answer. "It's a porpoise, and the accounts of it in the papers said it cut up all manner of tricks. Porpoises are very playful, you know."

"I thought it was a dolphin," Frank remarked.

"Well, maybe dolphins are playful, too, but this is a porpoise I want to see."

"A ham sandwich and a cup of coffee would be more in my line," was the other's comment. "Don't be too long at this fishing game, Ned."

"I won't. Then we can come out and get a bite. There are plenty of restaurants around here."

Together they entered the aquarium, and were soon gazing with interested eyes at the porpoise, which was kept in one of the large central tanks. Around the walls of the place were other tanks, with the light coming in from the top in such a way that the fish were plainly visible. There was a new exhibit of fishes from Bermudian waters, and looking at them after having watched the porpoise for some time, Ned remarked:

"Well, Frank, if we are ever lucky enough to get on a battleship that's sent to Bermuda, I suppose we'll see such fish as these in their native waters."

"Yes, it would be great!" agreed Frank, and as he spoke he noticed that a man standing near him and his brother looked at them in a peculiar and sharp manner. Frank did not like the looks of the fellow, and he was even less pleased when the man moved a little nearer and addressed them.

"Are you lads from some ship?" he asked. "If you are, shake! I'm from the *Kentucky* myself, on shore leave, and it does my heart good to meet a couple of the boys in blue. What's your berth?"

"We haven't any," Frank said, hoping to pass the matter off lightly and leave the man, for he did not like his face or manner.

"Excuse me," the fellow went on, "but I thought I heard youse say something about a battleship —"

"Oh, that was just talk," broke in Ned, more open and ingenuous than his brother. "We've been talking of getting on a battleship for some time, but I don't suppose we ever shall."

"Well, it's a great life, believe me!" exclaimed the man. "I've put in eight years of it. Hard work, but lots of fun, too. I've seen these fish swimming around so thick that you'd think there wasn't

enough water for 'em," and he waved his hand—not a very clean hand, Frank thought—toward a tank of angel fish.

"Have you been in Bermuda?" asked Ned, eagerly.

"Lots of times," boasted the other. "Two or three times the ships I was on were sent there on cruises. It's a great life. Are you boys stopping in New York?"

"For a while, yes," assented Frank, not wishing to give too much information about themselves to a stranger. He well knew the wiles of some of the unprincipled men of New York.

"I took you for strangers," the fellow went on, and there came a queer gleam in his eyes.

"We're Columbia students," put in Ned, who was very proud of the fact. And then, like a pang, it came to him, that he and his brother would have to give up their places at the university. No longer would they be able to keep on with their studies there. Well, there was no use in vain regrets.

"I thought youse looked like college boys," went on the man who claimed to be a sailor. "But what's the trouble? Flunked in your studies that you want to get on a battleship? You can't be officers first crack after you enlist, you know."

"Oh, that talk of battleships didn't amount to anything," Frank said, wishing the fellow would take himself off. "And we don't expect to be officers. Ned, come along," he said, "it's time we were going."

They started for the exit, but their new acquaintance persisted in following them. And when Ned, who was an ardent fisherman, stopped at another tank, the stranger halted also.

"I wouldn't like one of those chaps to get after me," the man said, indicating two big green morays. The eel-like fish were swimming about and tearing to shreds a smaller fish that had been put into their tank for food.

"They are fierce," agreed Ned, pressing close to the tank.

"And they'll attack a man, too," went on the sailor. "I knowed a feller once—he was on the same ship with me—he went swimming overboard when we was in the tropics, though he was told not to on account of sharks and these morays; but he did, and he got his all right."

"How?" asked Frank, interested in spite of himself.

"He was all chawed up. We just managed to get him out of the water alive. If youse go on a battleship, look out about swimming over the side when you're in tropical waters."

"I guess there isn't much chance for us," remarked Frank. "Come, Ned," he went on, "we really must be going!"

At that moment another man came up, evidently in something of a hurry, and he pressed eagerly forward to look at the morays. He shoved against Frank with some force, and Frank, in turn, collided with the stranger who claimed to be from one of the United States battleships.

"Here, look where you're shovin' to!" the sailor called to the newcomer. "What do youse mean by bunkin' inter my friend here in that way?"

The other did not answer for a moment, but looked the speaker over from head to foot, and an angry look came over his face.

"What's gittin' inter youse?" the second man demanded. "I didn't step on your corns, did I?"

"No, but you shoved my friend here," and the sailor indicated Frank, "and I won't stand for anythin' like that. Not for a minute, no sir!"

"Aw, ain't your friend got a tongue of his own?" roughly demanded the newcomer. "I didn't hear him kickin' none!"

There was contempt in his tone, and anger also.

"It really doesn't matter," Frank said. "I have no doubt it was an accident."

"Of course it was," insisted the man who had offended. "Youse is a gentleman, youse is, an' I apologizes."

"Does that mean I ain't no gentleman?" asked the sailor, in fierce tones.

"Youse kin take any meanin' from it youse likes," was the cool answer. The newcomer was about to walk away, when the sailor stepped up to him quickly, fairly crowding Ned and Frank together to do so, and he grasped the shoulder of the fellow who had apologized to Frank.

"I'll show youse who's a gentleman!" cried the sailor. "You can't insult me, nor bunk inter friends of mine!"

The two stood close together glaring at one another, with Ned and Frank between them. A crowd gathered in front of the moray tank.

"Come on, Ned, let's get out of here!" whispered Frank into his brother's ear. "There'll be a fight in a minute, and we don't want to be mixed up in it."

The two belligerents separated for a moment, and the lads slipped out of the throng. As they did so an officer sauntered up.

"Here, youse! Cut out that rough stuff and beat it!" he said to the two quarrelsome men. The latter never so much as replied, but quickly disappeared in the crowd. There was some laughter.

"One was afraid, and the other didn't dare," commented a man.

"Come on, now, don't crowd," advised the officer, and the throng thinned out, while Ned and Frank, glad they had escaped any unpleasantness, emerged into Battery Park again.

"Did you see enough?" asked Frank.

"Sure. Now I'm ready for the next thing on the programme. Say, that sailor was a friendly chap all right, wasn't he?"

"Too friendly," Frank said. "I didn't want him to get into a fight on our account."

"I should say not. But maybe he meant all right."

"Well, I'm not so sure of that. What time have you? It must be nearly one o'clock."

Ned reached toward his vest, where he carried his father's gold watch. He had chosen that as a memento of his dead parent, Frank taking a peculiar old ring that he valued highly. But instead of pulling out the watch it was the empty chain that dangled from Ned's hand.

"Why—why—" he began, a blank look coming over his face. "Why, where's dad's watch? I never left it anywhere! I had it not an hour ago, when we went in there! Now it's gone!"

Frank uttered an exclamation.

"You've been robbed, Ned!" he cried. "Those two fellows—I see it now! That was only a game! They—"

He paused, and hurriedly reached into his inside coat pocket.

"They robbed me, too!" he exclaimed. "They've taken the pocketbook and all our money! Ned, we've been robbed!"

## CHAPTER VII—"LETS ENLIST"

For a moment Ned stood staring at his brother as if he could not believe the words he heard. He remained holding the dangling chain, to which, only a short time before, his dead father's valuable gold watch had been attached.

"Robbed! Robbed!" murmured Ned, blankly.

"Exactly," answered Frank. "Why, see, they twisted the end right off your chain! That's a regular pickpocket's trick. And as for my wallet—well, I ought to be kicked for letting them get away with it!"

"But who took it?" asked Ned.

"Those two men, of course. They were working together!"

"But they didn't know each other, Frank. Why, they were going to fight!"

"That was only their trick, Ned, to take our attention off what they were doing to us. It is an old trick. I ought to have known it. But they were good actors, and they got away with it. Oh, hang it all! How stupid I've been!"

"Not any more than I was, Frank. But it doesn't seem possible that those men were friends, after the way they talked to one another. They were so—"

"Look!" suddenly exclaimed Frank. "Doesn't that look as if they were friends?"

He pointed across Battery Park, where, walking rapidly toward the station of the elevated, were the same two men who had so nearly, apparently, come to blows in the aquarium. The men were walking along close together.

"They don't seem very unfriendly now," said Frank, bitterly.

Ned set off on the run toward them.

"Where are you going?" asked Frank.

"After those fellows! They shan't get away with my watch and your money without a fight."

"I'm with you!" cried Frank. "It's as much your money as mine, though. I had it all together. Come on, we'll see if we can catch 'em, but they've got the start of us."

The two clever pickpockets had indeed an advantage. But Frank and Ned set off on the run, the younger lad crying loudly:

"Stop those fellows! Stop those men! They robbed us!"

His cry attracted considerable attention, and a crowd was soon following our heroes, for it does not take even such an exciting cry as "Stop thief!" to collect a throng in busy New York.

"Stop those fellows! Stop 'em!" yelled Ned.

"They've got our money!" added Frank.

By this time the thieves were aware of the commotion behind them. They had evidently anticipated pursuit, for at the sound of their victims' cries, and at the sight of the crowd that had gathered to help in the chase, the two men separated.

Where one went Frank and Ned could not see, as a pillar of the elevated structure hid him from sight. But the other ran up the stairway, and Frank noticed, with despair, that a train was just pulling into the station.

"He'll get away on that," thought Frank, "and the other will be lost in the crowd."

And that was exactly what happened. When Frank and Ned, somewhat out of breath, reached the elevated structure neither of the men was in sight. But a policeman, attracted by the throng and the sight of the two excited boys, ran over from where he was standing in front of a steam-ship ticket office.

"What's up?" he demanded, sharply.

"Pickpockets," explained Frank briefly. "Two of 'em—they robbed my brother of his watch, and took my pocketbook—"

"Any money in it?" snapped out the policeman, while the crowd pressed around to hear what was going on.

"Sure—all we had," and Frank spoke a little bitterly.

"Where did it happen?"

"In the aquarium. The men ran over here. One went up to take the train. Maybe we can catch him."

"Maybe," agreed the officer. "We'll have a try. Come on—sprint!"

He himself led the way up the elevated stairs, followed by Frank, Ned and some curious ones.

But the train had pulled out, and save for the ticket-chopper there was no one on the platform.

"Do you see him?" demanded the officer, rather needlessly.

"No," answered Frank. "He's gone all right. And I guess there's no use chasing after the other one."

"Give me a description of them," suggested the policeman, "and I'll report it. The detectives will do what they can, but I guess I needn't tell you there isn't much chance," went on the officer. He evidently regarded Frank and Ned as New York lads, and indeed they had the smart appearance of those who are familiar with the metropolis.

"No, I guess we can score that up to profit and loss," said Frank, gloomily.

"At any rate, give me your names and addresses," suggested the policeman. "I'll have to make a report of it to the station," and he took out notebook and pencil.

Most of the crowd had left the elevated station now, seeing no further chance for excitement, and standing on the platform, Frank gave an account of the affair, telling how, by the clever ruse of a pretended quarrel, the men had so engaged the attention of his brother and himself that they never noticed the trained and nimble fingers of the pickpockets taking the watch and money.

"Yes, it is an old trick," the policeman said. "It's often been worked before. I'll go back to the aquarium with you and see if any of the attendants noticed the two men, so I can get a description of them."

"One of the officers inside ordered them out when they seemed likely to fight," proffered Ned.

"I'll have a talk with him," decided the policeman. But he could get nothing more than a general description of the two thieves, and from that he did not recognize them as any well-known criminals.

"Well, give me your names and addresses," said the policeman again, when it became evident that nothing more could be done.

Frank complied, stating that they lived in Ipswich.

"We might as well call that our home," he said to Ned afterward. "It's the only real one we ever had, and maybe we'll get back to it some day."

"I hope so," sighed his brother. "But what are we going to do now, Frank? We surely are up against it good and hard!"

They had left the aquarium for the second time, parted from the officer, and were now by themselves. The crowd had melted away. There had been no chance for any real pursuit of the pickpockets.

"Yes, we've got to consider what to do," said Frank, and his voice had in it a serious note.

"I'm half starved," murmured Ned.

"So am I," added Frank. "We've got enough money left to buy us a few meals, anyhow. Luckily I held back a little change," and he produced it from a pocket the thief had not found. "We'll go and get a bite, and then we'll be better able to consider matters," he went on, as he led the way



hastily up and across Broadway, toward a restaurant.

The meal was grateful to the boys, who had had nothing since early morning, and it was now nearly two o'clock. They did not talk much during the process of eating, for they did not want to let their troubles be known. But a careful observer might have seen anxious and rather gloomy looks on the faces of both lads.

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"Well, now what?" asked Ned, as they came out of the eating place.

"Let's walk down around South Ferry," proposed Frank. "The elevated train that one of those fellows took went in that direction. Those thieves will have to meet again, and it's barely possible that we may see them on the street. If we do, we can have them arrested."

"Not much chance," commented Ned, shaking his head.

"No, but every chance is worth taking."

"Oh, yes, sure."

Together they walked down toward the lower end of the Island of Manhattan—the location known as South Ferry, where the waters of the East and Hudson River mingle.

Frank was thinking hard. He and his brother had between them now only the clothing they had left at the Pennsylvania station, and a few dollars that the thief had not taken. It would hardly last them two days if they had to engage a boarding place.

"Say, that's the life all right!" suddenly exclaimed Ned. Frank saw him pointing to a gaily-colored poster which depicted some sailors landing on a tropical island, while in the distance, on the blue waters of a palm-encircled bay, was a battleship. It was one of Uncle Sam's attractive posters, calling for young men to join the navy.

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"Yes, that does look enticing," admitted Frank.

And then, before he could say any more, Ned clapped him heartily on the back, and exclaimed so loudly that several passersby heard it and smiled:

"Let's enlist! Let's enlist, old man! That will solve all our troubles!"

## CHAPTER VIII—JOINING THE NAVY

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This time it was Frank's turn to stare at his brother as Ned had stared at him when Frank announced that they had been robbed. And as Ned had done, so did Frank, for the moment saying nothing. Then, finally, as Ned continued to stare at him with a smile on his face, Frank repeated:

"Enlist?"

"That's what I said," replied his brother. "Look on that picture—and then on, this!" and by a gesture he indicated himself and Frank. "Here we are," he went on, "almost penniless in New York. By a strange trick of fate we've lost everything that we formerly had. We've either got to beg, or go to hunting work to keep from starving. On the other hand—look at those fellows! If they haven't just had the very finest kind of a meal I don't know what I'm talking about!"

Ned pointed to the bright and cheerful picture of the blue-jackets.

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"Say, you're getting quite dramatic," commented Frank, as he drew nearer to the poster, which was one of two put on a V-shaped board standing in front of a hall entrance, in which was a placard announcing

### NAVY RECRUITING STATION

"Dramatic!" echoed Ned. "I guess you'd get dramatic, too, if you saw starvation staring you in the face."

"Worse and more of it," murmured his brother.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Ned, as Frank continued to stare at the poster. "We've got to do something, so why not do this? You know we've both been keen on getting on a battleship, and this is our chance. Maybe we wouldn't have come to it if it hadn't been for our misfortune. I'm sure we can pass the examination," he went on. He and his brother were in excellent physical trim, for they were active lads, always in training.

"Well, since you've brought up the matter," said Frank, speaking slowly, "I don't mind telling you, Ned, that I had something like this in mind all along."

"You did?"

"Sure. After the crash, and when Uncle Phil had to go away, I knew there'd be a shortage of money. Now, though we have pretty good educations, we haven't been trained for any work yet. So I looked into this navy business, knowing you were as crazy about battleships as I was, and I found out that not only does Uncle Sam train young fellows to be good sailors, marines and soldiers, but by enlisting in the navy you can acquire a trade at which you can earn your living if

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you want to quit after your term of enlistment is up.”

“Is that so?” asked Ned.

“It sure is. Why we can learn to become machinists, bakers, firemen, shipwrights, plumbers and fitters, boiler makers, cooks or musicians.”

“Really?” cried Ned.

“Well, I should say so! I read it all up. But your proposition sort of took me—er—”

“Call it amidships, if we are to enlist,” suggested Ned, with a laugh.

“All right—it sort of took me amidships,” agreed Frank. “I was figuring on looking about New York a bit, trying to get work, perhaps, and then enlisting.”

“And you never told me. Though you did speak something about a chance to get near Atlanta, where Uncle Phil is imprisoned.”

“Yes, that was part of the game. You know when a fellow used to enlist in the navy he was sent to a training ship. Well, that’s all done away with, and now the government has a number of naval training stations on shore, near the water, of course. There’s one at Norfolk, Virginia, and we might ask to be sent there. If we were, we could get leave and go to Atlanta, perhaps.”

“Say, you have it all thought out, haven’t you?” exclaimed Ned, admiringly.

“Not all,” Frank admitted. “And perhaps we couldn’t get to Atlanta after all. But it’s worth trying. So now I’m with you, old man, and we’ll enlist—or try to. Maybe they won’t take us.”

“Oh, I think they will,” Ned said, confidently.

A recruiting officer, in a natty uniform, looked at them closely as they entered the hallway.

“Looking for the recruiting office?” he asked, with a smile.

“Why—er—yes,” admitted Frank, a bit bashfully.

“One flight up—turn to your right,” he directed them.

Ned and Frank went into a barely-furnished room, where two or three men were sitting about. One had a sergeant’s chevrons on his sleeve, and to him Frank spoke.

“We’d like to enlist,” began the lad.

“That’s fine,” was the hearty response. “We’re looking for good lads, and you two seem to size up pretty well,” he added, drawing a pad of paper toward him. “Not running away from home, or anything like that, are you?” he asked, pleasantly enough.

“No; home sort of ran away from us,” answered Ned, with a laugh.

The sergeant looked at him closely for a moment, and then smiled himself.

“What’s the story?” he asked. “That is if you don’t mind telling me. Perhaps it might save trouble in the end,” he suggested.

“We’ll tell you,” replied Frank, and at a nod from the sergeant the other seamen in the room arose, saluted and went out.

“No use telling everyone your troubles,” went on the government’s representative. “Now I’ll listen to as much as you want tell, so go ahead.”

Frank acted as spokesman, and related all that was necessary concerning their change in fortunes. He related the facts of his uncle’s arrest on a political charge, and, to his relief, the sergeant seemed to think lightly of it.

“Well, you certainly are up against it,” he remarked, when the story of the pocket-picking had been told. “As for that charge against your uncle, it doesn’t amount to a hill of beans in my estimation—I mean as far as any disgrace is concerned.”

“Some of those little South American republics are crazy places anyhow, and they’ll do anything to an American who they think has money. I don’t see any reason, in what you’ve told me, why you shouldn’t join the navy if you can pass the physical tests, and you look fit,” he added.

“Oh, I guess we’re all right,” Frank said.

“And we’re pretty well at home on the water, and in and about boats,” added Ned.

“I should think you might be, having lived on Great South Bay so long. That will be a help, too. Some of the recruits get terribly seasick, and though it doesn’t last forever, still it’s just as well to escape it if you can. Now I’ve got to ask you a lot of questions, and you’ll have to answer. First, I suppose both of you are over eighteen years old. Otherwise you’ll have to get your uncle’s consent.”

