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Irving Hancock

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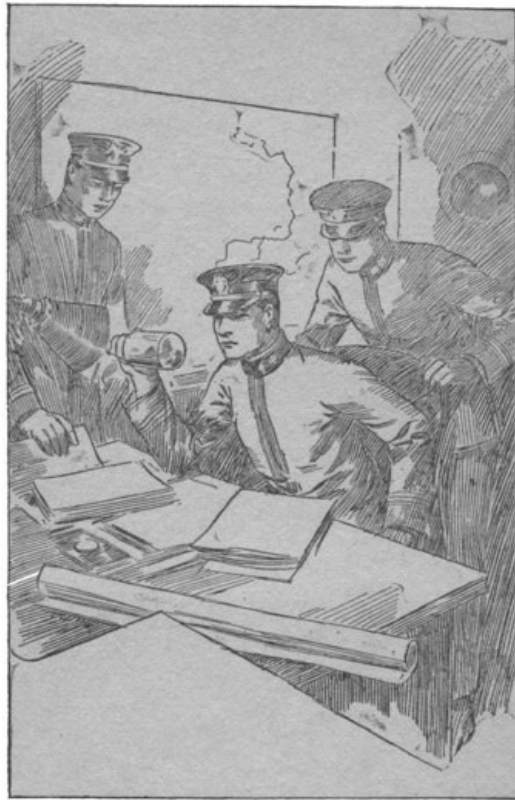
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DAVE DARRIN AND THE GERMAN
SUBMARINES ***

Dave Darrin and the German Submarines

H. Irving Hancock



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Dave Darrin and the German Submarines

OR

Making a Clean-up of the Hun Sea Monsters

By

H. IRVING HANCOCK

Author of "Dave Darrin at Vera Cruz," "Dave Darrin on
Mediterranean Service," "Dave Darrin's South American Cruise,"
"Dave Darrin After the Mine Layers," etc., etc.

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DAVE DARRIN AND THE GERMAN SUBMARINES

CHAPTER I—ON THE SEA PATROL

"Anything sighted?" called Lieutenant-Commander Dave Darrin as he stepped briskly from the little chart-room back of the wheel-house and turned his face toward the bridge.

"Nothing, sir, all afternoon," responded Lieutenant Dan Dalzell from the bridge.

Dave ran lightly up the steps, returning, as he reached the bridge, the salutes of Dalzell, executive officer, and of Ensign Phelps, officer of the deck.

"It's been a dull afternoon, then?" queried Darrin, his eyes viewing the sea, whose waters rose and fell in gentle swells.

No land was in sight from the bridge of the United States torpedo boat destroyer, "John J. Logan," which was moving at cruising speed westerly from the coast of Ireland. The course lay through the "Danger Zone" created by the presence of unknown numbers of hidden German submarines.

For a winter day the weather had been warm. Forward the two men of the bow watch and the crews of the rapid-fire guns had removed their coats and had left them below.

Though there was neither enemy nor friendly craft in sight, Darrin noted with swift if silent approval that there was no evidence of lax watch. At port and starboard, amidships, there were men on watch, as also at the stern. Members of gun-crews lounged close to their stations, to which additional men could be summoned in a flash. Aft, also, two men stood by the device from which it might be necessary, at any instant, to drop a depth bomb.

Trained down to the last point of condition by constant work, these officers and men of the torpedo boat destroyer made one think of hard, lean hunting dogs, which, in human guise, they really were. Not only had toil brought this about but sleep was something of a luxury aboard the "Logan." On a cruise these men of Admiral Speare's fleet of destroyers slept with their clothes on, the same rule applying to the officers.

Dave Darrin had slept in the chart-room for three hours this afternoon, following eighteen hours of duty on deck.

"Any wireless messages worth reading?" was Darrin's next question.

"None intended for us, sir, and none others of startling nature, sir," replied Ensign Phelps, handing his superior a loose-leaf note-book. "I think you saw the last one, sir, and since that came in there were none important enough to be filed."

Dave read the uppermost message, nodded, then handed back the book.

For the next ten minutes Darrin scanned through his glasses, the surface of the sea in all directions.

"I'd like to bag an enemy before supper," he sighed.

"And I'd like to see you do it," came heartily from Dan Dalzell.

"Why don't you turn in for a nap, Dan?" asked Dave, turning to his chum and second in command, whose eyes looked heavy.

"I believe I could," admitted Dalzell, almost reluctantly. "Mr. Phelps, will you leave word with your relief to have me called just after eight bells?"

Down the steps Dalzell went, to the chart-room, closing the door curtains behind him. It is one of the unwritten rules that, at sea, the commander of a vessel and his executive officer shall not both sleep at the same time.

As for Dave Darrin, he felt that he might be on deck up to midnight, at least. After that he might snatch "forty winks," leaving orders to be called just before dawn.

Short of sleep always, weighted down with responsibility, young Darrin was happy none the less. First of all, after his wide professional preparation in many quarters of the globe, he was at last actually in the great world war. He was in the very place where big things were being done at sea, and the war had brought him promotion and independent command. What more could so young a naval officer ask, except sufficient contact with the enemy to make life interesting?

An hour passed. Dave and Phelps talked but little, and nothing out of the usual happened, the "Logan" keeping on her course still at cruising speed. But now the sun was well down on the

western horizon; the northwesterly wind blew a little harder, though not enough to roughen the surface of the sea noticeably.

"Orderly, there!" called Phelps, quietly from the bridge. "Go to my quarters for my sheepskin coat and bring it here. Do you wish yours, sir?" turning to Darrin.

"I'll step below and get it," decided Dave. "I'll probably be back here with you shortly."

Going stealthily into the chart-room, Dave took a glance at his chum, now sound asleep in a chair, with a blanket drawn over him. Dave reached for his coat, donned it and buttoned it up, then stepped outside. First of all he moved forward to make a brief but keen inspection of the gun-crews and their pieces; then, to starboard, after which he strolled amidships. For a few minutes he was below to receive the report of the chief engineer, then went aft to inspect the gunners and the watch, returning on the port side to the bridge.

Soon after that the sun sank into the sea, and darkness came rapidly on.

"It's going to be a fine night, sir," said Ensign Phelps, as Dave came up on the bridge.

"A fine night for something besides steaming, I hope, Mr. Phelps," Dave replied, with a smile in which there was something more than mere wistfulness.

"Amen to that!" agreed the young ensign.

"Wind is shifting, sir," said Mr. Phelps, fifteen minutes later, when darkness had settled down.