“I’m past nineteen and Ned is over eighteen,” said Frank.

“Then you’ll come in all right. Now for the rest of it.”

The two boys who hoped soon to be doing duty on a battleship, answered many questions over which I will not go into details here. They had to tell of their past history, give their birthplace, the date, and many other details.

“It’s a little late for the doctor to-day,” went on the sergeant, when he had written down the

replies of Frank and Ned. "You'll have to be pretty thoroughly looked over by him. Can you come back to-morrow?" he asked.

"Sure," replied Frank.

"And now—er—I don't want to butt in, but how are you fixed for money? You said you were robbed, and—"

"Well, we have a little left," said Frank.

"Now, I'll tell you what I'll do," broke in the sergeant. "I'll just send you to my boarding place, and be responsible for you. There is a vacant room there you can bunk in. If you are accepted you can easily pay the small charge from your wages. If you are turned down—well, I guess it won't break me to stake you to one night's lodging."

"Oh, perhaps we have enough," said Frank, quickly.

"Save what money you have, friend!" interrupted the officer, with a smile and a wave of his hand. "You may need it before you begin drawing any cash from Uncle Sam. Now you can sit here until my trick is up, which will be in about two hours, or you can go out and see the town. Come back about five-thirty, and I'll take you to my place."

"I guess we've seen about all of the town we care to," said Ned, significantly, patting the empty pocket where the watch had rested.

"We could go up and get our valises," suggested Frank.

"Good idea," the sergeant told him. "Go ahead, and come back here, where I'll meet you."

As Frank and Ned went down to the street again the younger lad remarked:

"Well, we've joined the navy. Now we're going to be the two boys of the battleship."

"We've joined all right," agreed Frank, "but we haven't actually been accepted. The doctor has yet to see us."

"Oh, we'll pass all right," asserted Ned, confidently.

## CHAPTER IX—AT THE TRAINING STATION

With the valises in their possession our two boys of the battleship, as I shall begin to call them, felt a little less disheartened than at any time since the robbery. At least they had some belongings left, and if worst came to worst, they could sell or pawn their spare clothing, and so get money enough to tide them over their difficulties, or, provided they could not secure admission to the navy, until they could get work.

"And if we can't get a job with Uncle Sam," said Ned, as they were on their way down town again from the Pennsylvania Station, "maybe we can get on some ship that goes to the republic of Uridio."

"What do we want to go down there for?" asked Frank.

"To see if we can't prove Uncle Phil's innocence," was the quick answer.

"If we only could!" murmured Frank. "That would be fine! But I guess we'll have to leave that to the lawyers and politicians."

"Yes, I suppose so," agreed his brother.

Our two rather lonesome boys, who greatly missed the kind ministrations of Mrs. Brun, the genial housekeeper, were made welcome by Sergeant Berk at his boarding house, which was not far away from the recruiting station.

Frank and Ned slept well in spite of being in a strange place, for they were very tired. It had been a hard day for them. But before turning in for the night Frank sent a letter to his uncle at the Atlanta federal prison, telling of the intention of himself and Ned to join the navy.

"And if we do, dear Uncle Phil," Frank wrote, "and are lucky enough to be sent to Norfolk, we'll try to come to see you."

The next day Ned and Frank had to undergo a rigorous examination by a doctor.

"And what I don't find out about you, if I pass you, the medical officer at the training station will, and he may turn you down," said the physician, grimly.

"Well, we'll hope for the best," said Frank.

Neither he nor his brother really feared the examination. They had passed the first requirements, which state that to be successful applicants must be able to read and write English, that they must be American citizens (native or naturalized), that they never have deserted from any branch of the naval or military service of the United States. Neither had Frank or Ned ever been convicted of any serious offense, in which case special permission to enlist would have had to be obtained from the Bureau of Navigation.

"Well, now to get down to business," said the doctor, when he had made some entries on his blanks. "You know that you—let's see—your name is Frank Arden, isn't it?" and he turned to the older brother.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, since you are past nineteen, you must have a height of at least sixty-four inches, bare-footed, and weigh not less than 125 pounds."

"I can qualify there all right," said Frank.

"And as for your brother, he must weigh not less than 115 pounds, and be also sixty-four inches tall."

"I'm that all right, though Frank is more," put in Ned.

"Well, a little more in Frank's case won't matter—so much the better," the surgeon remarked.

He then went into medical details, which need to be touched on only to remark that neither Frank nor Ned was found to have any physical defect that would bar him from the service. Their teeth were good and sound, and of course you know that of late years the United States government, as well as all foreign governments, requires that their best fighters have good teeth. Those that are filled are counted as sound, provided there are not too many of them.

It is not so much to "bite the enemy," as one soldier, who was refused enlistment, said he seemed expected to do, as it is that with unsound teeth food cannot be properly chewed, and in these days "an army fights on its stomach."

"Well, I can't find anything the matter with you," announced the doctor pleasantly, after the examination was over.

"You tried hard enough," Frank remarked, laughing.

"Well, that's my business—I have to do it. I wouldn't want to pass you and have you sent to a training station, only to learn there, later, that you must be rejected. That would be a bad mark against my ability.

"But as it is, I'll almost guarantee that you'll pass when you come up before the medical officer. I wish all the recruits were as strong and healthy as you two."

This was a fine compliment, and Frank and Ned appreciated it.

"Well, so far so good," remarked Sergeant Berk, when the doctor had put away his stethoscope and finished filling out the blanks. "Now you boys will have to be sent to a training station, and at present my orders are to ship all enlisted men from here to Norfolk. I hope you don't mind going there, but if you do perhaps you can get a transfer later."

"Norfolk suits us right down to the ground!" exclaimed Frank. "We may get a chance to see our uncle," he added.

"Not right away, I'm afraid," was the sergeant's answer. "You'll be kept pretty busy learning your new duties. Are you going in for any special line of work?"

"Why, we want to work on a battleship!" exclaimed Ned. "Fire the guns, I suppose."

"Yes, most new recruits do," was the comment. "But every one can't be a gunner. You know Uncle Sam has to have a lot of different workers on his ships. There are those who are expert in steering, others who do nothing but cook. Then there are men who handle the anchors, others who man the boats, and even stenographers and typewriters are needed. Just to mention a few I might specify clerks, waiters, nurses, copper-smiths, plumbers, boilermakers, painters and stewards.

"And to make sure that he will get the best of help in these lines of work," went on the sergeant, "Uncle Sam trains men to fill the different positions. They are much better able to do their work with training, than they would be without."

"And do we have to select what branch we'd like best?" asked Ned.

"Well, in a way, yes, though of course you'll be picked for what you are best suited, or for what is most needed."

"I want to be a gunner," declared Frank.

"And so do I," added his brother.

"Well, good luck to you," said the sergeant, with a smile. "You may get your wishes."

Frank and Ned were now apprentice seamen, or they would be when formally passed by the medical officer at the training station. They were to leave New York with a squad of other enlisted men the next day, and that night they wrote to their uncle telling of their progress.

Frank wanted to pay Sergeant Berk for the boarding house accommodations, but the officer said there was plenty of time for that. And so, in due season, our heroes found themselves on board a train that was headed for Norfolk.

"Well, we don't know where we're going to land, but we're on our way," said Ned, slightly changing the words of the song.

"That's right," agreed his brother. "But I guess we'll make out all right."

"I'd feel a little better if I felt there was some way in which we could help Uncle Phil," murmured Ned, musingly.

"Well, maybe we can, after we get aboard some ship, and know just what we are about," replied Frank.

But he little realized how soon his words were to be brought to his mind again with peculiar force.

The journey to Norfolk was without notable incident, save that once Ned thought he saw one of the men who had robbed Frank. But it proved a false alarm.

"And maybe it's just as well," said Frank.

"How so?" asked Ned.

"Well, if we got our money back now we might not want to keep on and join the navy."

"Oh, no danger of my backing out now!" cried the younger lad.

"No, I guess not," was his brother's reply.

In time, they arrived at Norfolk, and were soon at the naval training station, where, with some other recruits, they were taken in charge by a petty officer to prepare for the second and more rigorous medical examination.

## CHAPTER X—IN BARRACKS

"Over this way," directed the petty officer as he led the squad of recruits into the well-kept grounds, Ned and Frank following the others, and, like them, looking curiously about.

"What are those buildings?" asked one of the young fellows, pointing to a row of buildings, at the upper windows of which could be seen a number of faces of men and youths in blue uniforms.

"The barracks—where you sleep," replied the petty officer.

"Sleep in barracks!" cried one. "Why, I thought we'd be put on board a battleship! That's what I enlisted for. I can sleep on land in a building, any night."

The petty officer smiled. Doubtless he was used to hearing that.

"You'll only sleep in barracks while you're training here," he answered. "You have to be shown something about a battleship and other naval matters before you're qualified to go on board. Don't worry, you'll have all the sleeping aboard a ship that you want. It will all come in time."

"That's good news," said Ned to Frank.

"Oh, I knew this was only temporary," was the answer.

"It takes about four months," the petty officer said, overhearing Frank's remark.

"Thank you."

A little later the two brothers, as well as the other recruits, were led into the presence of the medical officer and his assistants.

"Strip!" came the order, and soon the rigorous examination was under way.

Ned and Frank need have had no fears, for they were very promptly passed. Some of their mates, however, did not fare so well, and one or two were rejected, having to leave the prospective service, much to their regret. But our heroes were found physically fit, and, having previously taken the oath of allegiance to the United States, they were now fully qualified and admitted apprentice seamen.

"That's all," the medical officer said to them, as he motioned to them to dress. Once more they were taken in charge by a petty officer, a different one this time.

"What's next?" asked Frank.

"You'll have your clothing assigned to you, and will learn how to swing your hammocks," was the answer.

"Are we going to sleep in hammocks while we're ashore, in the barracks?" Ned wanted to know.

"That's what you are," said the guiding officer. "You'll unlash them every night when you're piped to do so, and you'll lash them up, out of the way, every morning, just as if you were aboard a battleship."

"It's to get used to it," suggested Frank.

"Exactly, and so with everything else done here at the training station. We do it as nearly as it's done on board a man-o'-war as is possible."

Led by the petty officer into the store department, where the clothing for the apprentice seamen was dealt out, Ned and Frank each received two complete outfits—one for winter and one for summer, consisting of rubber boots and coat, caps, sweater, overcoat, trousers, shoes,

underwear—in fact everything necessary.

“You’ve now each received sixty dollars’ worth of clothing for your start in a new life,” commented the officer.

“I’m afraid mine are going to be too big for me,” remarked one newly enlisted lad, who was rather small, though not below the standard.

“There’s a tailor right here on the premises, who’ll make them fit you like the paper on the wall,” said the officer. “And that’s one thing you boys might as well learn first as last. You’ve got to look neat while you’re working for Uncle Sam. He’ll do his part in giving you good clothes and the means to keep them in order. The rest is up to you.”

“I’m glad to hear that,” remarked Frank.

“Same here,” agreed his brother. “If there’s anything I like, it’s to be clean and neat.”

They had both been brought up that way.

If Ned and Frank had imagined that now they had received their outfit of clothing, there was nothing more to be done for a time, they were disappointed, for the petty officer, having arranged with the tailor to make certain alterations in some of the garments, told the recruits they would now be expected to mark each of their articles of wearing apparel with a stencil, so that each one would always know which was his.

“And when that is done you’ll have a few instructions in folding your things and stowing them away in your bag.”

“Fold our things!” exclaimed Ned. “Why can’t we hang them up? They’ll get all wrinkled if we fold them.”

“Not if you fold them the way I show you,” was the reply.

The officer then led the new recruits to the barracks, where each one was assigned to a certain hammock in the dormitory on the second floor. There were hammock hooks on the walls, just as there are on board a ship, and in a little while Ned, Frank and the others, after they had stenciled their clothes, were shown how to unlash the hammocks which were trussed up neatly out of the way.

Then they were given instructions in putting away the hammocks in ship-shape fashion.

“I’ve never slept in a hammock, except to doze off on an afternoon of a summer day under the trees,” remarked Frank.

“Neither have I. I wonder how I’ll like it?” returned his brother.

“Oh, there isn’t any finer bed going!” exclaimed the petty officer, enthusiastically. “You’ll find them comfortable here, even in barracks, but when you get aboard a ship, and find your hammock swaying to the motion, why say! you’ll be sorry to hear the breakfast call!”

“Not much I won’t!” exclaimed a fat, jolly-looking lad who probably had a good appetite.

Ned and Frank had noticed that the hammocks provided at the navy yard barracks of the Norfolk training station were not like the ordinary hammock in which magazine illustrators like to depict pretty girls with a book and a box of candy. The sailors’ hammocks were made of stout canvas, and each one was provided with a well-made hair mattress. The United States isn’t taking any chances on his boys’ going without a good night’s sleep. It makes every provision for their reasonable comfort, though there are no “fal-de-lals,” as Ned observed.

“But then, who wants them?” asked Frank.

“Certainly no one on a battleship,” answered his brother.

In addition to the mattress in the hammock there were two woolen blankets of good quality.

“You’ll never be cold, especially on board ship,” said the sergeant, “and when you want to be cool, just don’t use the blankets, that’s all. It’s the simplest and best bed in the world.”

Frank and Ned were beginning to believe this. They were already very favorably impressed with their new life, or, rather, its beginning. Of course they realized that hard work and plenty of it was in store for them.

They had enlisted for a term of four years. They could not resign before their term of enlistment was over if something did not suit them, and they would be subject to certain specified hours. But, as the petty officer told them, there was plenty of liberty allowed, and there were all sorts of recreations, such as swimming, boating, fencing, football, and other athletics. Then, too, they received free board, lodging and medical attention, and they were paid \$17.50 a month, which could all be saved, not a penny of expense being called for except what was wanted for extras.

“And if you show yourselves capable, and learn quickly,” their friend, the sergeant, told them, “you’ll soon be earning more. Ordinary seamen get \$20.90 a month, seamen \$24.60, and—”

“Say, what do gunners get?” asked impulsive Ned.

“Well, anywhere from \$1,500 to \$2,400 a year,” he answered. “And I want to say right now that if a lad is qualified he can get to that post, if he works hard.”

“Then I’m going to work hard!” declared Ned.

"Same here," echoed his brother.

"That's the kind of talk we like to listen to," commented the sergeant. "Aim as high as you can, and hit the bull's-eye!"

"Huh! Some folks are trying to crow before they're out of the shell very long," remarked a red-haired recruit, with a rather unpleasant face. He had seemed sullen ever since arriving at the training station, and the remarks of Frank and Ned seemed to anger him.

"What's the matter with you?" asked the sergeant. "Some one step on your corns?"

"No, but it makes me mad to hear kids that don't know a half hitch from a square knot talking about getting in the gunners' class!"

He glared rather vindictively at our two friends, though they did not know of anything they had done to merit his displeasure. His name was Henry Dell, but he called himself "Hank."

"That's the sort of lad who is looking for trouble. Steer clear of him," counseled the sergeant in a low tone to Frank and Ned, as he led them toward the mess hall where they would have their meals.

## CHAPTER XI—"ALL ABOARD!"

"Say, Frank, when do you think we'll really go on board a battleship?"

Ned asked this question of his brother, who was busy writing to his uncle, in the federal prison, telling the unfortunate man something of their new life.

"On the battleship?" repeated Frank, as he sealed the missive. "Well, I shouldn't be surprised if it were very soon now."

"Really?" cried Ned in incredulous delight. "How do you know?"

"Oh, well, rumors have been going around that some of the more advanced of us would be given our chance soon."

"And do they count us advanced?"

"So I understand. We've worked hard enough, haven't we?"

"We sure have! But that doesn't always count."

"Well, I think we are slated for the *Georgetown* all right," Frank said.

"What! That magnificent new battleship?" cried Ned, his eyes sparkling with anticipation.

"That's the one, and it's the very last word in battleships," Frank went on.

This talk took place about four months after the arrival of our heroes at the training station. Those four months were so crowded with work, play, incidents, and a few accidents of minor character, so full of learning new things, that the whole book could be devoted to what happened when Ned and Frank were learning to be sailors. But there are other matters to tell of, so only a brief idea of what took place will be given. Perhaps another volume will tell more fully of life at Norfolk.

Instruction for the two boys of the battleship, as well as for their mates, went on constantly, and they fairly absorbed knowledge of nautical matters, seemingly taking it in through their skin, as well as through their eyes and ears.

In the big drill hall, where they were given setting-up exercises, as well as taught the manual of arms and how to march in certain formations, one could not help learning. On the walls were flags from every nation, and all sorts of signal flags. For a sailor must learn to talk by means of signals—lights at night, and flags or semaphore arms by day. So the flags were hung on the walls of the drill hall that the boys might have them before their eyes continually. There was also a big compass, with its thirty-two "points," painted on one wall, thus there was no excuse for a lad's not knowing how to box it; which means to reel off the different directions.

Some of the recruits had to be taught to swim, for this is one of the first things insisted on by those in charge of making a man-o'-warsman. But Ned and Frank were masters of this aquatic art, and their ability was soon recognized. In fact they were even detailed to help show others how to get about in the water.

And in the matter of boats, too, our heroes had the advantage over many of their mates. For their years spent on Great South Bay proved of great advantage to them, though the boats in which the drills were given at Norfolk were heavy cutters and large motor-driven skiffs, and were not so easy to maneuver as had been the *Ellen*.

"Do you wish you were back at Ipswich again?" asked Ned of his brother one day, after a long boat drill.

"No, to tell you the truth, I think this life just suits us. Of course, I did love the old home, and I don't dare think about poor Uncle Phil," said Frank, "but this is really the life for us."

"You're right," declared his brother. And if ever lads were destined for the navy Frank and Ned were.

In the model room, and in the rigging loft, the apprentice seamen, the title borne by Frank and Ned, were taught how to coil down gear, make knots and splices, as well as hitches, and how to manage sails. For though a battleship only moves by steam, there are small boats that have canvas as a motive power, and enough of real sailor knowledge is required to make it necessary that instruction be given.

In spite of his rather mean character and his bullying ways, Hank Dell showed that he knew a great deal more than the average recruit about ropes. He could tie any sort of knot.

"How'd you learn it?" asked Frank, for though he and Ned did not like the boy, they were honest enough to admire his ability.

"A sailor that lived near me showed me how," was the answer. "He put me in the notion of coming here. But if I'd known how hard it was I wouldn't have enlisted."

Hank was lazy and shiftless in many ways, but he had to keep up to the mark, though this he did not like.

In due time Frank and Ned were assigned to the same battalion, and in that they went through many drills, all being designed to give the lads needed instruction. They had to learn how to send and receive messages by means of wig-wag flags, by the semaphore, which is something like a railway signal arm, and they also learned the alphabet, and to send and receive messages by means of colored lights at night.

Target practice, indoors and out, took up considerable time, for the United States requires its blue-jackets to be good shots with small arms as well as with the big guns. Ned and Frank became skillful with the revolver, also, though Ned would never be as expert as his brother. He had not the patience, but with the rifle they were both about on a par.