"So I observed," answered the youthful commanding officer. "From nor'west to nor'east. That cloud over to nor'east looks as if it carried a lot of wind."

Dave took a quick glance at the barometer, but it had not fallen much.

"No storm in sight yet," said Dave, thoughtfully. "But cloudy."

"Aye," nodded Ensign Phelps. "And a black night may aid either us or an enemy."

"More likely the enemy," replied Darrin, reflectively. "An observer on a submarine, with the aid of the microphonic or adapted telephonic device, that is now credited with having been perfected, can hear us coming when we're some distance away."

"And the same observer can discover our direction as compared with his own position, and can even judge the extent of the distance fairly well," remarked the ensign.

"True," Darrin nodded. Then, suddenly, he spoke energetically, as one gripped by a new idea.

"Mr. Phelps, have the word passed to all men on watch to keep a doubly sharp lookout for approaching craft and thus avoid danger of collision. No one carries running lights in these waters. The watch will also be extremely vigilant for submarines."

Again and again the watch, startled by shadows, of which the sea is ever full at night, called out low-spoken warnings. The officers on the bridge were kept busy investigating these alarms with their night glasses. In fact they frequently were deceived too. Every man's nerves were on edge; gunners swallowed hard, and with frequency moistened their lips with their tongues. Every man up topside on the "Logan" felt that peril was hovering near. It was not fear; it was perhaps that sixth sense that gives the alarm in moments of unseen danger. So intense was the nervous strain that the creaking of a brace or the sound of a straining plate, as the destroyer rolled, made every man on deck jump.

It was a trying situation and such as brought gray hairs to many a ship's master in these days of deeds and daring. Better far the rush of a torpedo in their direction than this nerve-racking waiting for something that every man on the destroyer felt was coming.

Lieutenant-Commander Darrin, sensing all this, for the very air was charged with expectancy, frequently steadied the watch with an encouraging word or a sharp, low-spoken command. Dave sympathized with them, for he was in very much the same nervous condition. Of course he could not show it.

"Curtin, we're in for some work to-night, or else I have an attack of nerves. I feel it," said Dave without taking his eyes from observation of the sea.

"So do I. Queer how a fellow can sense danger when he neither can hear, see, feel nor smell it," said Mr. Curtin.

"Submarine hunting is hard on the nerves, but it's worth while," returned Dave. "I think that must be what makes life on a destroyer so attractive to us. It is the real sporting game. I—What's that?"

"Yes, it's—"

"Sh-h-h!" Dave suddenly stiffened, bringing his glasses quickly to his eyes. "Bow watch there, did you hail?" he demanded in a low, sharp voice.

"Aye, aye, sir," came the prompt reply, also pitched in a low tone, though full of repressed excitement.

Whatever wind there had been in the cloud Dave had observed to the northeast, had passed. Only the gentlest of breezes blew, though the sky remained overcast, giving an almost ink-black night—a night for dark deeds.

So long did the "Logan" drift that probably every wakeful soul on board felt irritated by the monotony. Suddenly Dave stiffened, bringing his glass quickly to his eyes.

"Sounds and looks like a craft two points off starboard and about half a mile away, sir," reported the bow watch.

"Aye," Dave responded. "I see it. Mr. Curtin, pass the word for all hands to quarters."

Silently officers and men were soon streaming over the decks, on their way to their various stations. Curtin stood with one hand on the engine-room telegraph, awaiting the order for headway.

The three-inch guns were loaded, and also the one-pounders and the machine guns. Two men stood by the darkened searchlight.

"Searchlight men!" Dave called, in a low voice. "You know where we're looking?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Stand by to put a beam squarely across its conning tower if it proves to be a submarine."

Again Dave took a long, careful, steady look through his night glass. Secretly he was a-quiver with excitement; outwardly he was wholly calm.

"Throw the beam!" called Dave sharply, a few seconds later. "Gun-crews in line with the enemy, stand by!"

A broad band of light from the searchlight played into the sky, then descended. As the beam reached the water it revealed the tower and deck of a large submarine rolling awash a little more than half a mile away. A muffled cheer rose from some of the members of the watch. The men at the guns were too much occupied to open their mouths.

"Silence in the watch!" Dave commanded, sternly. "Mr. Curtin, half-speed ahead. Bear straight down on the enemy! Ram him if possible! Ram him at all hazards if he is submerging when we reach him," commanded Lieutenant Commander Darrin.

"Aye, aye," answered the quartermaster at the wheel.

Like a bloodhound the "Logan" sprang forward.

"Bow guns fire!"

Boom! roared one sharp-tongued three-inch gun. Bang! sounded a one-pounder. The larger shell threw up a column of spray beyond the submarine; the small shell struck the water on the nearer side.

"Full speed ahead, Mr. Curtin. Hold her steady there, quartermaster!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

The "Logan" was soon racing at more than thirty knots an hour, her nose burrowing into the sea, throwing up great volumes of water.

The enemy submarine had plainly been taken utterly by surprise by the first flash of the "Logan's" searchlight, for the warning sound that had come across the water had been caused by an oil-burning engine that was supplying power for the recharging of the submarine's storage batteries.

Such a craft, however, hated and at all times hunted, carries crews trained to swift work. Soon after the "Logan's" second three-inch gun had fired without registering a hit, a five-inch gun of the submarine was brought into action. Overhead whizzed a shell that just missed the "Logan's" wireless aerials. A second shot, aimed at the destroyer's water line, passed hardly more than four feet to starboard.

"Get him!" roared Dave Darrin. "Gunners have their wits about 'em!"

Dan Dalzell took the door curtains with him as he leaped out and ran for the bridge.

The submarine had swung around, and at the same time brought her after gun into action. The

submarine swung again bow on. There was no time to dive. She was caught and must fight.

"Torpedo coming, sir!" reported the bow watch, but Darrin had already caught sight, under the searchlight's glare, of a trail of foam heading straight for the destroyer.

Quick as was the helmsman's obedience of orders, the "Logan" escaped the torpedo by little more than a hair's breadth as it rushed on past. Then came a second torpedo. The "Logan," still driving bow on, save for swerves to avoid torpedoes, escaped the second one by what appeared to breathless watchers to be an even closer margin.

Lieutenant Beatty had taken personal charge of sighting one of the forward guns. He now let fly a shell that tore part of the top of the enemy's conning tower away.

"That settles him for diving!" cried Darrin, tensely. "Land a shell in the hull and force him to take the dive he doesn't want!"

Onward came a third rushing torpedo. As the "Logan" swerved to avoid it, a shell from the submarine's after gun struck and tore away a one-pounder aft on the destroyer, fragments stretching two men on the deck, seriously but not fatally injured. An instant later a shell aimed at the destroyer's water line forward pierced the hull just below the gun-deck. A fair hit at the water line would have put the "Logan" in a sinking condition, but, owing to the oblique position of the target, the shell, as it struck, glanced off.

"Great work, Mr. Beatty!" shouted Dave hoarsely, as another three-inch shell struck the enemy, this time at the waterline. "Mr. Curtin, half speed ahead!"

As the destroyer began to lose headway and slowly circle the undersea boat, the "Logan's" crew cheered, this time without rebuke from the bridge. The submarine craft was rapidly filling and sinking.

At a safe distance Darrin watched, for he was humane enough to wish to rescue the German survivors, should there be any. So swift was the sinking of the enemy, however, that there was no time for them to launch and man the collapsible lifeboat that they undoubtedly carried.

Then the seas closed over the hated craft. A few moments later Lieutenant-Commander Darrin gave the order to steam forward slowly, the watch standing by to discover and heave lines to any swimmers there might be afloat. Not a head was seen, however. Three men at the after gun had been observed to jump before the submarine went down, but no trace of them could now be found.

"We'll never know how many hundreds of decent lives the work of the last minute has saved," declared Dalzell hoarsely as he reported on the bridge.

"Find out as promptly as possible what damage we have suffered," Dave ordered. "We were struck several times."

As Dan saluted and hurried away, Darrin picked up his night glass and once more resumed his scanning of the sea. Lieutenant Curtin had already received orders that the destroyer was to cruise slowly back and forth over and around the spot where the submarine had gone down.

"It seems almost wasted sympathy to try to pick up enemy survivors," muttered Mr. Curtin rather savagely.

"But it's humanity just the same," Darrin returned. "And Americans must practise it."

"Of course, sir."

Dalzell, who had summoned the aid of other officers and some of the warrant officers, soon returned.

"Two breaches, one just above water line, and the other below it, sir," was Dan's beginning of the report. "I wasn't aware that a torpedo touched us. If it did, it made a dent, but glanced off without the explosion that a direct hit would have produced. That may account for the dent below the water line. But a shell hit us above water line. Is it possible that a large fragment glanced low enough to make the dent under water? It doesn't seem possible."

"Not likely," smiled Darrin.

"The hole above the water line has been repaired, but men are still working at the one below the line," Dalzell went on, "and the pumps are working hard. The chief engineer was about to report it to you when I reached him. We have been hit at other points, but no serious damage has been done."

"We are not in danger of sinking?"

"Doesn't look like it to me, sir," Dan replied, "and the chief engineer is of the same opinion."

"Take the bridge with Mr. Curtin."

Not more than two minutes was Dave below decks, half of that time with the chief engineer. Then he hurried back, disappearing into the radio room. In a code message he notified destroyer headquarters of the encounter, its result, and the nature of the damage to the "Logan."

Within five minutes the answer came back through the air:

"Return to repair. Keep alert for enemy craft understood to be more numerous in your waters than usual."

The order bore the signature of Admiral Speare's flag-lieutenant.

"Home, James," smiled Darrin, after reading the order.

So the "Logan" was put about. Dave did not steam fast, for it had been found impossible wholly to stop the hole below water line. Water still came in, though in diminished quantity. Fast speed would be likely to spring the damaged plates.

It was near dawn when land was sighted, and the sun was well up when the "Logan" steamed limpingly into port. Half an hour later American dock authorities had taken charge of the destroyer. Dave waited until he saw his beloved craft in dry dock and the water receding from under her as it was pumped out of the basin in which the "Logan" now lay.

In the meantime Dalzell, who had had two hours' sleep on the way to port, was busy granting shore leave to such men of the crew as were entitled to have it. More than half of the officers also received leave.

As soon as luncheon had been finished, and after Darrin had conferred with the dock officer, he and Dan went ashore.

"Where shall we go?" asked Dan, when they had left the naval yard behind them.

"Anywhere that fancy takes us," Darrin answered, "and by dark, of course, to a hotel for as good a shore dinner as war times permit."

"We'd have a better dinner on board," laughed Dan, sometimes known in the service as Danny Grin. "These British hotels are all feeling the effects of the enemy's submarine campaign, and can't put up a half-way good meal."

Once in the streets of the port town, the two young American naval officers strolled slowly along. The crowds had a distinctly war-time appearance. Hundreds of British and American jackies and two or three score French naval seamen were to be seen.

"Whoever invented saluting doesn't have my unqualified gratitude," grumbled Danny Grin. "My arm is aching now from returning so many salutes."

"It's a trifling woe," Darrin assured him. "Look more sharply, Dan. You missed those two French sailors who saluted you."

Too good a service man to do a thing like that without regret, Dalzell turned around to discover that the two slighted French sailors were glancing backward. He wheeled completely around, bringing his right hand smartly up to his cap visor and inclining his head forward. Facing forward once more he was just in time to "catch" and return the salutes of three British jackies.

"Quite a bore, isn't it?" asked a drawling, friendly voice, as the two young officers paused to look in at a shop window's display.

The young man who had hailed them was attired in a suit and coat of quite distinctly American cut. He was good-looking, agreeable in manner, and possessed of an air of distinction.

"The salute is a matter of discipline, not of opinion," Dave Darrin answered, pleasantly. "It isn't as troublesome as it looks."

"I have sometimes wondered if you didn't find it tedious," continued the stranger.

"Sometimes," Dave admitted, with a nod. "But it shouldn't be."

"You are an American, aren't you?" asked Dalzell.

"Yes. Matthews is my name. I'm over here on what appears to be the foolish mission of trying to buy a lot of fine Irish linen, and that is a commodity which seems to have disappeared from the market."

Somehow, it didn't seem quite easy to escape introducing themselves, so Dan performed that office for the naval pair. Darrin would rather not have met strangers in the port that was the destroyer base. Mr. Matthews walked along with them, and presently it developed that he was staying at the hotel where Dave and Dan had decided to dine. So, after an hour's stroll, the three turned toward the hotel.

"I'll see you later," declared Matthews, affably, starting for the elevator on his way to his room.

"Dan," said Darrin, laying a kindly arm on his chum's coat-sleeve and speaking in a low voice, "I'd just as soon you wouldn't introduce us to chance acquaintances."

"That struck me afterwards," Dalzell admitted, soberly. "Yet, for once, I do not believe that my bad habit of friendliness with strangers has done any harm. Matthews appears to be all right."