So well did our heroes apply themselves that both were soon promoted—that is they were made petty officers, and each received two dollars more a month.

"Say, if this keeps on we'll be able to save enough to get Uncle Phil out on bail," said Ned, with a laugh, one day as they drew their increase in money.

"That's right," admitted Frank. "But he writes that he is getting along pretty well, only he would like the chance to get out in order to go to work to clear his name."

As a matter of fact, except for the obligation to remain within the legal confines of the federal prison, Mr. Arden was not suffering. He had a comfortable room and enough to eat. But his financial matters were in such shape that he could not get money to reopen his case, all his property, as well as that of the boys, being tied up in the South American matter.

"But when we get through here, and if we don't want to re-enlist after our four years are up, we'll be able to earn a good living," Ned remarked.

"Yes," agreed Frank, "perhaps a better one than if we had finished at college. Uncle Sam gives thorough training."

And so their work and play went on at the training station, for there was plenty of play time. After four o'clock in the afternoon the time of Frank and Ned, as well as that of their mates, was their own. They could study if they chose, and many did, or they could play baseball or football, read, or otherwise enjoy life.

Best of all our friends liked the short cruises they were taken on from time to time to familiarize them with life aboard a ship. They learned all the details of hoisting boats, letting go the big anchors, weighing them, or hoisting them aboard again.

As Frank had said, there was a rumor going the rounds that soon some of the more advanced apprentices would be assigned to a real battleship, there to put into actual practice what they had learned.

"And that time can't come any too soon!" exclaimed Ned.

"So you're anxious to get out on the deep blue sea?" asked his brother.

"Yes. Aren't you?"

"Well, I should say I am! But still it has been fine here."

"I guess so!" exclaimed Ned, with emphasis. "Some different from the time we stood in front of the recruiting office, after we were robbed, wondering what in the world we were going to do."

"That's right! I wonder if we'll ever see those two thieves again?"

"It's hardly possible," said Ned. But fate plays strange tricks.

Toward the close of the four months of training, the work became more difficult in a way, and yet it was not too hard. It was always interesting to Frank and Ned. They were very different lads from the rather easy-going ones to whom I introduced you in the storm on Great South Bay, when they watched the big gray battleship.

And at last the day came when our heroes were told that their training time was up, and that they, with others, were to be assigned to the *Georgetown*, which was then in the Brooklyn navy yard. There Frank and Ned were sent, reporting to the proper officer.



"There she is!" Frank exclaimed, as the gray shape of the very latest of the dreadnaughts loomed before them. "There she is, Ned!"

"Oh, what a beauty!" cried Ned, using the word beauty as one does toward a very homely bulldog.

"All aboard!" exclaimed Frank, as they walked up the inclined bridge to the decks of the fighting monster. "All aboard!"

"Huh! Some new jackies!" remarked one of a group of sailors who watched the arrival of the recruits. "Maybe they won't be so anxious to be on board once we get to sea," he sneered.

## CHAPTER XII—THE CUT ROPES

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"Say, look at those guns!"

"What will happen when she fires a broadside?"

"And cast your eye on those anchor chains!"

"I wouldn't want to carry even one link!"

"See the double imposed turrets!"

"What a ship she is—a real ship of battle!"

These were only a few of the comments and exclamations that came from Frank, Ned and their shipmates as they boarded the *Georgetown*, on which they were shortly to make a cruise for practice. And everything they said was justified, for the vessel was the last word in construction for the United States government. In spite of the growing prejudice against big ships, in contradistinction to submarines and torpedo boats, the *Georgetown* had been built at enormous cost.

To describe her in detail would take up more space than is at our disposal. But most boys have either seen big battleships, or cruisers, or have looked at photographs of them, so have an idea of what they look like. But something larger and more formidable than anything before constructed to deal death and destruction from the sea will have to be imagined.

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She had more big guns, and more small quick-firers than any vessel afloat, and as an innovation, her largest calibred rifles, forward and aft, were fifteen inches in diameter, the limit, up to then, having been fourteen inches. An inch may not seem much, but add it to the diameter of a big rifle, and it means that the gun must be very much larger and stronger in proportion, that it needs more powder to send the projectile on its way, and that the projectile is also greatly increased in weight and explosive power.

So it is no wonder our heroes were filled with astonishment and amazement as they gazed about them, once they were on board the craft that was to be their floating home for some time.

"Attention there now!" called a sharp voice, and an officer formed the new recruits in line, and marched them to the quarters where they were to stow their bags and sling their hammocks. Frank, Ned and the others had brought with them their belongings from Norfolk, and these were soon stowed away, in proper ship-shape fashion.

Here was where the long and careful training showed. In spite of the fact that it was their first appearance on the *Georgetown*, the recruits knew just what to do, and where to put their things.

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Of course, ships differ, and some are more comfortable as living places than others, but the same general arrangement prevails on all of the United States battleships.

"When do we sail?" asked Frank of a sailor who had said he had been on the *Georgetown* since she had been put in commission.

"In a few days now. We're just waiting for the old man."

"Old man?" queried Ned.

"The captain," the sailor explained. "He's away on shore leave. His daughter got married, I believe, and he's at the festivities. We'll get out of here in about a week. Put in to be painted, you know."

Frank and Ned had read that fact before coming up from Norfolk, and certainly the battleship was spick and span, and as shiny as the sailors could make her, every bit of brass, copper and nickel gleaming in the sun.

Our lads had hammocks next to one another, but it was not with much delight that they noticed that the red-haired bully, Hank Dell, was assigned to the same mess as themselves, his hammock adjoining Ned's.

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"But we won't bother him if he doesn't bother us," Frank said to his brother.

There was not so much to be done aboard the *Georgetown* while she was in the navy yard as there would be once she was afloat, though there is always a certain amount of routine labor to

be performed on a ship when she is in commission and subject to orders at a moment's notice. In consequence, many of the sailors had been allowed shore leave, and after the first two days, during which they were made to do considerable work to make them familiar with the different parts of the craft, Frank and Ned were allowed a day off.

They went to New York, and strolled down toward the aquarium, hoping they might see the two thieves. But though they spent some time inside the building they were not successful in their quest.

They sent some souvenir postals to their uncle, knowing he would be glad to know that they remembered him. They had written frequently since they had been separated from him.

Seeing the sights of the big city again, after an absence of four months, was much enjoyed by the boys. But, strange as it may seem, they were glad to be back on board again. For they had no home now, and the battleship really filled that place in their hearts. Later on, when their uncle's affairs should have been straightened out, they would, perhaps, be back in the old homestead. 89

Captain Decker, in command of the *Georgetown*, returned about a week after Ned and Frank had reached the vessel, and at once preparations were made for putting to sea. The big craft was to cruise about, and do some target practice off Newport later on.

Life aboard a battleship is very much a matter of routine, with the same thing occurring at the same time every day, save when unexpected drills, such as collision drill, or fire drill, are held, no notice being given of these. This is done to keep the men ever on the alert.

"Well, we're off!" exclaimed Ned, as he and Frank, with the others of the crew, stood on deck, while the *Georgetown* steamed slowly out of New York harbor one day. "We're off!"

"And I wonder what will happen before we get back again!" suggested Frank.

"Maybe there'll be a war!" cried Ned, his eyes sparkling.

Frank shook his head.

"I don't believe I want one," he said slowly. "I'm not afraid, but—"

"Yes, I know," answered his brother.

Though Frank and Ned did not actually take part in a war, they were destined to see some fighting, and to see the destructive work of the big guns when fired at what really was an enemy. But of that, more later. 90

And so, out to sea went the battleship, with our friends aboard. Now began the real work of a man-o'-warman. Reveille was sounded on a bugle at 5:30 every morning. That meant that every enlisted man who had not been on guard the night before, must jump out of his hammock, lash it up, and prepare himself for breakfast. There was no lagging—no taking a few more "winks," for only fifteen minutes was allowed for clearing the decks of hammocks. Then coffee or cocoa was served, with bread, or, if the men preferred it, hardtack. And very good this was, too, not like the kind you read of in old-fashioned books, mouldy and full of worms. It was clean and sweet.

Half an hour was allowed for this early meal, and it could be followed by a smoke for those who indulged in tobacco. Frank and Ned did not, however.

At 6:30 all hands were summoned to clean ship. It might seem that this need not be done every day, but it has to be attended to, for a battleship is almost like a small town, and there is always something to be done. The men are told off into divisions, and each man has a certain "station," the cleanliness of which he is responsible for. Each division, or squad, of men has a certain specified amount of work to do in cleaning ship. One division may have to scrub part of the deck, another will be given boats to clean and make ship-shape, and another will have paint work or brass or copper fittings to polish. 91

It might be mentioned that following the early morning cup of coffee each man is required to wash his own clothes, for cleanliness is one of the cardinal points in the navy. And matters are so arranged that the cleaning of the ship stops in time for the men to make themselves neat for the breakfast, which is served from 7:30 to 8:15 A. M. For this the men are always in uniform, the nature of their clothing depending on the climate they are cruising in.

As was mentioned, the two brothers had their hammocks slung near that of Hank Dell. Nine o'clock is the hour when all blue-jackets must be in their hammocks, unless allowed to stay up for some entertainment, of which there are many aboard the ships.

At 7:30 A.M. on the first day out, when Frank and Ned went to sling their beds, in readiness for the night, Frank saw Hank near Ned's lashed hammock.

"Guess you're making a mistake, aren't you?" said Frank. "That isn't yours."

"Oh, that's so!" exclaimed Hank, with affected surprise. "I'm a bit green about things here. Mine's over on this side," and he went to his own sleeping quarters. 92

Frank thought no more about it at the time, but slung his own hammock. Ned, coming down a few minutes afterward, did the same. Then, as the time was free up to nine o'clock, the brothers went on deck to enjoy the air, for the day had been hot.

"Say, it's simply great, isn't it?" remarked Ned, as he gazed off over the heaving waters, silvered by the moon.

"Couldn't be better," declared Frank. "It's the best life ever!"

The signal came for turning in, and the men, rather regretfully perhaps, went below.

As Ned sprang up into his hammock it gave way with him, and down he came with a crash, turning over so that he fell on deck, off the mattress, bruising himself painfully.

"Hurt?" asked Frank, hurrying to his brother's side.

"Oh, not so much but that I can stand it," was the grim answer.

Some little commotion was caused by this accident, and a number of the men laughed, Hank seeming to find much pleasure in the occurrence. An officer came along.

"What's going on here?" he asked sternly.

"My hammock gave way with me, sir," reported Ned, saluting.

"Did some one pull it down?"

"I don't think so, sir."

Frank, who had been bending over the end of the hammock, gave a startled cry.

"The ropes have been cut!" he exclaimed.

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## CHAPTER XIII—TARGET PRACTICE

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For a moment silence followed Frank's startling announcement. Then the officer asked:

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, sir," replied Frank, "that the ropes of my brother's hammock were partly cut through, so that when his weight came on them they gave way. That is how it happened."

"Are you sure?"

"You may look for yourself, sir."

In the gleam of the incandescent deck lights Frank held out the end of the hammock where the ropes were joined to the canvas. Ned had limped to one side and sat down, for his leg pained him.

"You are right," said the officer, after a quick inspection. "Who cut those ropes?" he asked, sternly.

Of course no one answered. Probably the officer did not expect that any one would. He looked about at the circle of jackies, some of whom were grinning broadly. Frank looked angry—Ned had a pained look on his face.

"If I find out who did this," went on the officer, "I'll make him smart for it. Turn in, all of you! I'll have another hammock assigned to you," he remarked to Ned. "Do you need medical assistance?"

"No, sir. Thank you. I think I'll be all right."

The officer wheeled about and marched off, and a little later one of the sailors, who had charge of the store room, came and told Ned where he could get a hammock.

"I'll get it," offered Frank. "You take it easy."

"Oh, I'm not so badly off as all that."

"Well, save yourself all you can. I'll get the hammock." And Frank did. As he came back with it he heard Hank saying to some one:

"Well it happened all right, didn't it?"

"What happened?" asked Frank, quickly, a suspicion growing rapidly in his mind.

"None of your business! I wasn't talking to you," was the sharp retort.

"I'll make it my business," said Frank, as he slung Ned's hammock for him.

"Here you! Quiet down back there!" came the orders from a petty officer, as he heard the talking.

Ned limped as he made his way across the deck to his new hammock, and Frank had to help him up into it.

"Queer sort of game," murmured the younger lad, as he settled himself comfortably on the mattress. "Who do you suppose cut those ropes?"

"Don't you know?" asked Frank.

"I can't imagine."

"It was that bully, Hank, of course. I saw him monkeying near your lashings when I made up, but I didn't think, then, that he was up to any tricks. But I'll pay him out all right."

"Say, don't get into trouble on my account," begged his brother.

"Oh, I won't get into any trouble, don't worry," was the answer. "But I'll pay him back all right," Frank murmured as he leaped up into his swinging bed.

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Neither Frank nor Ned rested well that night. Ned on account of the pain in his hip, and Frank because he was wondering why Hank, or any one, for that matter, should have such a grudge against him or his brother as to cut the hammock ropes.

"I guess Hank, who did it, just wanted to play a mean trick," thought Frank. "But I'll have it out with him just the same. He needs a lesson!"

Ned groaned as he tried to get out of his hammock the next morning.

"Stiff?" asked Frank, who tumbled out at reveille.

"Dead lame, I'm afraid. I'll have to report sick, I guess."

"Well, maybe you'd better. No use taking any chances."

"It's tough luck," said Ned. "And I wanted to be in for target practice, too," for it had become known that the day would be given over to that drill.

"Never mind," Frank consoled him. "You'll have your chance later."

So while Frank, with the others, went through the early morning duties, Ned did not. Of course his absence was noted by the officer in charge of his division, who each day inspected the men under his charge and made a report to the executive. In turn Ned's name reached the captain as not being at his post, but that was merely a matter of routine.

At 8:30 each day, aboard the battleships, there is what is known as sick-call. At that time all who are not well must consult the medical officer. But Ned could not do this as he could only limp, so he was taken on a stretcher and it was found that he was suffering from a severe bruise. He was sent to the hospital, where he was told he would have to stay in bed for two or three days.

And so Ned missed the first target practice, which was with three-inch guns. Frank told him about it afterward.

"Oh, well, that isn't so bad, if it was only three-inch guns," remarked the invalided lad. "I was afraid I'd miss the big ones."

"They come later," Frank remarked.

"Say, Frank," whispered Tom Dawson, one of the recruits from Norfolk, to Ned's brother a little later, "do you know who it was cut the ropes of the hammock?"

"I have my suspicions," was the answer.

"Well, I can tell you for sure. It was that sneak, Hank Dell. He's boasting of it now!"

"I was pretty sure he did. What was his object?"

"I guess he wants you and your brother to shift to some other mess. There are a couple of tough friends of his that he wants to berth alongside of him in your places."

"Well, he's welcome to have them as far as I'm concerned," Frank said, "but he needn't have gone that way about it. I think I'll have to take it out on him."

"I would," advised Tom. "Some of us will stand by you. We don't like Hank any too well. Slip down below right after afternoon drill, and there'll be a clear place where you can see how well he can handle his fists."

"I'll do it," agreed Frank.

Boxing is encouraged among the blue-jackets, and Frank was an adept at it. He had seen Hank in action, and realized that he, too, could put up a good fight.

Afternoon drill began at 1:30 o'clock, and on this occasion consisted of a talk on projectiles, and practice in sighting the big gun, and in firing a dummy charge. It was over at three, and Frank slipped below. Some of those in the secret followed him.

Just how it had been brought about Frank did not know, but in a secluded place on a lower deck he found a number of his friends, and there, also, was Hank with a few of his cronies. Hank did not wait but swaggered up to Frank and said:

"I understand you have been sayin' things about me."

"What things?" asked Frank, coolly.

"About slicin' the ropes of your brother's hammock."

"I said I thought you cut them—yes."

"Well, if I did, what are you going to do about it?"

Frank's answer was to strip off his middy blouse, an action followed by Hank. The others formed a ring about them, and soon the fight was on. It was scientific, in a way, until Frank, with a feint, caught Hank unawares, and landed a good blow on one eye.

Then Hank lost his head and struck out wildly. He lost control of himself, and Frank easily got through his guard, planting several effective blows.

"I—I'll pay you for that!" spluttered Hank, as his lips swelled and one eye partly closed. He struck out wildly, and did manage to hit Frank on the face. It was a stinging blow, and hurt. But Frank knew he could not hope to come off scathless.

Then it was give and take for awhile, until Frank saw his chance, and aimed a sharp uppercut at Hank's chin. It caught the bully squarely, and almost lifted him off his feet. He staggered back, and would have fallen had not one of his chums caught him.

"I—I've had enough!" he muttered.

"Don't try to cut down any more hammocks," said Frank, as he went to wash himself, for a scratch on his cheek was bleeding.

"Oh, you haven't heard the last from me—not by any means," threatened Hank. But Frank did not worry.

The next day when Hank reported for early morning inspection his condition, as well as that of Frank, attracted the attention of the officer in charge of the division.

"How did you get that black eye?" he asked of Hank.

"Why, sir," was the grinning answer, "one of the fifteen-inch rifles recoiled and struck me."

"Very good!" was the grim and understanding comment. "And you, Arden—how about your scratches?"

"The—er—the goat mascot, sir."

"I see. A new fact in natural history—a goat with claws."

Of course, fighting was forbidden, but it went on just the same, and it was winked at to a certain extent when not too flagrant. So the incident was closed, as far as the ship authorities were concerned.

A few days later Ned was able to report again for his duties, and after that Hank was transferred to another division, berthing in another part of the ship.

"Well, I'm glad he's gone," Ned remarked. So were many others, for the red-haired recruit was not generally liked.

When the *Georgetown* had been at sea about a week, it was announced one morning directly after sick-call that great gun drill would be held.

"And it's with projectiles, too!" cried Ned. "Cracky, but I'm glad. You're in the forward turret with me, Frank."

"Yes, and I hope our ear drums don't crack. They make an awful racket, those fifteen-inch rifles."

Preparations for the drill went on. It had been gone through with many times before, though not always with charges of powder and projectiles, so the men knew the routine.

Frank had been detailed on this occasion as gun-pointer, which meant that he was to fire the gun when it was sighted at the target. Ned was helping with the ammunition and powder, which came up into the turret on a hoist, or elevator, from the magazine below.

"Are you all ready?" asked the officer in charge of the forward turret.

"All ready," was the answer.

"Watch yourselves, then. Try to make a record," he added.

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered Frank, who stood at the telescope sight, ready to look for the big canvas target which would soon be towed into range.

## CHAPTER XIV—A BRAVE ACT

Target practice with our big guns aboard a battleship is rather an important occasion, as it is not often done. It is too expensive to fire away hundreds of pounds of powder and projectiles, the cost of which runs into the thousands. But it must be done occasionally.

When it is done, in order to get as nearly as possible to actual war conditions, it is customary to have the unexpected happen. That is to say, the target, which is a big square of canvas on a float, is towed by some other ship, and where or when it is to appear is not known to the men who work the guns. This is to make them quick and resourceful.