"I hope he is," Dave answered.

Later Matthews joined them below.

"It struck me, gentlemen," he declared, "that my introduction was rather informal. Permit me to offer you my card."

He tendered to each a bit of pasteboard that neither could very well decline. It was a business card that he had offered, and its legend stated that Matthews was connected with a well-known Chicago dry-goods house.

"But in these times," smiled their new acquaintance, "an American passport is a better introduction than a mere card."

Whereupon he produced his passport. After a glance at it the two young naval officers did not see how they could escape offering their own cards, which Matthews gladly accepted and deposited in his own card-case.

He did not intrude, however, but soon moved off, after a cheery word of parting. Dave and Dan went out for another stroll, returning in time for dinner.

Hardly had they seated themselves when Matthews, fresh and smiling, stopped at their table in the dining room.

"I'm afraid you'll vote me a bore," he apologized, "but American company is such a treat in this town that I'm going to inquire whether my presence would be distasteful. If not, may I dine with you?"

"Be seated, by all means," Darrin responded, with as much heartiness as he could summon.

When the soup had been taken away and fish set before them, Matthews asked:

"Don't you find the patrol work a dreadful bore?"

"It's often monotonous," Dave agreed, "but there are some exciting moments that atone for the dulness of many of the hours."

"And frightfully dangerous work," Matthews suggested.

"Fighting, I believe, has never been entirely separated from danger," retorted Dalzell, with a grin.

"Have you sunk anything lately?"

Both naval officers appeared to be too busy with their fish to hear the question.

Matthews looked astonished for only a moment. Then he waited until they were half through with the roast before he inquired:

"How do you like the work of the depth bombs? Are they as useful as it was believed they would be?"

Dave Darrin glanced up quickly. There was no glint of hostility in his eyes. He smiled, and his voice was agreeable as he rejoined:

"Now, I know you will not really expect an answer to that question, Mr. Matthews. The officers and men of the service are under orders not to discuss naval matters with those not in the service."

"P-p-pardon me, won't you?" stammered Matthews, a flush appearing under either temple.

"Certainly," Dave agreed. "Men not in the service do not readily comprehend how necessary it is for Navy men not to discuss their work, especially in war-time."

Matthews soon changed the subject. After they had gone forth from the dining room he shook hands with them cordially, and took his leave.

"Is he genuine?" asked Dalzell.

"Must be," Dave replied. "His passport was in form. You know how it is with civilians, Danny-boy. Knowing themselves to be decent and loyal, they cannot understand why service men cannot take

them at their own valuation.”

Just as the two were going out for another stroll the double doors flew briskly open to admit a group of more than a dozen British naval officers.

“Hullo, there, Darrin! I say there, Dalzell!”

Surrounded by Britain’s naval officers, our two Americans had to undergo almost an ordeal of handshaking in the lobby.

“But I thought you were far out on the water, Chetwynd,” Dave remarked to one of the officers.

“And so I was, but a bad break in a shaft sent me in,” grumbled the commander of an English destroyer. “Beastly luck! And I was needed out there,” he added, in a whisper, “for the Germans are attempting a big drive underseas. We’ve new information, Darrin, that they’ve more than twice the usual number of submersibles loose in these waters.”

“I’ve been told the same,” Dave nodded, quietly.

“What brought you in?”

“Shell hits, I think they were, though one dent might have been made by a torpedo,” Darrin answered.

“Then you had a fight.”

“A short one.”

“And the German pest?”

“Went to the bottom. I know, for we saw her sink, and her conning tower was so damaged that she couldn’t have kept the water out, once she went under. Besides, we found the surface of the water covered with oil.”

“I’ll wager you did,” agreed Chetwynd, heartily. “You Yankee sailors have sunk dozens of the pests.”

“And hope to sink scores more,” Darrin assured him.

“Oh, you’ll do it,” came the confident answer. “But come on upstairs with us. We’ve a private parlor and a piano, and plan a jolly hour or two.”

From one end of the room, in a lull in the singing, an exasperated English voice rose on the air.

“What I can’t understand,” the speaker cried, “is that the enemy appear to have every facility for getting the latest gossip right out of this port. And they know every time that a liner, a freighter or a warship sails from this port. There is some spy service on shore that communicates with the German submarine commanders.”

“I’d like to catch one of the rascally spies!” Dan uttered to a young English officer.

“What would you do with him?” bantered the other.

“Cook him!” retorted Dan, vengefully. “I don’t know in just what form; probably fricassee him.”

Little did Dalzell dream how soon the answer to the spy problem would come to him.

CHAPTER II—THE MEETING WITH A PIRATE

Thirty-six hours’ work at the dry dock, with changing shifts, put the “Logan” in shape to start seaward again.

Under another black sky, moving into thick weather, the “Logan” swung off at slow speed, with little noise from engines or propellers.

“I feel as if something were going to happen to-night,” said Dalzell, coming to the bridge at midnight after a two-hour nap. A little shudder ran over his body.

“I hope something does,” agreed Darrin, warmly. “But remember—no Jonah forebodings!”

“I—I think it will be something good!” hesitated Dalzell.

“Good or bad, have me called at six bells,” Dave instructed his second in command. “Before that, of course, if anything turns up.”

He went slowly down and entered the chart-room, closing the curtains after him. Taking off his sheepskin coat and hanging it up, Dave dropped into a chair, pulling a pair of blankets over him.

Inside of thirty seconds he was sound asleep, dreaming, perhaps, of the night before at the hotel, when he had enjoyed the luxury of removing his clothing and sleeping between sheets.

At three o'clock to the minute a messenger entered and roused him. How Darrin hated to get up! He was horribly sleepy, yet he was on his feet in a twinkling, removing the service blouse that he had worn while sleeping, and dashing cold water in his face. A hurried toilet completed, he drew on and buttoned his blouse, next donned his sheepskin coat and cap, and went out into the dark of the early morning.

"All secure, sir!" reported Dalzell, from the bridge, meaning that reports had come in from all departments of the craft that all was well.

"You had better turn in, Mr. Dalzell," Dave called, before he began to pace the deck.

"I'm not sleepy, sir," lied Dalzell, like the brave young gentleman that he was in all critical times. Dan knew that from now until sun-up was the tune that called for utmost vigilance.

Darrin busied himself, as he did frequently every day, by going about the ship, on deck and below deck, on a tour of inspection. This occupied him for nearly an hour. Then he climbed to the bridge.

"Better turn in and get a nap, Danny-boy," he urged, in an undertone.