"Watch out now, men," advised the officer. "Arden, keep your wits about you. Remember there is quite a swell on to-day, and allow accordingly when you point the gun."

It might be stated here that the big guns are moved and controlled by machinery, but the machinery is under the fingers of the pointer and his assistants. By a simple movement of a lever the gun can be shifted up or down or from side to side. And probably all know that elevation is one of the most important matters in firing.

If a gun is taken, or for that matter a bean-shooter, and some projectile is fired or blown through the air, it will be noticed that it goes in a straight line for only a short distance. Then it begins to curve down and fall. This is due to loss of energy, and to the attraction of gravitation.

Now if the gun be held, say, exactly parallel to the earth's surface, it will be noted that the

projectile will go a certain distance. Lower the gun, and it will not go so far. Raise it and the bullet (or bean, if the trial is made with a bean-shooter) will go much farther. And it is this angle of fire that is most important.

By computation it is possible to know at just what angle or inclination to point the gun in order to send its projectile to a certain point at a known distance away. And in order to find this distance it is necessary to use what are called range-finders.

These are something like telescopes, but the science known as triangulation is brought into use, also. So a range-finder on a battleship can in a short time signal to the gun-pointer just how far away a certain hostile ship or a target may be. When the gun-pointer knows the distance, he knows just how much to elevate or depress his gun in order to make the projectile come somewhere near the object at which he is aiming.

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"All ready now. I think we'll get the range soon," said the officer in charge of the turret where Ned and Frank were stationed.

Every one was on the alert. The lads stood at attention. Into the breech of the big gun had been put the steel projectile, and back of that the powder, hundreds of pounds of it. Frank stood ready to press the trigger, which would detonate the primer and explode the charge. In front of him was the telescope sight, and at his fingers' ends were the controls that would move the gun whichever way he wished. Ned stood at the ammunition hoist.

A shrill whistle sounded in the turret. The officer in charge listened.

"The range is thirteen thousand yards," he said. An observer in a crow's-nest on one of the masts had sent in this information. The target was just coming into view, and through the range-finder the distance was quickly computed.

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered Frank in response to the officer. Then he bent down to peer through the telescope sight.

"Can you see it?" asked the officer.

"Not yet—there it is!" cried Frank, suddenly.

"Fire when you sight it properly."

There was a moment's hesitation. Then Frank's finger pressed on the lever that would send the great projectile on its way.

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Such a crash followed that every one was deafened for a moment, in spite of the fact that every man in the turret stood on his toes to lessen the shock, and had his ears stuffed with cotton. The great gun recoiled, the back action being taken up by shock-absorbers, however. A sharp, acrid smell filled the turret. Smoke drifted in. Men staggered back and opened their mouths for air. It seemed as if ten thousand thunder claps had been made into one.

Then came a silence.

"Do you think you hit it?" asked Ned, and his voice sounded so strange, after the great crash, that nearly every one laughed.

"Silence!" called the officer in charge.

Again came a whistle through the speaking tube.

"Yes!" answered the listening officer. "A hit? Good! You made a hit the first try!" he shouted to Frank. "Try again."

Frank blushed with pleasure. But one would never have known that his cheeks reddened, for he was black with grease and oil, having been engaged in going over the mechanism before he made the shot. The smoke was gradually blackening every one.

No sooner had the gun recoiled and moved back into place again, than compressed air rushed automatically into the breech and barrel, to drive out any slow-burning pieces of powder that might possibly ignite the next charge when it was inserted.

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"Once more!" called the officer in charge, as up came the supply of powder and the projectile. Ned and his mates shoved them into the gun, and again the breech was closed with a clang.

"Listen for the range," directed the officer. "They may try to fool us." For in order to get as nearly as possible to actual war conditions, the target-towers were often instructed to run a zigzag course, sometimes close to, and again far away from the firing ship.

Once more came the signal into the turret from the range-finder.

"Eight thousand yards!"

"Whew!" commented the officer. "They're running in on us."

"Have to lower the gun," commented Ned.

As has been said, in order to reach a far distant point, a gun must be elevated more than to hit a mark close by.

"Down she goes!" Frank exclaimed, as the mechanism depressed the muzzle.

"Can you sight the target?" asked the officer.

"Sight she is!"

"Then fire!"

"Fire!" echoed Frank.

Again came that belch of smoke and acrid smell, the recoil of the gun, the trembling turret and the rush of compressed air as it blew out the burning particles of powder.

Powder that is used in big guns is not like the old-fashioned black powder. It is highly explosive, but some of the "grains" are in sheets, perforated like a piece of Swiss cheese, and as large as your palm. Some is in long sticks, like large macaroni. Other is in brown hexagons, two inches across. You can safely touch a match to some of this powder and let it burn as you hold it. It is when it is confined, as in a gun, and the gases from it can not escape after its sudden detonation, that it exerts its explosive force.

So the target practice went on, the young blue-jackets taking turns at sighting and firing the gun. But no one bettered Frank's record of shots though Ned came close to it. It was hot work in the turret. The boys were stripped to their waists, and even then they were wet with perspiration and blackened with smoke and oil.

Finally there flashed into view on the turret signal device the words "cease firing." The practice was over. And then, just how it happened no one could tell, there was discovered on the iron floor of the turret a burning mass of powder that was slowly flaming. And worse than that, this burning powder was near a large charge that had been hoisted up but not used.

"Look!" cried Ned, frantically.

"Run out!" shouted Frank, aware of the danger of an explosion.

"Clear the turret!" yelled the officer. "Out, every one of you!"

The explosion was imminent. The officer stood at the entrance as the lads rushed out. Frank was the last, being preceded by Hank Dell. As the latter hurried he slipped and fell, striking his head on a steel projection. With a moan he rolled over unconscious.

The next instant, though the explosion might occur any moment, Frank stooped over, and catching up in his strong arms the body of the unconscious bully, he bore him from the turret, though, had he wished, Frank might have leaped across the prone form to safety.

"Quick!" cried the officer, as he leaped after Frank to help him. But there was no need. Frank had carried out his enemy.

The next instant there was a big flash of fire, and a dull report that threw Frank with his burden down to the deck.

## CHAPTER XV—ORDERED SOUTH

At first more than one thought a terrible explosion had taken place, and the general alarm was sounded. But it was not half so bad as it seemed.

Ned, who, with horror-stricken eyes, had seen his brother fall, was relieved to see him slowly get up and help lift Hank to a more comfortable position. From the interior of the gun turret, however, a mass of yellow smoke poured. But it quickly blew away, and an inspection on the part of the officers showed that no great damage had been done. It was a mass of imperfect powder that had exploded, and the force was not great. Then, too, it had not been closely confined, and the force was distributed over a large area, not being strong at any one point.

"But young Arden didn't know that when he stopped to pick up Dell," said the officer in charge. "Young man, I want to congratulate you on as brave an act as I've seen in a long time!"

"Oh, it wasn't anything," protested Frank, blushing. His blushes could be seen now, for this was some time later, and he and the others had washed. Hank, who had received a bad cut on his head by the fall, was sent to the hospital, though he had regained consciousness, and was not badly hurt.

"It was a plucky act," went on the officer. "But it only goes to show of what stuff Uncle Sam's jackies are made of."

The effects of the explosion were soon cleared away, and an investigation started to ascertain how it had happened. But it was one of those unaccountable things that frequently occur on even the most perfectly-manned battleships. Fortunately, no serious damage had been done, and no one hurt except Hank, and his injury was due to a slip and fall that might have occurred even when he was swabbing down the deck.

The affair had one good and lasting effect, however. Of course Hank did not fail to learn who had picked him up and carried him from the turret when the explosion was about to occur. And, harmless as the explosion turned out, there is no doubt that had any one been in the turret at the time, instead of at the entrance, he would have been killed, or at least badly injured. So Hank learned that, in effect, Frank had saved his life at the risk of his own.

And when the bully had recovered and reported back for duty he went up to Frank before the

whole mess at hammock-slinging time one evening, and held out his hand.

"Will you shake, Arden?" was asked.

"Why certainly, Dell," was the quick answer.

Their palms met in a warm clasp.

"I want to apologize," went on Hank. "I've acted pretty mean toward you and your brother, and I'm sorry. But I'm done now. If ever you want a friend on this ship, count on me!"

"Thank you," said Frank, "I don't hold any grudge."

"I'm glad of it," responded Hank. "I know I've been rotten, but I'm through. It was fine of you to take me out. I shan't forget it!"

"Three cheers for Frank Arden!" called some one.

They were given with a will that brought an officer on the run to see what was happening. But when he saw what it was he smiled and turned away.

"And three cheers for Hank Dell!" proposed Ned.

It would have puzzled any one to tell which cheers were the heartiest. And from then on, though occasionally he was up to some trick, the bully was a changed youth. He gave no more trouble, and Frank and Ned had no firmer friend. From being rather careless and neglectful of his progress, he became studious, and in this he was encouraged, for the officers are eager to have their men promoted.

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"So that explosion was a good thing after all," remarked Ned, some time later.

"Yes, though it looked mighty ticklish at the start," responded Frank, with a smile.

There were other rifle practices as the weeks passed, sometimes with big guns, and more often with the small arms and quick firers. Ned and Frank went in for gunnery work, for which they seemed to have a peculiar aptitude, and in this they were encouraged by their superiors.

Quite often they wrote to their uncle, and also heard from him. Friends had reopened his case, but it was dragging slowly along, and there was no immediate prospect of his release.

"I wish we could help him," said Frank, with a sigh.

"So do I," chimed in Ned. "But how can we?"

There did not seem to be any way in which the boys could assist.

Drill and instruction went on unceasingly aboard the *Georgetown*. There are nine principal drills aboard a battleship. These are great gun drill; infantry and light artillery; boats, under oars or sails; signals; collisions and abandon ship; fire-quarters; general quarters; clear ship for action; and coaling ship.

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Some days only one or two drills may be ordered, and on others none. Nor are they followed in the order given, for above everything else the government does not want life aboard ship to become monotonous. Often the drills were broken into by short, instructive talks by the officers.

In the succeeding chapters will be briefly told of what each drill consists.

It was one day following boat drill, when the small craft had come racing back in response to the recall signal, that Frank and Ned, whose boat had won an impromptu race, observed signs of unusual activity aboard.

"What's up?" Frank asked a petty officer.

"Just got wireless orders," was the answer. "We're ordered South!"

"Ordered South?" echoed Ned. "Where?"

"Down to a small South American republic. Uridio it's called. I never heard of it, but there's some sort of a revolution there, and we're ordered down to protect American interests. I didn't know Uridio was on the map."

"Well, we did," said Frank in a low voice to his brother. "Oh, Ned! That's where Uncle Phil's property is. Maybe now we'll get a chance to help him!"

## CHAPTER XVI—HEAVY SEAS

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Such eager hope shone on the faces of Frank and Ned Arden on hearing the news that the battleship was ordered to South America, that the sailor who had given them the information remarked:

"Say, you fellows must be glad of it!"

"We are!" declared Frank. "Why, aren't you?"

"I should say not!" was the emphatic reply.



"You don't mind because we may be mixed up in some fighting, do you?" asked Ned, in some surprise.

"Of course not! It's the climate I object to. It'll be hot down there—as hot as blazes, and if we have to go into action, and use the big guns, why being inside of the turrets will be worse than being in a teakettle."

"Oh, I guess we can stand it," returned Frank.

"Huh! Wait until you try it once," went on the blue-jacket. "I was down in the tropics once when we had some evolutions, and say! I haven't got rid of all the blisters yet. That's what makes me wonder when I see you fellows showing all sorts of signs of joy!"

"Well, some of our money is invested down in that little republic, and we want a chance to see what it looks like," Frank explained.

"Come off! What sort of talk are you giving me?" demanded the sailor. "Money invested, and you working for Uncle Sam? Tell me something easier to believe," and he laughed in a good-natured way.

Frank and Ned exchanged meaning looks, and tacitly agreed that perhaps it would be better not to go into any explanation of the matter. It would be hard to convince the ordinary blue-jacket that the two battleship boys once possessed a considerable fortune that was now tied up because of political troubles in Uridio. It sounded more like a tale from a book, than the real thing, as Frank admitted to his brother later.

"So we'd just better keep still about it, I think," he said. "Of course if we get a chance to do a good turn for Uncle Phil, and, incidentally ourselves, we will. We can speak to the captain or some of the officers about it, and we have papers that prove what we say is true. Only there is no use in going into all this to any of the sailors."

"I guess you're right," admitted Ned. The two lads did have certain documents that would establish the truth of what they had said, namely, that their fortune, as well as that of their uncle, was tied up in investments in the "banana republic," as the small countries of Central and South America are often called.

Matters regarding Mr. Arden's affairs had not changed of late, according to the last advices received by the boys. They had not, as they had hoped, been able to visit him at Atlanta.

Their life at the naval training station had been more fully occupied than they had expected, and there was no time to take the trip to Georgia. They had regretted the matter very much at the time, and Mr. Arden was greatly disappointed at not seeing his nephews. But he knew it could not be helped. Now, however, there might be a chance to do him a much greater service than would have resulted from a mere visit.

"Heat isn't the only thing that's disagreeable down in the tropics," went on the sailor the next time he saw Frank and Ned.

"No?" asked Ned.

"I should say not! There's no telling what sort of disease you may catch."

"Well, I'm not going to try and catch any," laughed Frank. "If some disease wants to catch me I'll do my best to get away, too."

"And there's all sorts of bugs and crawling things," continued the blue-jacket, making a wry face.

"Oh, don't listen to him!" exclaimed Hank Dell, who, of late, had become quite chummy with Frank and Ned. "He's a regular calamity-howler, he is!"

"Yes, and you'll be a howler, too, when some of those South American chiggers get after you and burrow under your skin," predicted the other as he went below.

The news that the *Georgetown* had been ordered to South American waters where there was a prospect of some real fighting, soon spread all over the ship. As boat after boat returned from the drill, and was hoisted to the davits, the sailors discussed the wireless message that had been received. Of course the enlisted men did not know any of the particulars, merely being told that the rather aimless cruising about, which had thus far marked the voyage, was at an end, and that orders had come to start South.

Now the *Georgetown* had a definite object in view, and it was rumored throughout the ship that hereafter drills would be stricter and that drills with the big guns would be more frequent.

"Of course we won't stop for any target practice, though," reasoned Ned.

"Hardly," agreed Frank. "I guess, too, they won't fire away many of the big, expensive projectiles. We may need them for Uridio."

"Yes, we may have a run-in with their navy," his brother said.

"Navy!" laughed Hank. "Say, I don't believe they have any more navy than Switzerland has, and all that country can put out is a motor boat on Lake Constance."

"Well, I guess there won't be any waste of ammunition if there's a prospect of some real work," another sailor remarked.

As has been said, the word for the *Georgetown* to proceed to Uridio had come by wireless, and later it was learned that the battleship was to stop at Havana for sealed orders, and also to take

on board certain stores—ammunition and supplies that would be waiting for her.

“It means business all right,” said Frank to Ned, as they were talking the matter over before turning into their hammocks for the night. “I wonder if we shall be able to go ashore and get any sort of a line on that business of Uncle Phil’s?”

“We’ll make a good try, anyhow,” declared Ned. “I guess the captain or some of the executive officers will give us help and advice if we ask them.”

“That’s a good idea,” Frank added.

As soon as all the boats had returned, the course of the battleship was changed, and now, with black smoke pouring from her funnels, she was rushing away through the night toward Cuba, there to stop, and as soon as possible afterward to take up her journey again toward South America. 120

A totally different spirit and feeling was on board now, at least among the younger enlisted men. It was the nearest any of them had yet come to conditions of actual warfare, though probably the matter of proceeding to regulate matters in a small republic, such as Uridio was, and looking after the interests of United States’ citizens there, was really a small affair in the minds of the higher officers, some of whom had been with Dewey at Manila when the Spanish fleet was defeated.

A change was made the next day in the nature and manner of holding the drills. For some time the lighter forms of evolutions had been the order of the day. But after the wireless orders were received there was more big gun drill and more, too, of infantry and light artillery tactics insisted on.

The United States blue-jackets often have to perform the services of a soldier in time of war, and that they may be familiar with those duties special drills are devised. Often, when a ship is in port, the men will be landed and go through these drills on shore. But now, in the case of the *Georgetown*, they took place on the big decks. 121

The manual of arms was gone through with again and again, and the light artillery was brought up and put into action against an imaginary enemy, blank charges being fired. Frank, Ned and their chums greatly enjoyed this drill.

“If you do as well when you’re ordered ashore to proceed against a howling mob, you’ll be all right,” remarked one of the officers at the conclusion of some snappy work one day.

“Oh, we’ll do it!” said Ned, to his brother.

While it was not for a moment thought that the *Georgetown* would be endangered from the shots of any hostile ship, or from the guns of a fort on shore, still drills were held that would enable the men to repair any possible damage in such a contingency.

These drills were collision, fire-quarters, general-quarters, and clearing ship for action.

The signal for collision drill was unexpectedly sounded one day when they were but a short distance from Havana. At once all the water-tight doors in the battleship were closed by machinery, and Frank, Ned and the others rushed to the various stations that had previously been assigned to them.

It was the work of the squad, or division, that included Frank and Ned to put over the side a thick, heavy collision mat, which was lowered to cover an imaginary hole, supposed to have been blown in the ship below the water-line or near it by a torpedo or projectile. The object of the collision mat is to stop the inrush of water until the water-tight doors can be made fast, or dropped into place. 122

In order to give as many as possible practice at this drill it was gone through with a number of times, several collision mats being used. It was hard work, for the mats were heavy, and Frank and Ned were not sorry when it was over.

Havana was reached in due season, and shore liberty was allowed to all in turn, for the ship was to remain there two days. Frank and Ned greatly enjoyed the novel sights ashore, and were rather sorry when they were under way again. But they were also eager for the work ahead of them, and anxious about the prospect of aiding their uncle, and saving, if possible, their own fortunes.

The night after leaving Havana Frank was awakened by a violent pitching and tossing. He heard Ned, next to him, moving about restlessly, and asked:

“What’s up?”

“I don’t know, unless it’s a storm,” was the reply.

“That’s it, we’ve run into some heavy weather,” said an older sailor. 123

Though there was a violent pitching and tossing, which motion was imparted to the *Georgetown* in spite of her great size, still our two heroes were not made greatly uncomfortable. The swaying hammocks did not take all the motions through which the vessel went, though the “beds” did sway more than usual. But the recruits had gotten their sea-legs some time before, and none was made seasick. This malady had not bothered Ned and Frank at all, for they had gone through their initiation in that regard years before, on Great South Bay and the adjacent ocean.

In the morning the *Georgetown* was plowing her way through a stormy sea, a heavy gale was

blowing and sending the salt spray across her decks.

"It's like the time we were out in our motor boat," remarked Ned.

"Yes," agreed Frank, and he thought regretfully of the *Ellen*. "And maybe we'll have the same pleasure some time later, if we get back the money from the revolutionists," he added.

"Why, are you going to quit the battleship?" asked Ned.

"Oh, no, I haven't any idea of that sort, but if we get back our money we might apply for a leave of absence. Or after our four years are up, we can take a furlough."

## CHAPTER XVII—A CHASE

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Just what the orders were that the commander of the *Georgetown* had received at Havana was known only to himself and to his immediate official family. They were not made public, but the fact that the ship kept on down the South American coast in the direction of Uridio, was sufficient evidence that the trouble in the small republic was not yet over.

"We'll see some sort of action all right," predicted Hank, in talking the matter over with Ned and Frank, as the battleship labored on through the storm.

"Action! Say, if there's any more action than we're getting right now, I'd like to see it—or, rather, I wouldn't," cried Sam Bowler, the sailor who had found so much fault about the prospective heat.

"There you go again, old calamity-howler!" laughed Tom Dawson, who, with Hank, had become quite chummy with Ned and Frank.

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Certainly the *Georgetown* was being rather ill-used by the elements. The storm increased, rather than diminished, and soon had attained the proportions of a hurricane. There was rain, too, but so heavy was the salt spray, whipped from the crests of the foaming billows, that out on deck one could not tell the fresh water from the briney. It all came down together.

Of course, in the storm everything was lashed fast, life lines were stretched about the decks, and only the necessary routine work and duties were performed. The battleship proved herself most seaworthy, and though she did roll and pitch and toss, still she remained as tight as a drum, even under the terrific strain.

To while away the time, which was monotonous because of enforced idleness, only the necessary men being allowed on deck, some amusements were permitted. Boxing contests were arranged, though it was no easy matter to keep one's footing, and in several of the bouts the less skillful men managed to "knock-out" efficient boxers. This was because an unexpected roll of the ship would send the good boxer off his balance when he least expected it, and the other would have a chance to "land" one on him. But it was all in fun, and taken in good part.

Frank and Ned were good banjo players, and could also perform on the guitar. And as they had each purchased an instrument just before being assigned to the *Georgetown*, and as several other recruits had also displayed musical talents, they were able to give an impromptu concert below decks during the storm.

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The officers encourage the blue-jackets to do this, and instruction in music is provided to those who are fitted for it. Life on a battleship or in the navy is not so dull as some people would have prospective recruits understand.

Gradually the storm blew itself out, or else the battleship ran out of the storm region, and after two days of inclement weather the wind died down, the sun came out, and the men were able to move about freely on the upper decks and go about their usual duties.

Shortly after sick-call one morning there came the rapid ringing of the ship's big bell, and in different parts of the craft bugles were sounded. Then came a certain number of taps on the big bell.

"Fire quarters!" cried Ned, as he caught the signal. He jumped away from the work he was doing, polishing some brass, and ran for his designated station.

"Is it drill or real, I wonder?" asked Frank, as he, too, hurried along with his brother. All over the ship were seen signs of activity.

"Fire-quarters! Fire-quarters!" was called.

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Again the bugles blew, and by the manner of the call the location of the "fire" was indicated.

"After magazine!" shouted Ned, as he listened to the call.

No one knew whether it was a call to fight a real fire, or whether it was simply a drill. For just as the fire signal is given in the public schools, to get the children used to answering it unexpectedly and without undue alarm, so on board the battleships these emergency drills are held at unexpected times.

In a few minutes after fire-quarters had sounded on the *Georgetown* every man was at the station

which had been assigned to him some time previous, in other like drills. Then long lines of hose were manned, all converging toward the after magazine, which was the position indicated by the signals. At once all water-tight doors and hatches were closed, so that in case there was a fire it would be prevented from spreading to other parts of the ship.

But fortunately this was not a real blaze on the battleship. The drill was simply for practice, and when the hose had been unreeled, and all was in readiness for flooding the magazine, had such a course been necessary, and when all the doors and hatches had been closed, word was given to the men to resume the work at which they had been when the call came.

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"Whew! That was hot work!" exclaimed Ned, wiping the perspiration from his face.

"I should say yes," agreed his brother.

The storm had passed away, but as they were now in the tropics and would shortly cross the equator, the air was hot and moist. Orders had been given for a change of clothes, and the men and officers now wore as cool garments as possible, presenting a fine appearance in their white uniforms.

Down past Venezuela and the three Guianas steamed the mighty *Georgetown*. Then, a little later, the ship was off the mouth of the great Amazon, and the "line," as the equator is called, was crossed.

Of course there was the usual horse-play and high jinks permitted by the officers. Neptune, in the person of one of the sailors, came aboard, with his trident, his crown and his wealth of hair, made from strands of oakum; and before Neptune and his court were brought those who had never yet crossed the equator. They were to be initiated.

Various feats were assigned to the luckless ones, not all of them mild, either. But everyone went through the fun with good spirits, though Hank Dell protested when he was told to thrust his head into a bucket of soapy water. He hesitated, but his mates forced him to take the ducking.

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"Wough!" he spluttered, as his eyes and mouth were filled with the soapy mixture. Then he was doused with a pail of clean water, and his novitiate over.

Frank and Ned, with the others, had to submit to their share of the hazing, but finally it came to an end amid gales of laughter.

"Well, we won't have to go through with that again," Frank remarked to his brother when they were changing into clean and fresh garments.

"No, and I'm glad of it. There was a little too much rough stuff in it to suit me."

"Oh, it'll do us good, I guess," laughed Frank.

In the days that followed other drills were held aboard the battleship, though they were made as light as possible on account of the hot weather in the tropics.

When the general-quarters call was sounded, all took their stations at the guns for fighting the ship. This was what would be done on going into action, and that drill was usually preceded by the "clearing ship for action" order. In this the upper decks were cleared of all unnecessary rigging, not actually required for fighting. In this drill it is sometimes customary to lower the boats, but as the *Georgetown* was speeding to accomplish a certain mission she was not stopped to permit the lowering of the small boats.

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"Abandon ship" was another drill that interested Ned and Frank. This drill often came after collision drill, and was supposed to indicate that the ship had been so badly damaged in action that she was likely to sink. When the "abandon" signal was given each man rushed to his particular station at the small boats.

Each man had also to get a certain amount of food or supplies which was always his portion, and stow this in the boat. So proficient did the blue-jackets become that in a few minutes after the signal had been given to abandon ship the whole crew, officers and all, would be ready to take to the boats and pull away. And in the boats would be enough food for several days, as well as other comforts and necessities. Everything possible is thought of in advance, and preparations made for all emergencies, from fire or explosion on board, to an attack by an enemy.

Down past the shoulder of Brazil slipped the *Georgetown*, and as she was now leaving the equator and going south, the heat of the weather moderated a little. Still it was warm enough.

"It won't be long before we shall be there," remarked Frank to Ned one day, as they stood on the forward deck, looking across the sea.

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"Yes, we ought to be there soon. I hope we're in time."

"In time? What do you mean?"

"I mean I hope the revolution isn't all over."

"Oh, I see," laughed Frank.

Suddenly the lookout cried:

"Steamer ho!"

"Where away?" came the demand.

"Almost dead ahead. Looks like some sort of cruiser."

Ned, Frank and several others, including a number of officers looked in the direction indicated. There, speeding away ahead of the *Georgetown*, was a craft that did look like a small fighting craft.

"Can you make out her flag?" asked one officer to another.

"No, not yet," was the reply, as the one addressed peered through his glasses.

"Yes, I can, too!" he cried a moment later. "If those rascals of revolutionists of Uridio haven't got a navy! Well, who would have thought it!"

"Let me see," demanded the other. "Yes," he continued a moment later, "it is a small cruiser, and she flies the hostile flag. They must have bought some old fighting craft that some nation considered out of date. The captain must be informed."

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A little later there sounded down in the engine room of the *Georgetown* the signal from the bridge of, "full speed ahead!"

"Are we going to chase her?" asked Ned.

"It looks that way," said his brother.

From the funnels of the battleship belched clouds of black smoke.

## CHAPTER XVIII—BIG GUNS BOOM

133

"What's the idea of taking after that craft, I wonder?" remarked Ned, when it became certain that the chase was on.

"Give it up," answered Frank, "unless the old man wants to throw a scare into those revolutionists."

"I guess that's it," chuckled Tom Dawson. "We'll take their navy away from 'em, and then they can't do anything."

"They couldn't do anything anyhow, with that dinky little craft against the *Georgetown*," boasted Hank Dell.

"Don't you fool yourself, son, and let that idea get away with you," came from an older blue-jacket. "A little craft like that may have a torpedo tube or two concealed about her, and if she lets a Whitehead go at us, and it hits—good-night! as the boys say."

The others knew that he spoke the truth. A single torpedo, with its 200-pound explosive charge of the terrible gun cotton, can render helpless the greatest battleship in the world if the hole is blown in the right place below the waterline. And this indisputable fact has caused many nations, our own included, to doubt the wisdom of building so many big, heavily-armored and expensive ships. Many well-informed persons favor the development of a navy of submarines, which are becoming more and more efficient each year. They cost only a fraction as much as a battleship or cruiser, and can successfully cope with the larger craft.

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"I wonder what a warship of the Uridian revolutionists is doing out here, anyhow?" went on Ned, as he and his friends watched the other craft which was endeavoring to escape.

"Probably scouting along the coast to see if it can capture anything," suggested Frank. "The treasury of the revolutionists may be at low ebb, and they may hope to replenish it."

"That's what they've been doing, with your money and mine and Uncle Phil's," remarked his brother in a low voice. "I wish the *Georgetown* would help to get some of it back for us."

"Maybe she will," Frank murmured. They had followed their plan of not telling their shipmates the peculiar situation which had led them to enlist.

Everyone who could get a vantage point, and was not obliged to be at other duties, was watching the chase. The battleship was running under forced draft, and Ned and Frank were very thankful that they were not coal-passers, or firemen. For the temperature in the stokehole of a battleship, when forced draft is being used, is about the highest in the world.

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Still everything possible is done to make the men comfortable, and they only work in short shifts, changing frequently, and receive the best of medical treatment and advice if they are temporarily overcome, as often happens. But word had gone into the engine room that the *Georgetown* was really making her first race after what might be considered a hostile craft, and the coal-passers and firemen stuck to their tasks with great grit, determined to make their craft do her best.

So through the sea plowed the great battleship, an immense wave piling up on either bow as she pushed her way along driven by the powerful engines deep in her interior.

"We don't seem to be catching up very fast," observed Frank.

"No, that little craft is showing a clean pair of heels," agreed Ned. "We aren't built for speed, anyhow."

This was true enough, though for her size the *Georgetown* was one of the fastest battleships

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afloat. Still a smaller boat which did not meet with so much resistance going through the water, could get away with comparative ease. And it looked as if this was what was going to happen.

"Why don't we fire a shot at her?" murmured Tom Dawson.

"We can't very well put one across her bows when we're dead astern," commented Ned. "And if we fire any other way we're likely to hit her."

"Which I suppose we haven't a right to do," observed Frank. "We aren't at war with Uridio. It's only that we aren't going to let her revolutionists do things to our citizens."

But it was evident that something was going to be done, for there sounded, a little later, the order for clearing the ship for action. With cheers the men sprang to their stations, Ned and Frank going to the big gun turret, though it was hardly possible the great guns would be used on so small an opponent.

The decks were quickly cleared, and preparations made for all emergencies. The captain seemed to have taken into consideration the same idea that the sailor had given voice to—namely, that a torpedo might be launched against the *Georgetown*. He was going to take no chances, and even the boats were gotten ready for a quick launching if it should prove necessary.

"Fire one shot at her, to starboard from a three-inch gun," was the order that came a little later. And with a yell of delight, not from bloodthirstiness, but at the chance for action, the crew of that gun sprang to obey.

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"I wish we had a chance," murmured Ned, regretfully, as he stood at the ammunition hoist in the big turret.

"Say, if one of these projectiles hit that ship there wouldn't be a thing left," said Frank.

"No, I reckon not. Well, maybe our chance will come later."

With a dull boom the smaller gun sent out a projectile that carried a small explosive charge. It was aimed to strike far enough to one side of the escaping craft to do no damage.

Into the sea splashed the shell, and as it burst it sent a column of water high into the air.

"That's a notification to them to slow down and let us come up to them," said Frank.

"I wonder if they will," came from Ned.

The issue was not long in doubt. From the stern of the smaller boat there shot out a puff of smoke, and then came a dull report. A small object was seen speeding toward the *Georgetown*.

"They're trying to torpedo us!" shouted Ned, looking from the forward turret.

"That's no torpedo," one of the more experienced sailors said. "It's only a small projectile, and it's going to fall short."

A moment later events proved that he was right, for the shell fell into the sea five hundred yards from the battleship, and a spray of water flashed into the air.

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"Guess her guns haven't much power," said Frank.

"But she shows, by firing back at us, that she isn't going to pull up and let us investigate her, I think," remarked Ned. This was the case, for the other craft, the name of which was not visible, kept on at an undiminished speed. She was rapidly leaving the *Georgetown* behind, and soon the commander of the latter gave up the chase. He did not want to waste his coal, or run the risk of burning out bearings, or breaking a shaft, merely to capture a craft so small as the one flying the Uridian flag of the revolutionists.

"We can attend to her case later, if she comes monkeying around when we're anchored off that banana republic," observed Hank, and the others agreed with him.

Gradually the escaping craft drew away, until only her smoke could be seen on the horizon. It was the general opinion, afterward, that the vessel had been scouting around, perhaps to get sight of the approach of the United States' war craft, and having seen her, had made haste to run and bring the word to the land forces. Just what the outcome would be no one knew.

It was two days later when the *Georgetown* came to anchor off the city of Pectelo, which was the seacoast capital of Uridio. As the big chains rattled through the hawse pipes, a boat was lowered away, and Captain Decker and some of his officers went ashore to learn what the situation was.

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What took place ashore was not made public to the ship's crew when the cutter returned. But a grave look was observed on the faces of the captain and his officers.

Everyone on the *Georgetown* waited eagerly for the next move. It was not long in coming.

"Man the forward turret!" came the command. "To your stations, men. We're going to give them a demonstration!"

"Hurrah!" cried Ned.

"It's our gun that's going to be fired!" exulted Frank.

Like clockwork the men in the turret prepared for the work ahead of them. Frank took his place at the firing trigger, and waited for the range.

"Sight her at ten thousand yards," came the command. "Aim at that hill back of the town. We're going to blow it apart!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" Frank answered.

"Fire!" came the command.

"Fire she is!" echoed Frank.

And the big gun boomed.

## CHAPTER XIX—ASHORE

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The great ship trembled with the vibration of the immense gun, and when the smoke had cleared away and the gases been blown from the cannon by the compressed air, Ned looked out of the turret, which had not been completely closed on account of the heat, and cried:

"A hit, Frank! A hit!"

What he saw was a cloud of dust flung into the air, and slowly drifting about in the wind.

"Well, I couldn't very well help hitting that," said Frank. "It was a big enough target, and it was stationary and so were we."

As yet none but the officer who had given the direction for the training of the big gun, and his superiors, knew why the hill had been shattered by the shot.

"Another shell, sir?" asked the blue-jacket who, with Ned and some others, had charge of the ammunition hoist.

"No, not from this turret. We're going to fire another, but from the after one."

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Frank and his mates were a little regretful, for there is a wonderful fascination about working the big guns. But still he did not want to monopolize all the glory, if such it can be called.

So Frank's crew cleaned the immense gun to have it in readiness for use when it would again be needed, and went back to their usual positions. A little later there was another terrific report, as the second fifteen-inch gun in the after turret sent a second 1500-pound projectile toward another hill back of Pectelo.

This time Ned and Frank and some of their friends had a good view of the flight of the shell as it sped on its mission of destruction, if not death. They were out of the turret now. Screeching through the air went the projectile. It struck the hill squarely, the gun being aimed as well as had the one Frank served.

An instant later there was a veritable fountain of earth and stones sent into the air, and then dust hid the scene from view.

"I wonder what the game is, firing at those hills?" questioned Ned.

"Maybe just to give the revolutionists a scare," suggested his brother.

"Sort of expensive scaring," commented Tom Dawson.

"Well, we'll know in good time, I guess," was the opinion of Hank Dell.

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The effect of the two big projectiles, other than that the tops of the hills had been smashed, was not discernible from on board the *Georgetown*.

But there was no mistaking the effect on the populace of the capital of the little republic. Through glasses Frank and Ned could notice wild excitement in the public square which came down to the water's edge. Men, women and children seemed to be rushing about without any special object in view.

"Maybe they think we'll bombard the town next," Ned suggested.

"The old man wouldn't do that," declared Frank. "It isn't a fortified city, and by the rules of civilized warfare an unfortified town can not be bombarded."

"That doesn't always hold—not in the European war," said a sailor. "But the people here needn't worry. We won't send any shells among 'em. Why, we could take the whole place without using anything larger than one-pounders," he boasted.

"I wish I knew what it was all about," Frank said, and he wondered whether there would be a chance for him and his brother to go on shore and make some inquiries about their own and their uncle's fortunes.

"Though if this battleship is going to shoot up the place after the inhabitants get out, I guess our chances for saving any of that money will be pretty slim," he reasoned.

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"I guess so, too," assented Ned. "I wonder what the situation is, anyhow?"

But they continued to wonder, as no word came from the captain or other officers regarding the situation in Uridio. That it was momentous might be guessed from the fact that the commander and his officers still had serious looks on their faces.

When the second gun had been cleaned after the one shot, and all made ready for quick action, if

need be, there was a period of waiting. Then a few small boats put out from the town and approached the *Georgetown*.

Those in them seemed somewhat in doubt as to the reception they might meet with, and it was noticed that all of them carried the national flag of the little republic, and in addition a peculiar banner, made in pennant shape, and colored red, white and green.

"I wonder what that flag is; revolutionary?" asked Hank.

"No, not if the cruiser that escaped from us was the navy of the revolutionists," Frank remarked. "Their flag wasn't the same shape or color as the flag on these boats. I guess these folks must belong to the party that is fighting the revolutionists."

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And this, later, they found to be the case. And as it was against the revolutionists that the battleship had come to make a demonstration, the other side was to be made welcome.

None from the battleship was allowed on board, however, and no shore leave was granted that first day or night. No one who has not been kept on board a vessel for several weeks, knows what a longing there is to go ashore, especially when it is within viewing distance.

But orders had been issued, and no one was allowed to leave. Many of the natives brought out fruit in their boats, and this was very welcome to the sailors. A brisk trade wind was soon under way. Uridian seemed to be a sort of Portuguese, that being the language of Brazil.

Toward evening a small launch containing some of the native officials came up to the battleship. There was an exchange of signals, and a ladder was lowered, a number of the dark-skinned, but brilliantly uniformed, Uridian officials coming on board. They were taken to the captain's cabin, where a conference was held.

"A whole lot of mystery about this," commented Hank Dell.

"Oh, I guess we'll find out about it in due time," Frank said.

"Double the number of sentries on guard tonight," was an order Frank overheard after supper had been served, and the crew prepared to take their ease before turning in. "And instruct everyone of them to be unusually watchful."