"Say!" uttered Danny Grin. "You must know something big is coming off, and you don't want me to have a hand in it!"

Dave picked up his night glass and began to use it in an effort to help out his subordinate, who stood near him. From time to time Dan also used a glass. A freshening breeze blew in their faces as the boat lounged indolently along on its way. It was drowsy work, yet every officer and man needed to be constantly on the alert.

Despite his denials that he was sleepy, Danny Grin braced himself against a stanchion of the bridge frame and closed his eyes briefly, just before dawn. He wouldn't have done it had he been the ranking officer on the bridge, but he felt ghastly tired, and Darrin and Ensign Tupper were there and very much awake.

With a start Dan presently came to himself, realizing that he had lost consciousness for a few seconds.

"Oh, it's all right," Dan murmured to himself. "Neither Davy nor Tup will know that I'm slipping in half a minute of doze."

His eyes closing again, despite the roll of the craft, he was soon sound enough asleep to dream fitfully.

And so he stood when the first streaks of dawn appeared astern. It was still dark off over the waters, but the slow-moving destroyer stood vaguely outlined against the eastern streaks in the sky.

Ensign Tupper was observing the compass under the screened binnacle light, and Darrin, glass to his eyes, was peering off to northward when the steady, quick tones of a man of the bow watch reached the bridge:

"Ware torpedo, coming two points off port bow!"

That seaman's eyesight was excellent, for the torpedo was still far enough away so that Dave had time to order a sharp swerve to port, and to send a quick signal to the engine room. As the craft turned she fairly jumped forward. The "Logan" was now facing the torpedo's course, and seemed a bare shade out of its path, but the watchers held their breath during those fractions of a second.

Then it went by, clearing the destroyer amidships by barely two feet. Nothing but the swiftness of Darrin's orders and the marvelously quick responses from helmsman and engineer had saved the destroyer from being hit.

On Dave's lips hovered the order to dash forward over the course by which the torpedo had come, which is the usual procedure of destroyer commanders when attacking a submarine.

Instead, as the idea flashed into his head, he ordered the ship stopped.

Danny Grin had come out of his "forty winks" at the hail of the bow watch. Now Dave spoke to him hurriedly. Dalzell fairly leaped down from the bridge, hurrying amidships.

"All hands stand by to abandon ship!" rang the voice of Ensign Tupper, taking his order from Darrin. The alarm to abandon ship was sounded all through the ship.

There was a gasp of consternation, but Dalzell had already met and spoken to three of the junior officers, and these quickly carried the needed word.

The light was yet too faint, and would be for a few minutes, to find such a tantalizingly tiny object as a submarine's periscope at a distance even of a few hundred yards. Lieutenant-Commander Darrin, therefore, had hit upon a simple trick that he hoped would prove effective. All depended upon the speed with which his ruse could be carried out. Cold perspiration stood out over Darrin as he realized the chances he was taking.

"Bow watch, there! Keep sharp lookout for torpedoes! Half a second might save us!"

Tupper stood with hand on the engine-room telegraph. He already had warned the engineer officer in charge to stand by for quick work.

Dalzell and the officers to whom Darrin had spoken saw to it that nearly all of the men turned out and rushed to the boats. Even the engineer department off watch came tumbling up in their distinctive clothing.

To an onlooker it would have appeared like a real stampede for the boats. Tackle creaked, making a louder noise than usual, but seeming to "stick" as an effort was made to lower loaded boats. The men in boats and at davits were grinning, for their officers had explained the trick.

Dawn's light streaks had become somewhat more distinct as Dave peered ahead. Mr. Beatty and three men crouched low behind one of the forward guns.

The submarine commander must have rubbed his eyes, for, while he had observed no signs of a hit, he saw the American craft drifting on the water and the crew frantically trying to abandon ship.

Then the thing for which Darrin had hoped and prayed happened. The enemy craft's conning tower appeared above water four hundred yards away.

"The best shot you ever made in your life, Mr. Beatty!" called Dave in an anxious voice.

The officer behind the gun had been ready all the time. At the first appearance of the conning tower he had drawn the finest sight possible.

The three-inch gun spoke. It seemed ages ere the shell reached its destination.

Then what a cheer ascended as the crew came piling on board from the boats. The conning tower of the submarine had been fairly struck and wrecked.

"Half speed ahead!" commanded Dave's steady voice, while Dan gave the helmsman his orders. As Tupper sent the signal below the "Logan" gathered headway.

But Darrin had not finished, for on the heels of his first order came the second:

"Open on her with every gun!"

After the wrecking of his conning tower the German commander began to bring his craft to the surface. Perhaps it was his intention to surrender.

"Full speed ahead!" roared Darrin, and Ensign Tupper rang in the signal.

The hull of the submarine was hardly more than awash when five or six shots from the "Logan" struck it at about the same time.

Veering around to the southward the "Logan" prepared to circle the dying enemy. The German craft filled and sank, and Darrin presently gazed overboard at the oil-topped waters through which he was passing.

"A wonderful job! I wonder that you had the nerve to risk it," muttered Dalzell.

"I don't know whether it was a wonderful job, or a big fool risk," Dave almost chattered. "It would have been a fool trick if I had lost the ship by it. I don't believe that I shall ever try it again."

"If you hadn't done just what you did, a second torpedo would have been sent at you," murmured Dalzell. "You saved the 'Logan' and 'got' the enemy, if you want to know."

Grinning, for the responsibility had not been theirs, and the ruse had "worked," the men of the watch returned to their usual stations, while those off duty returned to their "watch below." Darrin, however, was shaking an hour later. He had dropped the usual method of defense for once and had tried a trick by which he might have lost his craft. As commander he knew that he had discretionary powers, but at the same time he realized that he had taken a desperate chance.

"Oh, stop that, now!" urged Danny Grin. "If you had steamed straight at the submarine you would have taken even bigger chances of losing the 'Logan.' Even had she given up the fight and dived, there wasn't light enough for you to follow by any trail of bubbles the enemy might have left. The answer, David, little giant, is that the submarine is now at the bottom, and every Hun aboard is now a dead man. In this war the commander who wins victories is the only one who counts."

Through that day Dave and Dan slept, alternately, only an hour or two at a time. All they sighted were three cargo steamers, two headed toward Liverpool and one returning to “an American port.”

At nine o'clock in the evening Darrin, after another hour's nap, softly parted the curtains of the chart-room door and peered out. He saw a young sailor standing just back of the open doorway of the radio room. Slight as it was there was a something in the sailor's attitude of listening that Darrin did not quite like. He stepped out on the deck.