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"Is something likely to happen?" asked the officer who had received this order.

"There is no telling. A rumor is afloat that the cruiser we chased is coming back. And she does carry torpedo tubes. That much is certain."

"Well, as long as they haven't a submarine it will be pretty easy to spot them."

"Yes, but take no chances."

It may well be imagined that a spirit of uneasiness and anxiety was aboard the *Georgetown* that night. An attack in the open is one thing, but watching for the unexpected, especially when it may be a torpedo that will rend the stoutest battleship in an instant, is very different, and it gets on the nerves of even the bravest.

It is said that in the present European war the continual fear on the part of the men of the different fleets that their craft may be torpedoed so works on their nerves that some of them go insane. There is no rest day or night, and even the most careful watching can not be depended on to guard against the danger. A submarine gives very little evidence of its approach.

Of course, in this case no such danger was to be apprehended, but no chances were being taken.

So after the Uridian officials had departed, double sentries were posted at all stations aboard, and the men were told to be on the watch for the approach of any craft, or for any unusual disturbance in the water.

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"It's a heap more fun to read about a condition like this than to actually have to take part in it," remarked Frank, as he went on duty. He had an early "trick," but Ned had to get out of his hammock at two o'clock in the morning to go on guard duty.

However, the night was pleasant and not too warm, and after Ned was fully awake he did not so much mind it. He paced up and down his part of the deck, with ready rifle, on the alert to challenge and fire if he saw anything suspicious.

Off about a mile lay the town, only a few lights showing. Ned wondered how many Americans were there, and if they were in any danger. He wondered, too, just how and where his own and his brother's fortunes were invested, and what the chances were for recovering them. It was very still and quiet, save for the occasional footfall of some of the other sentries, or the little talk that went on as the guards were changed.

Ned was beginning to get sleepy again, in spite of the fact that he walked to and fro. His gun was feeling heavy. He wondered, after all, if there was any need of all this precaution.

Suddenly he thought he heard, in the water just below him, a slight commotion. At once his heart began to beat violently. Suppose it should prove to be a submarine after all. Or an automatic torpedo, which would presently burst and send them to the bottom. How had it gotten so near without his having heard or seen it? And there was, all about the *Georgetown*, a torpedo net, let down over the side to prevent the deadly missiles from hitting the ship's plates!

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Ned leaned over. Yes, something was moving in the water. He brought his rifle to bear, and was about to fire and give the alarm, when a searchlight was suddenly turned full on the very spot



where there was a ripple in the calm surface of the sea.

Then there came a swish, and a flurry, and in the gleam of the powerful light Ned saw that it was a school of fish which had probably gathered near the battleship to feed on the scraps the cooks tossed overboard.

"Ha! That's a good one on me!" Ned mused. "I'm glad I didn't give any alarm."

The sentry in charge of the searchlight said he had also heard the commotion in the water, and that was why he switched on the light. Of course the officer in charge of the sentries saw the light and had to be told why it was turned on. But there the incident ended.

"Shore leave will be granted!" was the unexpected order that was issued next day, the night having passed without accident.

"Hurrah!" cried Frank.

"Great!" echoed Ned. "Now we'll have a chance to see what this country looks like, and we may find out something about the missing fortunes."

Our heroes were among the first to be granted permission to land, and soon they were speeding toward the town in cutters. There were only a few small piers in what was a very small harbor, and not well protected at that, so the battleship had to anchor out. Up to the public pier raced the cutters, and out on shore leaped the eager sailors.

## CHAPTER XX—THE RIOT

"Well, we're here at last!" exclaimed Ned, as he fell into step beside his brother, walking along the water front.

"Yes, Ned, and it remains to be seen what we can do—I mean about our business and uncle's. As for quelling any trouble here, there doesn't seem to be any."

This was true enough, as far as it went. The two battleship boys and their comrades found themselves in a typical city of the tropics. It was a large one, and there were many improvements that would scarcely have been looked for. But a number of European firms, including many Germans, were in business, and this accounted, in part, for the up-to-dateness.

"But I don't see any signs of a revolution," declared Ned.

"Maybe they've cleared it all away," Frank suggested. "Don't you think, though, Ned, that there is a sort of air of expectancy about the people—as though they were looking for something unpleasant to happen, as we were last night on board?"

"Well, maybe you're right, Frank," Ned admitted, as he looked into the faces of the inhabitants. There were furtive glances cast at the men from the United States battleship, but, back of that, there seemed to be something else. And more than once Ned and Frank saw little knots of men gathered on the street corners. And they would look and point in the direction of the hills, where the big guns had made great holes in the earth.

"I wonder what they'd say if they knew you had a hand in making the dirt fly?" said Ned.

"Well, not much more of a hand than you had, Ned. We all had a finger in the pie, even if I actually did fire the big gun. I couldn't have done that unless you fellows had helped. But I guess there's no danger of 'em knowing what I did. Not that I care. Though they don't seem much concerned at what we did."

"No, and that's the odd part of it. You'd think they'd be angry at us."

"Unless these people in the city belong to the party we've come here to protect," Frank suggested. "It may be that, you know. The revolutionists may have jumped out for the time being."

"Yes, that's so. Well, it's a queer go however it is. Say, I wonder if we couldn't go out and take a look at those holes the projectiles made?"

"I guess so. We'd better find out how far it is, though, and if we'll have time to go and get back."

But when Frank spoke to the commanding officer the latter shook his head.

"It's too far out there to begin with," he said, "and for another thing—" he paused and looked around as though to make sure no one else was listening. "For another thing," he added, "we'd rather none of our men went out there—just now."

"Why?" impulsively asked Ned.

Again the officer looked around.

"Well," he said, "I don't mind telling you, because I can see that you are a little different from the general run of our recruits. Not that they're not fine fellows, and all that," he hastened to say, "but some of them have been handicapped in life, and they haven't as much natural intelligence as they might have. But I don't in the least hold that against them. They may be all the better

fighters when it comes to a brush.”

“Do you think we’ll have a fight?” asked Ned, and his voice was eager.

“Well, it’s hard to say,” replied the officer. He and the two boys of the battleship were off by themselves, on a quiet street leading up from the water front. For the time being none of the other men who had shore leave were around. “There is a peculiar situation here,” he said to Frank and Ned. “The captain has given orders that we must be very careful, and not go out to the place where we blew the tops off the hills, or, rather, where you did,” and he nodded at Frank.

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“Why is that?” asked Ned, again displaying his impulsiveness.

“I can’t tell you,” was the smiling answer. “But you may learn in a few days.”

Frank and Ned knew better than to argue the point. They had a feeling that something momentous might occur at any time, and they wanted to be ready for it.

Deprived thus of permission to go out to the hills where the big guns had wrought the damage, they strolled about the town, looking with interest on the sights they saw.

They stopped for chocolate in a quaint little place, and bought some souvenirs to send to their uncle, thinking thus to cheer him in his loneliness.

But with all their looking about they saw nothing of any of the business enterprises in which Mr. Arden had told them their money, as well as his own, was invested. Later they learned that the mines, and the places where the natural products of the country came from, were some distance out in the little republic.

“What strikes me as queer,” said Ned, as they walked back toward the boat landing, for their time was nearly up, “what strikes me as queer is that every one we’ve seen—that is, the natives, if you can call them such—seem to be expecting something.”

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“You mean something to happen?” asked Frank.

“Yes. They keep looking off there to the hills where you blew the top off, and talking to themselves in their queer lingo.”

“It isn’t such a queer lingo,” said Frank. “It’s Portuguese, and that language is very like Spanish.”

“Well, I never did like Spanish. But what do you guess is going on?”

“Give it up, unless there’s going to be a fight between the revolutionists and the regulars.”

“I wonder if we’ll be in on it.”

“Say, are you looking for trouble?” asked Frank, with a laugh.

“No, but if it’s coming our way, I’m not going to dodge it very hard,” Ned answered, grimly.

The two battleship boys strolled about the town a little longer, and then made their way to the boat landing, for it was nearly time to start back for the *Georgetown*.

“This looks like an American quarter,” said Frank, as they passed a place where several signs, in distinctly American names, were to be seen.

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“It is,” said a petty officer, who was walking along with them. “And if there’s any trouble going to happen it will happen right here, in this quarter.”

“What do you mean?” asked Frank, quickly.

“Oh, nothing,” was the evasive answer. It was evident that the petty officer had said more than he intended to. “It’s just as well to know,” he went on, “where the American quarter of any foreign city is located. There’s no telling when one may need the information.”

Something in the officer’s words and manner impressed Frank. Dropping a little to the rear he whispered to his brother:

“Ned, open your eyes and take a good look around this place.”

“What for?”

“So you’ll know it again. I have an idea we’ll need to know it. Maybe we’ll have a scrap in it sooner than we expect.”

“A scrap? You mean a fight?”

“That’s just what I mean. There’s trouble brewing, and it isn’t far off!”

Ned did as his brother advised, and made a mental map of the streets of what might be designated the “American quarter” of Pectelo. It was not large, and was only a short distance from the water front.

A large number of the citizens of the South American city gathered to witness the departure of the blue-jackets for their battleship. And here again, in spite of the fact that some of the inhabitants cheered while others scowled, Ned and Frank could not help noticing that there was that same curious air of expectancy—as if something was about to happen.

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But there was nothing out of the usual as the sailors took to the cutters and began steaming back to the *Georgetown*. They had had their shore leave and felt all the better for it.

Frank noticed that all the officers reported to the captain as soon as they got on board, and he

wondered if that had anything to do with the expected happening.

Again that night, after hammocks had been slung, and the men had enjoyed their period of rest, were double sentries posted. It fell to the lot of Frank to have an important station on the side of the battleship nearest shore where he could plainly see the flickering lights.

It was nearly midnight when, as he patrolled his post up and down the deck, he saw on shore a series of lights suddenly flash into view. At first he paid no attention to them, thinking they indicated some celebration near the beach. But as they continued to flash he took more notice of them.

"It looks like a signal," he said; "a signal to us. I wonder if there can be any trouble? I'd better notify the officer of the watch."

It took but a moment to do this.

No sooner had the officer seen the flashing lights than he exclaimed:

"Arden, I'm glad you called me. I wasn't expecting that signal so early. The revolutionists must be at it."

"You mean—" began Frank.

"That's a signal call, telling us that the revolutionists are again rioting against the United States citizens in the town," said the officer. "We'll have to land a party to protect them without delay."

"Then there'll be something doing all right!" exclaimed Frank.

"I should think there would be!" was the grim answer.

Instantly the officer gave the signal. Bells began ringing throughout the great battleship. The general call was sounded, and blue-jackets swarmed from their hammocks.

"It's a riot!" cried a commanding officer, as soon as he had read the message flashed by the signal lights. "It's what we've been expecting! The revolutionary party is stirring up a riot against the American residents!"

"Man the boats! Get a landing party ashore. Infantrymen and light artillery guns! We'll show these chaps what it means to fight Americans! Lively, boys!"

Across the dark waters on which sparkled the reflections of the signal lights, came hoarse cries and shouts, as well as the reports of guns.

In an instant the battleship was astir. The men sprang to their stations, and Ned and Frank were among the first. Into the boats they piled, well armed, and in other boats that accompanied them were the light field pieces. They were on their way to quell the riot.

But what it was all about, the cause of it, and how it would affect them and their uncle, Ned and Frank could only guess.

## CHAPTER XXI—UNEXPECTED NEWS

Great searchlights from the battleship illuminated a scene that was one of great activity. Boats were pulling away from the side of the *Georgetown*, boats filled with eager, excited men and youths, including our two friends. Every one was armed, and each had plenty of cartridges in reserve. There were also light field pieces taken apart for transportation, but which could easily be set up. The men had been drilled for just such an emergency as this.

Several motor launches towed the cutters filled with the blue-jackets. There was no time for rowing, with the growing excitement on shore ever on the increase.

"Say, it sure is a row!" exclaimed Ned, for as they came nearer they could hear shots and shouts and yells.

"It's a regular riot!" said Frank.

"That's what it is," said a petty officer in the boat containing Frank and Ned. "It's a riot, and that's what we're going ashore for—to end it!"

In the path of the illumination from the battleship's searchlights the boats sped on. Now could be seen a dark mass of men fighting near the shore.

"They're going to dispute our landing," observed Tom Dawson.

"Well, they won't dispute it very long," said Frank, significantly, as he tapped his rifle. "We're ready for them."

Up to the beach, through surf that was not heavy, went the boats. Before they grounded the men and youths leaped out into the water and fairly raced up the shingle. In an instant they formed in line and waited for orders from their officers. There were nearly three hundred of them, for the *Georgetown* carried over a thousand men, though of course many of them were not available for fighting duty on shore. However, several hundred more could be sent in case the impending conflict should go against the first men who landed.

"Attention, men!" called the commanding officer. "I want you to understand what this is about. Our captain has been appealed to for protection by a number of United States citizens living here. According to the signals flashed to us from shore our citizens are being attacked by a mob of the revolutionists. Just why, we needn't go into now. But we must give protection to our friends, and we are going to try and drive off the mob."

"Hurrah!" some one cried.

"Lively now, men!" went on the officer. "Forward! There they are!"

The dark mass of fighters which had been near the shore before the boats landed had gone farther up the strand just as the battleship men arrived. But now they were again rushing down the beach.

There were shouts, yells and cries, mingling with the pop of small arms. Most of the shouting was in a foreign tongue, Portuguese, most likely, so Ned and Frank thought.

"There must be a lot of our citizens here," said Ned, as he saw that there were two good-sized crowds, one evidently attacking the other. And it was this attack and repulse, this backward and forward movement, as the tide of fighting changed, that had taken the conflicting forces away from the water's edge, and now, once more, brought them to it again.

"Those who are being attacked aren't all Americans," said a petty officer near our heroes. "Our citizens threw their lot in with the inhabitants here who are opposed to the revolutionists, and the latter are attacking the loyal natives as well as our men. Now we'll—"

But he had no time to explain further, as sharp orders to advance came. It was not very dark, though it was about midnight, for the moon shone brightly, and now the battleship had brought to bear on the scene all her powerful searchlights.

"Forward and at 'em!" came the command. "Protect the Americans!"

Snarling cries came in answer from the revolutionists. But they did not give way at once, though they must have realized that they were about to be attacked by some of the best-trained fighting men in the world, and some of the bravest—the United States blue-jackets.

The crack of guns, which had ceased for a moment, now began again more spitefully than before. The two parties in the riot were firing at one another, and bullets began to sing over the heads of the battleship boys. Instinctively several ducked. Others laughed.

"You needn't duck," some one near Frank called. "When you hear the bullet it's past you."

"Forward! Forward!" came the cries.

"Over this way!" a voice shouted in English. "Over this way, battleship boys! They're beating us back!"

It was a cry for help from those being attacked by the rioters.

Ned and Frank found themselves in a division that was being led off to one side for a flank attack. The hearts of both lads were beating violently. It was the first time they had ever been under fire, and for the first time they were about to fire a shot at a human being. It was a strange feeling, but they felt that right was on their side. And they were going to save the lives of fellow citizens who were being attacked by a foreign mob.

"It's just like a football rush!" cried Ned in Frank's ear. He had to shout to be heard above the crack of the rifles.

"Come on! Come on!" yelled back Frank, just as he might have done had he and Ned been carrying the ball down the field.

As yet, though the hum and whine of bullets was almost constant in the air, none of the battleship force had been hit, as far as was known. But suddenly a lad in the ranks behind Frank and Ned gave a convulsive cry and fell to the ground.

"They got me!" he cried. "It's only in the leg, though," he added an instant later. "Go on, boys, and give 'em one for me!"

"Three cheers for Wright!" some one called. And they were heartily given, but the advance did not halt.

On rushed the battleship boys toward the mass of rioting revolutionists. They had swung around now, to attack them in the rear and to one side.

"Halt!" came the order from the lieutenant leading the advance. "Ready! Aim! Fire over their heads!"

He wanted, if possible, to quell the riot without taking life. A volley crashed out, and there came a return fire from the revolutionists. Several of the men from the *Georgetown* fell. Something like a shout of anger ran through the ranks.

"Fire low!" yelled the lieutenant. This time there was a different story. Ned and Frank could not see at whom they were shooting, because they were now in some of the water front streets of the capital and the buildings cast shadows. They could see, however, a dark mass of humanity before them, and at this they and the others fired. A number were seen to fall, and then the tide of battle suddenly turned.

With howls of fear in their foreign tongue the revolutionists turned and fled. They had had

enough in one volley from the rifles of the battleship's force. It was an easily won victory—for the time being.

"Come on! After 'em!" yelled Ned, eager for the fray.

"Halt! Hold on! No pursuit! We merely want to stop the riot, and have no wish to inflict punishment," said the lieutenant. "We'll hold the ground here for a time. Now, who are hurt?"

A number had received bullet wounds, it developed, though none was necessarily fatal. Some were incapacitated through wounds in legs or arms, and these were quickly sent to the rear to be transported to the ship for treatment. Sentries were posted, and a little later some of the Americans in whose interests the battleship force had been landed came up. They had guns, and had been fighting against the revolutionists with the friendly citizens. They reported that the revolutionary force had retreated to the hills back of the city.

"Is that where the revolutionists have their headquarters?" asked Frank of one American, who said he owned a large coffee warehouse in front of which the battleship boys were standing.

"Yes, in between those two hills."

"So that's why we fired at them," said Frank in a low voice to Ned. "It was to scare them out."

"Only it didn't; or, rather, it brought them into town," Ned replied.

The American business man, who said his name was Paige Kennedy, stated that he had large interests in Uridio, as had many of his American friends, and that these interests were seriously threatened by the revolutionists.

He opened his coffee warehouse and switched on the lights, inviting the squad of men from the battleship to make the place their headquarters. This the lieutenant who led the force including Frank and Ned was glad to do. The wounded had been sent to the ship. Off in different parts of the city the sound of firing could be heard, the peculiar crack of the rifles carried by the blue-jackets being easily distinguished. It was evident that not all the squads of fighting revolutionists had been as easily dispersed as had the one our friends encountered.

"But what's it all about—why did they attack the Americans here?" asked Frank of Mr. Kennedy.

"Well, it's quite a political tangle—the whole business," he said. "To explain briefly I will say that there are here two parties, each one trying to get the controlling power. We Americans established ourselves under the present ruling party, and they treated us well. In fact we are making lots of money. I guess it's the money—our money, our factories and warehouses—that the revolutionists are after.

"Of course, we stood up for our rights, naturally, and the citizens' party, as I call the present ruling one, to distinguish it from the revolutionists, stood by us. We heard talk some time ago that we Americans were to be driven out of this republic, so we appealed to the Washington authorities for help. We are glad to see that it arrived in time.

"There has been fighting before this, but it did not amount to much. This attack planned for to-night, and of which we had word in time to prepare, in some measure, is the beginning of the effort to drive us out."

"Well, they won't drive you now," said the lieutenant. "Arden—Frank," he said, to distinguish the two brothers, "Arden, find Sergeant Wherry and tell him I want him to take a message for me."

"Yes, sir," answered Frank, saluting. Mr. Kennedy looked up suddenly.

"Excuse me," he said, "but did I hear you call some one Arden?"

"Yes," the lieutenant replied. "I have two brothers in my squad to-night, Frank and Ned Arden," and he indicated them. Frank paused a moment.

"Are you, by any chance, related to a Mr. Philip Arden of Ipswich, Long Island," went on the coffee man.

"He's our uncle" exclaimed Ned, impulsively. "Do you know him?"

"Well, I should say I do!" was the unexpected answer. "I have been looking after some of his interests down here—that is, I was until he was cheated out of them. What has become of him? I have been wondering why he didn't do something to protect his property, and straighten matters out. Where is he?"

"In the federal prison at Atlanta," replied Frank.

"In prison?"

"Yes. He is charged with inciting some revolution down here, and his property in Ipswich was confiscated, as well as his fortune and ours down here. Claims for damages were filed against him, and he was unjustly convicted. Friends are now trying to reopen the case."

"Oh! So that's how the matter lies!" exclaimed Mr. Kennedy. "Well, I want to tell you boys, right now, that your uncle had no more to do with this revolution down here than I did. But I see the game now. It's that rascal of a Bernardo and his crowd. Why say, I understand now! Bernardo is one of the revolutionists!" he cried. "And he gave this false information against your uncle to cover his own crimes and those of his helpers. It's a plot to ruin your uncle! Say, you boys have just come in time!

"If this revolution can be put down, and you can get Bernardo and his rascals into your hands,

you may be able to get evidence to clear your uncle and free him. If only you can stop the revolution!"

"Oh, we'll stop it all right," said the lieutenant, significantly. "Arden, you needn't go on that errand. I'll send some one else. I didn't know you were so concerned in this matter. You stay and have a talk with Mr. Kennedy for it is possible that he might help you quite a good deal. I'll relieve you and your brother from further duty to-night, unless there is more fighting."

"Thank you, sir," answered both boys, and saluting they departed.

## CHAPTER XXII—THE PURSUIT

Frank and Ned were greatly surprised at the unexpected news given them by Mr. Kennedy, the coffee merchant. For a while they did not know what to say, nor what questions to ask first.

"Say, did you ever hear anything like the way this has turned out?" Ned finally demanded. "It's like a book story."

"It beats a book story," Frank observed. "I thought it was a queer coincidence when our battleship was ordered to this republic, where our fortunes and Uncle Phil's are tied up, but to find here some one who knows him, and the different complications with which he is tied up is certainly wonderful."

"It certainly is," agreed Mr. Kennedy. "I never thought you would be among the battleship boys who were coming to our relief. Now I'll tell you all I know about your uncle's affairs. I am sorry to hear he is in prison."

"Well, of course it isn't as if he were a criminal," put in Ned.

"No, of course not," admitted the coffee man.

"And he's pretty comfortable, or he was the last we heard from him," went on Frank. "But he does want his liberty so he can prove his innocence and save our money. You know we lost practically everything."

"Yes, and we were robbed in New York, and if we hadn't enlisted we might have starved," added Ned, and he and his brother, in turn, told their story.

Then came Mr. Kennedy's opportunity. By this time the sailors from the battleship had made themselves comfortable in the warehouse, disposing themselves on piles of empty bags to sleep. Of course, sentries were posted to guard against a surprise in case the revolutionists returned, but this did not seem likely. The sound of firing in other parts of the town grew more distant, and it was evident that the rebels had been driven back to their quarters in the hills.

"And we may have to get you to use your big guns on them again," said the coffee man.

"Did the shells do much damage—kill many?" asked Frank.

"He fired one gun," said Ned, proudly.

"Did you, indeed? Well, no, not many were killed; in fact, none, though several were wounded by flying debris. We asked your captain to shell the two hills to blow them apart, and make it less easy for the revolutionists to hide up there. We hope to attack the position soon, and we wanted it made as easy as possible to take."

"But now I'll tell you something of your uncle's affairs, and we'll try and plan a way to help him. It all depends on that rascal Bernardo, one of the rebel leaders. He's a bad one!"

Then the coffee man went into details with which it is unnecessary to burden the readers, as most of what he told Frank and Ned was of interest only to them and their uncle.

In brief the facts were these. After the death of the boys' father, as has been related before, Mr. Arden took his money and the boys' fortunes, of which he had charge, and invested in various industries in the South American republic. Some of the investments were in the natural resources of the country, and others were in stock companies organized to develop different businesses, some of which were owned by American, and some by other foreign residents of Pectelo.

It was through some of these business matters that the boys' uncle had met Mr. Kennedy. The two had trade interests in common, and often helped each other. Ned and Frank, going to college, and spending their summers on Great South Bay, knew nothing of all this.

Finally the success of Mr. Arden in the South American republic excited the jealousy of some of the native residents there, especially the man Rafello Bernardo, a Portuguese trader. He had had some business dealings with Mr. Arden, but the latter caught him in some underhand transactions and refused to have anything more to do with him. This angered Bernardo, and he sought means of revenging himself.

He found it in the pending revolution. Revolutions often occur in Central and South American republics of the lesser size, and in Uridio they were nothing new. But to have any sort of revolution it is necessary to have arms, and as the revolutionists under Bernardo had none, they had to purchase them.

The government forces, or at least the government then in power, the one under which Mr. Arden, Mr. Kennedy and the others held their concessions and privileges, felt that if they could keep arms away from the revolutionists they could easily subdue them, and to this they bent all their efforts.

But arms were smuggled in, and not until it was too late did Mr. Arden learn that some of his own agents and employees had used his factories, his warehouses and his very transportation facilities to bring in the weapons. And when this was found out Bernardo falsely said that Mr. Arden had helped to finance the revolution, that he had arranged for the shipment of arms, and that Mt. Arden hoped to have a large part in the new government that would be set up.

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Mr. Arden had no means of disproving this, and action was taken against him by those who had been injured, complaint being made to the federal authorities, who had no option but to act and cause the arrest of the boys' uncle. The rest of the story you know.

"And so things have been going on from bad to worse," said Mr. Kennedy. "I wondered what had become of your uncle. I knew his affairs here were in bad shape, but I kept expecting him to come down and straighten them out. I never dreamed he was arrested. I was in Europe on business for awhile, and when I returned I had so much on my hands, protecting my property from the effects of the revolution, that I had no chance to make the proper inquiries.

"The revolution dragged until recently, when it assumed such an aspect that we Americans determined to ask the protection of Uncle Sam. And I assure you I never saw a prettier sight than when your magnificent battleship dropped anchor in our bay."

"She is a great ship!" cried Ned, with sparkling eyes.

"But how are we going to get hold of this Bernardo, and prove the innocence of Uncle Phil?" asked Frank.

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"I don't really know," replied Mr. Kennedy. "We shall have to wait and see what happens. The revolution isn't over yet, by a long shot. Those rascals have drawn off, but they'll come back. They really outnumber us—that is we Americans, our employees and the friendly inhabitants," he went on, "though you blue-jackets will turn the scale in our favor. And once the revolution is broken, and Bernardo and his rascals driven out of the country, I think we'll have peace. We'll see what happens when morning comes."

It may be imagined that Frank and Ned had so much to talk about that they did not sleep well. But finally they dozed off. Morning brought no resumption of the fighting. Orders came that the detachments already on shore, thus including Frank and Ned, were to remain in the city, being stationed in different quarters. More blue-jackets came from the battleship, and more field artillery was landed.

Camp kitchens were set up, and the detachment which included our two heroes remained quartered in the coffee warehouse, which made fine barracks.

That day passed quietly, though spies reported that the revolutionists were gathering in force in the hills and seemed to be getting ready for another attack.

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It came two days later. But the battleship forces, the American residents, and the loyal citizens were ready for them, and after some sharp fighting, in which a number were killed and wounded, including some of the comrades of Ned and Frank, the tide of battle went against the revolutionists.

Their defeat was accompanied by a panic, and most of them surrendered.

It fell to the lot of Ned, Frank and their detachment to be in the van of the fighting. Frank did not receive a scratch, but Ned received a flesh wound in the arm. He refused to go to the rear to have it treated, but tied on a first aid bandage, and went on fighting. Mr. Kennedy joined the squad and fought side by side with Frank and Ned. And it was due to this that they were able, toward the end, to catch sight of the man responsible for their uncle's troubles.

"There's Bernardo now, and his bodyguard—rascals all!" exclaimed the coffee man as they were pursuing a group of the fleeing revolutionists.

"Where?" demanded Frank.

"There—that tall, dark man!"

"Come on, Ned!" yelled the older brother.

The fighting was practically over. That in which our two heroes had taken part had been going on near the water front. The two brothers rushed forward, followed by Mr. Kennedy.

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"Those lads have grit!" he exclaimed.

Bernardo, seeing that he was completely beaten, called to his men to follow him. He turned and shook his fist at his pursuers, but he had no more shots left in either his rifle or revolver, nor did any of his men.

"We'll get him!" panted Frank. "We'll get him and make him prove Uncle Phil's innocence!"

The chase grew hotter. It was along the water front, and out among the small piers.

"Come on now, we have them!" cried Frank.

"Surrender there! Give up! Stop!" shouted Ned. "Halt, Senor Bernardo!"

But the Portuguese revolutionist and his rebel rascals kept on. Frank brought his rifle to his shoulder and exclaimed:

"Halt, or I'll fire!"

Whether he actually would or not, he never stopped to consider. Shooting at a man in the open that way, when the heat of battle has passed, is a hard matter. Frank could not decide what to do. But the aimed gun had no effect, and a second later, with shouts of exultation, Bernardo and his men leaped from a small pier into a power boat, which was cast off and set in motion at once.

"They've beaten us!" gasped Ned. "They've gotten away!"

"Oh for a boat!" cried Frank. "If we had one—even our *Ellen*—we might catch them!"

"But we haven't," said Ned, sadly, as he saw the powerful craft, containing the escaping revolutionists, speeding out into the bay. The cutters and motor boats of the warship were some distance away, some of them having been taken back to the *Georgetown*.

One of the men who was among the last to leap into the boat after Bernardo, carried a large tin box. He seemed to be very careful of it.

"Probably it contains what cash they have left," said Frank.

"Yes, and perhaps papers that might serve to free Uncle Phil," added his brother. "Oh, Frank, we simply must get those fellows!"

"What's the trouble?" asked Mr. Kennedy, who came running up at that moment. He was rather stout, and had been winded by the pursuit. "Where are Bernardo and his rascals?" he asked.

"There they go," replied Frank, pointing to the motor boat, now well away from shore.

"And one of them has a tin box full of money with him," added Ned.

"Not much money left among the revolutionists," was the comment of the coffee man. "Besides, if there is, you can be sure Bernardo has it safely put away somewhere. He wouldn't take any chances carrying it with him in that fashion."

"But there was something of value in the box," Frank insisted.

"Papers and documents, most likely," said Mr. Kennedy. "Those fellows don't want to leave behind anything incriminating. They aren't any fonder of going to prison than the next man."

"If that tin box contains papers some of them might prove our uncle's innocence," ventured Frank.

"By Jove! So they might!" cried the coffee merchant. "I never thought of that. Bernardo is just the sort of rascal, too, to do away with the proof."

"If we only had a boat!" and Ned groaned in disappointment as he uttered the words.

At that moment there came out from around one of the piers a small motor boat.

"Look!" cried Frank. "It isn't very big, but it will hold us. And maybe we can catch them. Hi, you!" he called to the man in the boat, "sell us your craft—lend it to us. We'll pay you well!"

The man only shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

"Name your own price!" yelled Ned.

"He doesn't understand you," said Kennedy. "He's Portuguese. I know him. He's a fruit dealer. I'll talk to him."

Rapidly the coffee merchant explained the situation. There was a quick exchange of rapid-fire talk, and the boatman brought his craft to shore.

"Get in!" cried Mr. Kennedy. "We'll give those rascals a race, but I'm afraid we haven't much chance. They have a good start, and their boat is faster than ours, but we'll do the best we can."

Eagerly Frank and Ned, not forgetting their rifles, jumped into the boat. A moment later they were off. The motor boat was of recent pattern, and contained a good engine. But the Portuguese who owned it did not know how to get the most speed out of the machine. He was rather surprised when Frank made some adjustments, changing the timer, and regulating the air intake valve of the carburetor.

At once the craft increased her speed.

"Say, you boys know something about boats, don't you?" exclaimed the coffee man, while the Portuguese looked in wonder at our two heroes.

"Oh, we know a little," admitted Ned, modestly.

"I wish I knew enough to make this into a hydroplane," said Frank, as he peered eagerly toward the boat they were pursuing. "It's about the only way we'll be able to catch those rascals I'm afraid."



"We're pulling up on them a little," declared Ned.

"Not enough, though," his brother retorted, rather gloomily.

They were well out in the bay, which was unusually calm. Back in the city the last remnants of the revolutionary army—if such it could be called—were fleeing before the combined forces of American business men, their employees, the loyal citizens, and, finally, the blue-jackets from the *Georgetown*.

"I wonder what the lieutenant will say to us, running off from the squad this way?" remarked Ned, as he filled the almost empty oil cups.

"Why, it's all right—we're in pursuit of the enemy," replied Frank. "Just because our private interests happen to be served also, doesn't do any harm."

"I think you're right," agreed Mr. Kennedy. "I will explain matters if you get into any trouble. But, boys, I really think we are gaining on them!"

Ned and Frank stood up, and looked searchingly ahead. They were nearer to the boat containing Bernardo and his cronies. They could see them more plainly. There appeared to be some dispute going on about the tin box, which was wound around with many turns of rope.

"I wish they'd have such a difference of opinion that they'd fight among themselves," remarked Ned. "Then some of them might come over on our side, and we'd have the evidence we need."

"No such luck," sighed Frank. "We might as well wish they'd go near enough the battleship, so we could signal to have them fired on."

"Not sunk, though," he added quickly, "for that would lose the box for us altogether. I'd just like to have one of our quick-firers disable them. But we're going away from the *Georgetown*, instead of toward it."

This was only too evident.

Of course Ned and Frank might have fired on the escaping men in the boat ahead of them, as they were within rifle shot, but neither of the boys dreamed of shooting at the rascals. It was too cold-blooded.

The boat of the fruit dealer was making good time. It was smaller and lighter than the larger craft containing Bernardo and the others, and was not so heavily laden.

"Ned, I believe we're going to catch them!" Frank cried, a little later. "I can see them ever so much more plainly."

"So can I," said Mr. Kennedy. "Now, boys, you had better let me do the talking, if we really overhaul them and force them to stop. I can speak their language and I know what to say to them to bring them to terms I think. And you want to look out. Bernardo is an ugly customer, and he is probably very bitter over the defeat of his forces and the collapse of the revolution. He'll be especially vindictive against you sailors, for if it had not been for Uncle Sam's men the revolutionists would undoubtedly have won."

"Well, we have our rifles and automatics," replied Frank, as he looked to see that his gun was loaded, and the pistol in readiness. "If they try any monkey business—"

"Look! Look!" suddenly interrupted Ned. "They're having another dispute! And it's about the box!"

Several of the rascals were now standing up in the boat. One of them had the box in his arms, and Bernardo was trying to take it from him. High words could be heard.

"We're going to close in on them, and they know it," exulted Frank. "Maybe some of them want to offer us the box to stop the pursuit."

"I wouldn't agree to that," said Mr. Kennedy. "You might need more evidence than is in the box—personal testimony. Don't let them get away if you possibly can stop them."

"I really believe we are going to get them," cried Ned.

It seemed very probable, and the revolutionists evidently thought the same thing. The dispute over the box was renewed.

"I wonder what really is in it," ventured Ned.

No one could tell him.

Suddenly one of the men stood up, dealt the revolutionist who held the box a blow that sent him overboard, and as he fell, the man dealing the blow caught the box in his own hands. Then he yelled out something in his own tongue.

"What is he saying?" asked Ned, eagerly.

"Quiet, just a moment," cautioned Mr. Kennedy, who was listening intently.

The man screamed something at those in the pursuing boat, and shook one fist at them. Then, with a sudden motion, he tossed the box into the water. It sank instantly, and groans of disappointment came from Ned and Frank. The evidence that possibly would clear their uncle, and restore their fortunes, seemed lost forever.

"What did he say?" asked Frank.

"He said that all the documents referring to the revolution would rest on the bottom of the bay," translated Mr. Kennedy. "He defied us, saying that though the revolution was checked it was not over, and that no punishment could be given Bernardo and his friends, because the necessary papers would never fall into our hands."

"Did he say anything about Uncle Phil?" asked Ned.

"I don't believe he knows him, though Bernardo does, and he may suspect you are his nephews," answered the coffee merchant.

"Come on!" yelled Frank. "They may have destroyed the documentary evidence, but we'll get them and make them testify in person! We'll be up to them in another minute. Get your gun ready, Ned!"

But alas for their hopes! Their motor suddenly "went dead." They lost headway, and the other boat drew swiftly away, while the revolutionist who had been knocked overboard was seen swimming toward the stalled craft.

## CHAPTER XXIV—THE MISSING BOX

"What's the matter with the engine?" cried Ned.

"We must get it started again!" exclaimed his brother, as he sprang to the motor. But revolve the fly-wheel as he did the craft remained still, save for the motion imparted to it by wind and wave, which was not much, as it was a still, calm day.

Meanwhile the other boat was getting farther and farther away, and it was soon seen that, even if the stalled motor could be started without delay, there would be little chance of catching the rascals.

"Something is wrong, somewhere," declared Ned.

"Never mind, I guess it's all up, boys," said the coffee man. "They've gotten away, and the evidence, if it was in the tin box, is at the bottom of the sea. It couldn't be helped."

"Maybe not," agreed Frank, with a sigh, in which his brother joined. "But I would like to find out what made the motor stop so suddenly, and just when we were about to overhaul them, too."

He continued to work over the machinery, adjusting and readjusting the carburetor and the spark-timer, but without result. The Portuguese owner looked on interestedly and finally said something in his own language, which sounded much like Spanish.

"What is he saying?" asked Ned of Mr. Kennedy.

"He says perhaps there is no gasoline. He did not have much when we started."

"Great guns!" exploded Frank. "Why didn't we think of that before? We would have had time to stop and get a supply, and maybe, after that, might have caught the rascals."

An examination of the forward tank showed that the surmise of the boat's owner was correct. The gasoline container was dry, and that was what had caused the engine to stop.

"Well, what are we going to do?" asked Ned, looking around on the bay. "Have we got to stay out here? We may be classed as deserters, Frank."

"Oh, I think a boat that we can hail may pass us soon," suggested Mr. Kennedy. "They'll tow us in."

There was nothing they could do save wait.

They hoisted their handkerchiefs on a boat hook as a signal of distress and finally it was seen. A boat came and towed them back to the city.

Before this, however, the man who had been knocked overboard from the other boat came swimming up to the craft containing our friends. He said something in Portuguese which Mr. Kennedy translated as being a surrender. He had to come to those he had been fighting, as his friends had gone off and left him.