Sighting him, the sailor saluted.

“Jordan!” called Dave, even before his hand reached his visor cap in acknowledgment of the salute.

“Yes, sir!” answered the seaman, coming to attention.

“You belong to this watch?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Your station is with the stern watch?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then what are you doing forward?”

“I left my station, by permission, to go below, sir.”

“Have you been below?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then why are you loitering here?”

Seaman Jordan hesitated, shifted on his feet, glanced down, then hurriedly replied:

“I—I don't know, sir. I just stopped here a moment. There's a relief man in my place, sir.”

“Return to your station, Jordan!”

“Aye, aye, sir,” replied the sailor, saluting, wheeling and walking away.

“And I'll keep my eye on you,” mused Darrin, as he watched the departing sailor. “I may be wrong, but when I first sighted him there was a look on that lad's face that I didn't like.”

Even before he reached his station Seaman Jordan was quaking inwardly more apprehensively than is usual with a sailor caught in a slight delinquency.

CHAPTER III—QUICK “DOINGS” OVER THE SHOAL

For several days after that Darrin and the “Logan” cruised back and forth over the area assigned for patrol. During these days nothing much happened out of the usual. Then came a forenoon when Darrin received a wireless message, in code, ordering him to report back at once to the commanding officer of the destroyer patrol.

Mid afternoon found the “Logan” fifteen miles off the port of destination.

“Be on the alert every instant,” was the order Darrin gave out to officers and men. “There have been several sinkings, the last month, in these waters. We are nearing Fisherman's Shoal, which is believed to be a favorite bit of ground for submarines that hide on the bottom.”

Over Fisherman's Shoal the water was only about seventy feet in depth—an ideal spot for a lurking, hiding undersea craft.

Five minutes later the bow lookout announced quietly:

“Trail of bubbles ahead, sir.”

Leaving Ensign Phelps on the bridge, Dave and Dan darted down and forward.

A less practised eye might have seen nothing worth noting, but to the two young officers the trail ahead was unmistakable, though Darrin quickly brought up his glass to aid his vision.

“Pass the word for slow speed, Mr. Dalzell,” Dave commanded, quietly. “We want to keep behind that craft for a moment. Pass word to Mr. Briggs to stand by ready to drop a depth bomb.”

Quietly as the orders were given, they were executed with lightning speed. The destroyer began to move more slowly, keeping well behind the bubble trail. At any instant, however, the “Logan”

could be expected to leap forward, dropping the depth bomb at just the right moment. Then would come a muffled explosion, and, if the bomb were rightly placed, a broad coating of oil would appear upon the surface.

Dave was now in the very peak of the bow. Watching the bubbly trail he knew that the hidden enemy craft was moving more slowly than the destroyer, and he signalled for bare headway. And now the bubbles were rising as though from a stationary object under the waves.

"Buoy, there!" he ordered, quickly. "Overboard with it."

Slowly the destroyer moved past the spot, but the weighted, bobbing buoy marked the spot plainly.

"Have a diver ready, Mr. Dalzell," Dave called. "Make ready to clear away a launch!"

In the matter of effective speed Darrin's officers and crew had been trained to the last word. Only a few hundred yards did the "Logan" move indolently along, then lay to.

Soon after that the diver and launch were ready. Dave stepped into the launch to take command himself.

"May I go, too, sir?" asked Dan Dalzell, saluting. "I haven't seen this done before."

"Clear away a second launch, Mr. Dalzell. The crew will be armed. You will take also a corporal and squad of marines."

That meant the entire marine force aboard the "Logan." Dalzell quickly got his force together, while Darrin gave orders to pull back to where the bobbing buoy lay on the water.

"Ready, diver?" called Dave, as the launch backed water and stopped beside the buoy.

"Aye, aye, sir." The diver's helmet was fitted into position and the air pump started. The diver signalled that he was ready to go down.

"Men, stand by to help him over the side," Darrin commanded. "Over he goes!"

Hugging a hammer under one arm the diver took hold of the flexible cable ladder as soon as it had been lowered. Sailors paid out the rope, life line and air pipe as the man in diver's suit vanished under the water.

Down and down went the diver, a step at a time. The buoy had been placed with such exactness that he did not have to step from the ladder to the sandy bottom. Instead, he stepped on to the deck of a great lurking underseas craft.

He must have grinned, that diver, as he knelt on top of the gray hull and hammered briskly, in the International Code, this message to the Germans inside the submarine shell:

"Come up and surrender, or stay where you are and take a bomb! Which do you want?"

Surely he grinned hard, under his diver's mask, as he noted the time that elapsed. He knew full well that his hammered message had been heard and understood by the trapped Huns. He could well imagine the panic that the receipt of the message had caused the enemy.

"We'll send you a bomb, then?" the diver rapped on the hull with his hammer. "I'm going up."

To this there came instant response. From the inside came the hammered message:

"Don't bomb! We'll rise and surrender!"

Chuckling, undoubtedly, the diver signalled and was hoisted to the surface. The instant that his head showed above water the seaman-diver nodded three times toward Darrin. Then he was hauled into the boat, and the launch pulled away from the spot.

"It took the Huns some time to make up their minds?" queried Dave Darrin smilingly, after the diver's helmet had been removed.

"They didn't answer until they got the second signal, sir," replied the diver.

Dalzell's launch was hovering in the near vicinity, filled with sailors and marines, a rapid-fire one-pounder mounted in the bow.

Both boats were so placed as not to interfere with gun-fire from the "Logan." Officers and men alike understood that the Huns might attempt treachery after their promise to surrender.

Soon the watchers glimpsed a vague outline rising through the water. The top of a conning tower showed above the water, then the rest of it, and last of all the ugly-looking hull rose until the craft lay fully exposed on the surface of the sea.

The critical moment was now at hand. It would be possible for the submarine to torpedo the

destroyer; there was grave danger of the attempt being made even though the vengeful Germans knew that in all probability their own lives would pay the penalty.

The hatch in the tower opened and a young German officer stepped out, waving a white handkerchief. He was followed by several members of the crew. It was evident that the enemy had elected to save their lives, and smiles of grim satisfaction lighted the faces of the watchful American jackies.

"Give way, and lay alongside," Dave ordered his coxswain, while signalling Dalzell to keep his launch back for the present.

Then Dave addressed the young German officer:

"You understand English?"

"Yes," came the reply, with a scowl.

"We are coming alongside. Your officers and men will be searched for weapons, then transferred, in detachments, to our launch, and taken aboard our craft."