He was hauled on board, and told that he would be made a prisoner and turned over to the proper authorities.

"He wasn't one of the leaders, though," said Mr. Kennedy to the boys, after a talk with the man. "He was a sort of servant to Bernardo."

"What does he say was in the box?" asked Frank, eagerly.

"He doesn't know. He imagined it was money, and that was why he was hanging on to it so tightly. The others, he says, claimed there were only papers in the box—papers that would get them into trouble if they fell into the hands of the government. That's why it was tossed overboard."

"Does he know anything about Uncle Phil's affairs?" asked Ned.

Mr. Kennedy inquired, but the man shook his head. He seemed much disheartened. Possibly he imagined he would be executed.

"And to think we have to come away, and leave at the bottom of the sea evidence that would free Uncle Phil," said Frank regretfully, as the rescue boat towed them away from the place where the box had sunk.

"Yes, it is too bad," agreed his brother. "Well, maybe things will take a better turn, now that the revolution is broken up and Bernardo and his crowd scattered."

"I hope so," returned Frank, thoughtfully.

When they reached the city the man they had picked up was turned over to the military authorities. Then Frank and Ned reported to their commanding officer. He had just begun to wonder where they had gone, as the fighting was all over, and the blue-jackets (though they all wore white now instead of blue) were reporting back.

"And so they got away?" asked the lieutenant, after hearing the story of our two heroes.

"Yes, and all because of a pint of gasoline!" said Frank, bitterly. "If we'd had that much we could have caught them, I'm sure."

"But not in time to have saved the box of papers," Ned remarked.

"Oh well, maybe they'll be caught, and we can force Bernardo to make a confession and free Uncle Phil," went on Frank, more hopefully. But Ned shook his head. He did not have much faith.

"Are we to stay on shore longer?" asked Frank of their lieutenant, as the boys and the rest of their squad went back to the coffee warehouse.

"I don't know. I am waiting for orders. I think we'll go back, though."

And a little later word to this effect was sent to them. Those who had borne the brunt of the fighting were ordered back to the *Georgetown*, while fresh men replaced them as a guard to American interests on shore.

"I guess they want to give the other fellows a chance to have some of the honor and glory," said Hank Dell, as our friends were on their way to the battleship.

But there was no more fighting that night. Matters were quiet in the capital, though rumors came in of little skirmishes in the outlying districts. The backbone of the revolution seemed to have been broken.

Frank and Ned felt very badly about the loss of the tin box. They felt more sure every hour that it contained just the evidence needed to free their uncle. But the box, at the bottom of the bay, seemed gone beyond hope of recovery.

"Of course Uncle Phil may get out, eventually, anyhow," suggested Ned, "but I want to see him out now."

"So do I," chimed in Frank.

Affairs began to straighten themselves out in the little republic that had gone through such strenuous times. The American and other merchants made preparations to resume their interrupted businesses. For a time it was thought that Bernardo would be caught, but he appeared to have made good his escape.

Then suddenly, about a week later, without warning, the revolutionary fighting broke out again. It appeared that Bernardo and his rascals had landed farther down the coast, and had, by making a detour, reached their stronghold in the hills back of the town. There they made ready for a new attack.

It was made shortly after sunrise one morning following a night march, and at once the alarm was signaled out to the battleship. For some marines had been left on shore to act as guards and sentries, and their commander quickly sent word for reinforcements.

Once again was the call to arms sounded on the *Georgetown*. Again did the men take to the boats with their rifles and field pieces. Again came that rush on shore and once more the streets of Pectelo echoed to the sounds of fighting, and the rattle of rapid-firers.

But the second effort of the revolutionists was as but a flash in the pan compared to their first attempts, though there was severe fighting in one or two places, and many were killed and wounded, a number of the force of the *Georgetown* meeting death. But it could not be helped.

Frank and Ned were again permitted to have their share in the hot and exciting work, and this time Frank received a wound in the leg which made it necessary for him to go to the rear.

"I'll go with you," offered Ned, as his brother was picked up.

"No, you won't!" cried Frank. "You stick it out! Maybe you'll have a chance at Bernardo. I hear he's on the job again."

The plucky lad waved his hand at his brother as they bore Frank back to the landing stage to send him aboard the ship where he could have better treatment than in the city hospital.

"Why, the *Georgetown* is coming closer in shore!" Frank cried, as he looked across the bay and noticed that the vessel was at a new anchorage.

"Yes," said one of the petty officers, "the old man is going to shell the revolutionary headquarters

again, and he's going to make a good job of it this time. So he put in closer to shore for the work."

"Good!" cried Frank. "Maybe I'll have a chance at the guns, if I did have to give up fighting on land."

"I'm afraid you won't—not with that leg. And they're going to bombard soon," was the answer.

The party taking off the wounded men, of whom there were several besides Frank, waited until the battleship had dropped her anchor in the new location. Then they went aboard, and soon afterward there began a bombardment of the hill section where the rebels had again set up their camp.

The shells from the big guns, as well as those from the smaller ones, flew screeching over the town, and burst in the neighborhood of the two hills, at one of which Frank had fired. The destruction was terrific, but the loss of life small, as most of the rebels were down in the city fighting. Much to his chagrin Frank was not allowed to serve "his" gun, as he called the forward fifteen-inch gun.

But as I have said, the second effort of the rebels did not amount to much. They were soon put to flight, and the effect of the ship's bombardment, added to the hot fire from the blue-jackets on shore, soon brought the revolution once more to an end. It was most effectually broken this time.

"And that's not the best of it!" cried Ned, when he came on board with his mates, dirty and powder-stained. "That's not the best of it, Frank, old man!"

"It isn't? what is?"

"How's your leg?"

"Oh, never mind my leg! It's all right—not so bad. Tell me the news!"

"They captured Bernardo and his gang!"

"They did? Who?"

"I don't know. Some of our boys, I believe. He's locked up in the military prison, I hear, and is to be tried as a traitor."

"Good! Now maybe we can get out of him something that will clear Uncle Phil!"

"Oh, if we only can!" cried Ned.

But it was a vain hope. Bernardo was indeed captured, with most of those who had plotted with him. Some had been killed. The rebel leader, however, maintained an absolute silence when questioned in regard to the boys' uncle. Mr. Kennedy proved an invaluable friend in conducting these negotiations for Frank and Ned, but they came to no end. Bernardo insisted that Mr. Arden was mixed up in the revolution, and that he was guilty of the political crimes for which he had been convicted. It seemed hopeless to Frank and Ned, and they were more disheartened than ever.

The revolution had been put down, and the Americans and their property in Uridio protected, but it had cost something in gallant lives of the men and youths from the *Georgetown*. Several had been killed, and more than a score wounded.

But it was in a just cause, and perhaps it had to be. There were some sad scenes following the fighting.

The rebels were dispersed, and most of them renewed their allegiance to the government and were pardoned. Not so, however, Bernardo and his ringleaders. To the end, when he received a sentence of life imprisonment, he maintained that Mr. Arden was guilty of the crimes charged against him.

"And to think if we only had that box, which is at the bottom of the bay, we might free him," sighed Ned.

"It's too disheartening to think of," Frank declared, shaking his head slowly.

Their story was now quite well known, and some of their comrades received permission to use nets, dragging them on the bottom of the bay, in the hope of bringing up the box. Ned helped, and so did Frank when his leg healed, which it did in about ten days. But the efforts were fruitless.

"Well, we leave here to-morrow," said Frank one day, as he and his brother were taking their ease on deck, having just finished their tour of duty.

"Yes, it's been a great time while it lasted, but I do wish we had some good news to take back North to Uncle Phil."

"So do I."

The battleship was soon to leave. Matters in Uridio had now quieted down, and the government had the situation well in hand. Every promise was made that the rights of the Americans would be respected, and they were to be given adequate sums for the damage caused to their property by the rebels. The stronghold of the latter had literally been blown to bits by the big guns of the *Georgetown*.

Shortly after reveille one morning word was given to hoist the anchors. A parting salute had been

fired as a compliment to the Uridian flag. It was answered from a small land battery. The one cruiser owned by the rebels had not been seen since the *Georgetown* had pursued her.

What had become of her was not learned until later, when it was discovered that her commander had been told of the collapse of the revolution, and had discreetly remained away. Later he took service with the government and turned his craft over to the authorities, so unless she has sunk, or tried to fight some other vessel out of her class, the little war craft may yet be doing duty for Uridio.

"Well, it's good-bye to Uridio," remarked Ned, as he looked landward.

"That's what it is," answered Frank.

"I wonder if we will ever see this place again?"

"I doubt it—that is, unless there is another revolution."

"Oh, I guess they've got fighting enough for the present."

"Just what I think."

"Maybe we'll see some other countries, more interesting than this. I'd like to go to Europe, and to Japan and China, and I'd like to see Africa too."

"Wow! Why don't you include the North Pole and Australia while you are at it," came with a laugh. "Warships like this don't travel just any old place. It costs too much money."

"Oh, I know that. Just the same I'd like to see other countries, especially those that are well built up. This is only a one-horse affair."

"It isn't much of a place, that's true."

Slowly the great anchors of the *Georgetown* came out of the bay as the steam winches wound up the big chains. Ned and Frank were on duty forward as the immense hooks came to the surface.

Something on one of the flukes caught Frank's eye. It looked like a bunch of seaweed, but when he glanced a second time he saw what it was, and cried out.

"Ned! Ned! Great guns, Ned! Look at that! It's the tin box! The tin box Bernardo's man threw out of the boat. It caught on the fluke of the anchor and was brought up from the bottom of the bay! Great guns! Don't let it get away again! It's the box with the papers that may free Uncle Phil!" and he fairly hopped up and down.

## CHAPTER XXV—CLEARED

Frank Arden was so excited when he saw, caught by the binding ropes, on the great warship's anchor, the mysterious box that might mean so much to him and his brother and uncle, that he would have sprung over the side of the *Georgetown* and caught at the anchor. Indeed, he made a motion in that direction, but a sailor nearby stopped him.

"Wait a bit, me lad," he said. "I'm in charge of hoistin' th' mud-hook, an' I'll have it stopped if there's somethin' on it that ye want."

He was a genial Irishman, and, as he said, he was there to pass the signals to the operator of the steam winch when the anchor had been hoisted high enough. In a quick manner, though he did not know all of the story of our heroes, he had grasped the situation. In another moment the anchor hung stationary over the side of the battleship.

It was near enough the deck for Frank to scramble over the side and down the great links of the chain. Some one passed him a rope with a hook on the end—he was so excited he did not know who it was—and he managed to catch the hook in the ropes wound about the box, and so haul it up.

How carefully he did it may well be imagined, for if the box had slipped from the anchor and again fallen into the sea, the chances of recovering it would have been very slight indeed.

Then, clasping close in his arm the tin case, dripping with water and slimy with seaweed, Frank clambered back on deck. Ned was waiting for him.

"Is it the same box?" Ned cried.

"I'm sure it is," Frank answered. "Isn't it the most wonderful thing in the world?"

"It certainly is," agreed Ned.

The two brothers looked at their treasure-trove. About them gathered their mates, some of whom had heard the story. And then word came from the captain, demanding to know what the delay was about in getting the anchor catted, so that the *Georgetown* might proceed. A lieutenant came forward, and to him Frank briefly told the story.

"Humph!" was the remark. "Well, I think I'd better take this box to the captain, and let him supervise the opening of it. If it contains what you think it does he will notify you."

Ned and Frank were eager to open the box themselves, but they realized that discipline aboard a naval vessel must be observed, so they made no objections. A petty officer carried the box to the captain's quarters and the work of getting under way the big craft proceeded.

Frank and Ned were so excited they could scarcely perform their duties, and their immediate superior, seeing this, and knowing what was at stake for them, allowed them time off.

"Say!" exclaimed Ned, as he and Frank went to a quiet part of the deck, "do you really think it's what we hope it is?"

"Well, I—hope so," his brother answered, slowly.

They did not have long to wait before hearing the good news. A messenger summoned them to the captain's office. They had never been there, for it is not often that the commander of a great battleship has a personal interview with an enlisted man. So Ned and Frank spruced themselves up, and went to the appointed place. They found Captain Decker and several of his officers standing about a table, over which had been spread an oilskin coat, and on this reposed the wet, open box. It had been full of papers, which were scattered about the table. And so watertight was the tin case that the documents were scarcely damp from their immersion.

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"You are the Arden brothers, are you not?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir," answered Frank and Ned, saluting in their best manner.

"Well, I have heard something of your story, and also something of the strange way in which this box was found. I suppose, by some strange trick of fate, we came to anchor near where it was thrown into the bay, and it may have drifted upon our anchor.

"But what you are most interested in is whether or not the box contains any papers that will prove your uncle's innocence, and restore to him his fortune and yours; is that not so?" asked Captain Decker.

"That's it—you bet!" exclaimed Ned, impulsively, and then he blushed as the officers laughed at him. No, Ned did not exactly blush, for he was too tanned for the red to show. But he felt "blushy."

"Well, I am very happy to inform you," said the captain, trying to speak formally, though there was a smile on his lips and a twinkle in his eyes, "I am happy to inform you that I have examined the papers and from what I know of the revolution and the rebels, I am sure that these papers, so strangely recovered, will completely prove that your uncle had no hand in it. There are also papers which show there was a conspiracy against him fostered by Bernardo. I am sure when the federal authorities see these documents they will at once free your relative, and judgments in the damage suits against him must be reversed, because he was in no way responsible."

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"Good!" cried Frank, and this time he felt "blushy," for every one looked at him.

"If you like, I will keep these papers for you," the captain went on, "and put them in the proper hands."

"I wish you would," Frank said.

"And further, if you wish, you may prepare a cablegram to send to your uncle," the commander continued. "I will give orders that it is to be rushed through, and relayed by the government wireless if necessary. For it will be some time before we reach the vicinity of Atlanta," the captain went on.

"It is very kind of you, and we'll write the message at once," Frank said.

"I am only too glad to serve you," the captain responded. "I have had very good reports of the conduct of yourself and your brother in our recent trouble, and it gives me pleasure to inform you that you two are among those recommended for promotion."

The captain saluted formally, Frank and Ned, their hearts burning with joy, returned it, and then, turning stiffly, and in the most approved manner, they marched out.

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Outside the captain's office they were provided with a cable blank, and at once wrote a message to their uncle in the federal prison at Atlanta, telling him the good news, adding that there was no doubt he would soon be freed.

And then, this having been done, the great battleship proceeded on her way back North, and to the waters of the United States. The revolution had been put down, the rightful government was in full control, the ringleaders, including the rascally Bernardo, were in jail, and the American business men and residents were in no more danger. The *Georgetown* had accomplished her mission.

Of the journey up nothing of great moment occurred. The usual drills were held, and they had an added significance, now that those who took part in them realized how much they meant when actual conditions of warfare were encountered. Of course, there were some sad hearts, for gallant comrades had fallen in battle, but theirs was a glorious end, and they had died fighting for the honor of their country. And the honor had well been upheld.

The wounded recovered, and though Frank's leg pained him occasionally, it was not of any seriousness. Ned's wound healed completely.

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Once again the equator was passed, but there was only a mild celebration. Every one had been initiated, and there was a feeling of sadness as those shipmates were recalled who had taken part

in the former fun, but who now had been left behind.

A stop was made at Havana on the way back, and Captain Decker gave the papers, establishing Mr. Arden's innocence, to a special messenger to take to Atlanta in order that the prisoner might be more quickly freed.

Then the battleship proceeded, but before she reached New York, a wireless message was received for Ned and Frank. It was from their uncle, and read:

"Cleared. Leave for New York to-day. Will meet you there on arrival of battleship. Can't thank you enough. Fortunes safe."

"Hurrah!" cried Frank.

"Two hurrahs!" echoed his brother.

"Count me in and make it three!" shouted Hank, the former bully, who was now the battleship boys' firm friend. In fact, all their chums rejoiced with them.

And now my story is almost at an end. The *Georgetown* reached New York in time to take part in a grand naval pageant on the Hudson River. There she was anchored along with other sea-fighters, submarines and torpedo boats, and received many visitors. She was an object of great interest, because her part in the recent South American revolution was known through published accounts.

And best of all, one day Mr. Arden came on board. He was a well-known man from the moment he announced himself, and the captain entertained him in his cabin. Thither Frank and Ned went and there clasped hands with their father's brother, who had endured so much wrongfully, but who had been freed largely through the hard work and the good luck of the two battleship boys. For, after all, luck had played a big part in the affair.

"And is everything all right, Uncle Phil?" asked Frank.

"Everything," was the answer. "As soon as the authorities received those papers from the tin box they released me. I knew I was innocent, but it was hard to get proof. The papers were the very documents needed.

"I had no idea this Bernardo was such a scoundrel, or I would never have done business with him. However, all's well that ends well. And I cannot complain of my treatment by the federal authorities. But I was worried for a time, not only about myself, but about you boys."

"Oh, we made out all right," boasted Ned.

"So I hear," laughed his uncle. "Besides saving me you covered yourselves with glory."

"We didn't think so the time we let those pickpockets rob us," remarked Frank. "We felt like a couple of very foolish lads then."

"Did you ever hear anything of those rascals?" questioned the uncle, with interest.

"Not a word. Fact is, we didn't get much chance to follow the matter up after we joined the navy."

"I see. It is a pity. Such rascals ought to be placed behind the bars. They are a constant menace to honest folks."

"Maybe the police captured those fellows while we were away," suggested Ned. "I think I'll make some inquiries. They may have pawned dad's watch. I'd like to get that back even if we didn't get our money. I'm going to inquire."

And he did, with the result that he did recover the watch where one of the thieves had pawned it. But the money was gone forever, and the thieves were never brought to book for the crimes against Frank and Ned for the reason that these two rascals were already serving a term in prison in another state.

"Well, since our fortunes are recovered, we have plenty of money, boys," said Mr. Arden to his nephews one day when they had shore leave and were out to dinner with him. "I can buy your discharge from the navy, if you like."

"No, sir!" exclaimed Frank. "I'm going to serve out my four years at least. Uncle Sam's navy is the finest place in the world, and I'm learning more than I would at college. I'm going to stick!"

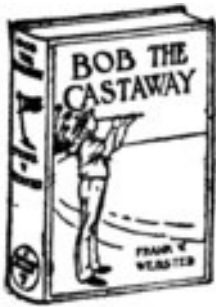
"So am I!" added Ned.

And stick they did.

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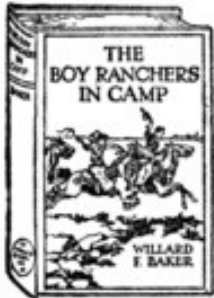
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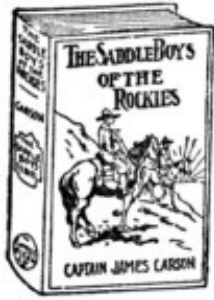
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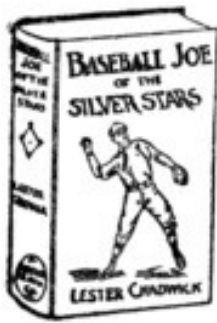
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