The German nodded, addressing a few murmured words to his men, who moved well up forward on the submarine's slippery deck.

As the launch drew alongside two seamen leaped to the submarine's deck and held the lines that made the launch fast to it.

Half a dozen armed seamen sprang aboard, with Darrin, who signalled to the second launch to come up on the other side of the German boat.

"Be good enough, sir, to order the rest of your men on deck," Dave directed, and the German officer shouted the order in his own tongue. More sullen-looking German sailors appeared through the conning tower and lined up forward.

"Did you command here?" Dave demanded of the officer.

"No; my commander is below. I am second in command."

Dave stepped to the conning tower, bawling down in English:

"All hands on deck. Lively."

Another human stream answered. Darrin turned to the German officer to ask:

"Are all your crew on deck now?"

Quickly counting, the enemy officer replied:

"Yes; all."

"And your captain?"

"I do not know why he is not here. I cannot give him orders."

By this time the marines were aboard from the second launch. Already the first detachment of German sailors, after search, was being transferred to the launch.

"Corporal," called Darrin, "take four men and go below to find the commander. Watch out for treachery, and shoot fast if you have to."

"Aye, aye, sir," returned the corporal, saluting and entering the tower. His men followed him closely.

"I've seen the outside of enough of these pests," said Dave to his chum. "Suppose we go below and see what the inside looks like. The German submarines are different from our own."

Dalzell nodded and followed, at the same time ordering a couple of stalwart sailors to follow. A boatswain's mate now remained in command on the submarine deck.

"You get back there!" growled the corporal. Dave reached the lower deck just in time to see the corporal pointing his revolver at a protesting German naval officer.

"Look what he's been doing, sir," called the corporal. "Look on the floor, sir."

On the deck lay a heap of charred papers, still smoking.



Charred papers still smoking.

"If I'd got down a minute earlier, sir, he wouldn't have had a chance to have that nice little bonfire," grumbled the corporal.

Dave gave a great start as he took his first look at the face of the German captain.

As for the German, he seemed at least equally disconcerted. Dave Darrin was the first to recover.

"I cannot say that I think your German uniform becoming to a man of your name, Mr. Matthews," Darrin uttered, in savage banter.

"Matthews?" repeated the German, in a puzzled voice, though he spoke excellent English. "I cannot imagine why you should apply that name to me."

"It's your own fault if you can't," Darrin retorted. "It's the name you gave me at the hotel."

"I've never seen you until the present moment," declared the German, stoutly.

"Surely you have," Danny Grin broke in. "And how is your firm in Chicago, Mr. Matthews?"

"Chicago?" repeated the German, apparently more puzzled than before.

"If Matthews isn't your name, and I believe it isn't," Darrin continued, "by what name do you prefer to be addressed?"

"I am Ober-Lieutenant von Bechtold," replied the German.

"Very good, von Bechtold; will you stand back a bit and not bother the corporal?"

Dave bent over to stir the charred, smoking heap of paper with his foot. But the job had been too thoroughly done. Not a scrap of white paper could be found in the heap.

"Of course you do not object to telling me what papers you succeeded in burning," Darrin bantered.

Ober-Lieutenant von Bechtold smiled.

"You wouldn't believe me, if I told you, so why tax your credulity?" came his answer.

"Perhaps you didn't have time to destroy all your records," Dave went on. "Under the circumstances I know you will pardon me for searching the boat."

Thrusting aside a curtain, Dave entered a narrow passageway near the stern. Off this passageway were the doors of two sleeping cabins on either side. Dave opened the doors on one side and glanced in. Dan opened one on the other side, but the second door resisted his efforts.

"This locked cabin may contain whatever might be desired to conceal," Dan hinted.

Turning quickly, Darrin saw that von Bechtold had followed. This the corporal had permitted, but

he and a marine private had followed, to keep their eyes on the prisoner.

"If you have the key to this locked door, Captain, it will save us the trouble of smashing the door," Dave warned. He had followed the usual custom in terming the ober-lieutenant a captain since he had an independent naval command.

"I do not know where the key is," replied von Bechtold, carelessly. "You may break the door down, if you wish, but you will not be repaid for your trouble."

"I'll take the trouble, anyway," Darrin retorted. "Mr. Dalzell, your shoulder and mine both together."

As the two young officers squared themselves for the assault on the door a black cloud appeared briefly on von Bechtold's face. But as Darrin turned, after the first assault, the deep frown was succeeded by a dark smile of mockery.

Bump! bump! At the third assault the lock of the door gave way so that Dave and Dan saved themselves from pitching into the room headfirst.

"Oh, whew!" gasped Danny Grin.

An odor as of peach-stone kernels assailed their nostrils. They thought little of this. It was a sight, rather than the odor, that instantly claimed their attention.

For on the berth, over the coverlid, and fully dressed in civilian attire of good material, lay a man past fifty, stout and with prominent abdomen. He was bald-headed, the fringe of hair at the sides being strongly tinged with gray.

At first glance one might have believed the stranger to be merely asleep, though he would have been a sound sleeper who could slumber on while the door was crashing in. Dave stepped close to the berth.

Dalzell followed, and after them came the submarine's commander.

"You will go back to the cabin and remain there, Mr. von Bechtold," Dave directed, without too plain discourtesy. "Corporal, detail one of your men to remain with the prisoner, and see that he doesn't come back here unless I send for him. Also see to it that he doesn't do anything else except wait."

Scowling, von Bechtold withdrew, the marine following at his heels.

As Darrin stepped back into the cabin he saw the stranger lying as they left him.

"Dead!" uttered Dave, bending over the man and looking at him closely. "He lay down for a nap. Look, Dan, how peaceful his expression is. He never had an intimation that it was his last sleep, though this looks like suicide, not accidental death, for the peach-stone odor is that of prussic acid. He has killed himself with a swift poison. Why? Is it that he feared to fall into enemy hands and be quizzed?"

"A civilian, and occupying an officer's cabin," Dan murmured. "He must have been of some consequence, to be a passenger on a submarine. He wasn't a man in the service, or he would have been in uniform."

"We'll know something about him, soon, I fancy," Darrin went on. "Here is a wallet in his coat pocket, also a card case and an envelope well padded with something. Yes," glancing inside the envelope, "papers. I think we'll soon solve the secret of this civilian passenger who has met an unplanned death."

"Here, you! Stop that, or I'll shoot!" sounded, angrily, the voice of von Bechtold's guard behind them.

But the German officer, regardless of threats, had dashed past the marine, and was now in the passageway.

"Here, I'll soon settle you!" cried the marine, wrathfully. But he didn't, for von Bechtold let a solid fist fly, and the marine, caught unawares, was knocked to the floor.

All in a jiffy von Bechtold reached his objective, the envelope. Snatching it, he made a wild leap back to the cabin, brushing the marine private aside like a feather.

"Grab him!" yelled Dave Darrin, plunging after the German. "Don't let him do anything to that envelope!"

CHAPTER IV—THE TRAIL TO STRANGE NEWS

Fortune has a way of favoring the bold. The corporal and a marine were in the corridor behind

Darrin. The ober-lieutenant's special guard had been hurled aside.

Hearing the outcries, the other two marines in the cabin sprang toward the German officer. One of these von Bechtold tripped and sent sprawling; the other he struck in the chest, pushing him back.

Just an instant later von Bechtold went down on his back, all five of the marines doing their best to get at him in the same second. But the German had had time to knock the lid from a battery cell and to plunge the envelope into the liquid contained in the jar. Then the German was sent to the mat by his assailants.

Darrin, following, his whole thought on the envelope, plunged his right hand down into the fluid, gripping the package that had been snatched from him.

"Sulphuric acid!" he exclaimed, and made a quick dive for a lidded fire bucket that rested in a rack. The old-fashioned name for sulphuric acid is vitriol, and its powers in eating into human flesh are well known. Darrin's left hand sent the lid of the bucket flying. Hand and envelope were thrust into the water with which, fortunately, the bucket was filled. When sulphuric acid in quantity is added to water heat is generated, but a small quantity of the acid may be washed from the flesh with water to good advantage if done instantly. After a brief washing of the hand Dave drew it out, patting it dry with a handkerchief. Thus the hand, though reddened, was saved from painful injury. The envelope he allowed to remain in the water for some moments.

"Von Bechtold, you are inclined to be a nuisance here," Darrin said coolly. "I am going to direct these men to take you above."

"I am helpless," replied the German, sullenly, from the floor, where he now lay passive, two marines sitting on him ready to renew the struggle if he so desired.

"Take him above, you two men," Darrin ordered, "and take especial pains to see that he doesn't try to escape by jumping into the water."

At this significant remark von Bechtold paled noticeably for a moment. Then his ruddy color came back. He got upon his feet with a resentful air but did not resist the marines who conducted him up to the deck.

Dave now drew out the envelope, which had become well soaked, and took out the enclosure, a single sheet. The writing at the top of the sheet was obliterated. Darrin did not read German fluently, but at the bottom of the sheet he found a few words and phrases that he was able to translate. Their meaning made him gasp.

"Danny-boy," he murmured to his chum, "I want you to make quick work of transferring the prisoners to the 'Logan.' Keep back two of the German engineer crew, and send word to Ensign Phelps to come over on the launch's next trip with two men of our engine-room force, and to bring along also six seamen and a petty officer. Phelps will take charge of this craft as prize officer."

The submarine was soon cleared of her officers and crew. Ensign Phelps and his own men came over and took command. Two German engine-room men had been kept back to assist the Americans. On the last trip Darrin and Dalzell returned to the undersea boat and gave the order to Ensign Phelps to proceed on his way to the base port.

As soon as the prize with its captors was under way, Darrin went to the chart-room of the "Logan," sent for the marine corporal, and ordered that Ober-Lieutenant von Bechtold be brought before him.

As the prisoner was ushered in Dave rose courteously, bowed and pointed to a chair.

"Be seated, if you please. Now, Herr Ober-Lieutenant, your second-in-command and your crew will be taken ashore as ordinary prisoners of war, and turned over to the British military prison authorities. Of course you are aware that your own imprisonment will take place under somewhat different circumstances."

Von Bechtold, who had accepted the proffered chair, gazed stolidly at this American naval commander, who was several years younger than himself.

"I fear that I do not understand you," the German replied.

"You soon will, for you speak excellent English," Darrin returned, with a chilly smile. "Your English does not have exactly the Chicago accent, but it was good enough for your purposes. The Chicagoan speaks with a sort of sub-Bostonese accent, as perhaps you did not know. Your own English has rather the sound of Oxford or Cambridge University in England."

Opening his eyes wide, and expressing bewilderment, the German begged:

"Will you be good enough to speak more explicitly?"

"Certainly," Dave assented. "When you are turned over to the British military authorities it will

be done with a card showing that you now give the name of von Bechtold——”

“Which is my right name,” interposed the German officer, tartly.

“And the card will also state that, a few days ago, you gave the name of Matthews.”

“Again you use that name of Matthews,” cried von Bechtold, impatiently. “May I ask why?”

“I will make it so clear,” Dave promised him, “that you would understand even though what I am about to say were not true. But it is true. A few days ago you met me at the hotel in port. You met also my executive officer, Mr. Dalzell. You introduced yourself to us as Matthews, claimed to be a buyer for a Chicago dry-goods house, and declared that your mission was to buy linen.”

“Not a word of truth in it,” declared von Bechtold, calmly, with a wave of his hand, as though to brush aside the charge.

“Unfortunately, quite true,” Dave went on, steadily. “You were there under an assumed name and claimed to be an American citizen. You exhibited an American passport; I have heard that your government has a printing office where such documents are turned out. You were there out of uniform. In other words, sir, your conduct on British soil, in civilian dress and under false colors, met with all the requirements of proof that you were there as a spy. It has long been known to the British, and to us, that German spies have abounded in Great Britain and that they obtained a good deal of information that we would rather German submarine commanders did not possess. So, Mr. von-Bechtold-Matthews, it will be my disagreeable duty to hand you over with the charge that you have been serving as a spy. Dalzell and I will be obliged to testify against you. I much fear that a British court-martial will condemn you to be shot.”

“What infamous lie is this that you are threatening to utter against me?” demanded the German officer, leaping to his feet.

“No lie at all, as you know quite well,” Dave went on. “I am sorry to have to bring you to this plight, von Bechtold, but you know that I cannot do otherwise.”

Gazing into the steady eyes of the young American naval officer von Bechtold realized the folly of further acting. Breathing hard, he dropped into a chair.

“It is not a fine thing that you propose to do to me,” he declared. “You do not know, of course, that I have five young children at home, who will need a father.”

“I did not know it,” Dave answered gently. “Yet I feel quite certain that some of the information you have gathered, when ashore in these parts, has resulted in the drowning at sea of a good many men who may have left behind even more than five children.”

“I feel that I am doomed,” shuddered the German, throwing a hand up over his eyes. “My five little children will not see their father again—not even when this war is over.”

“It is too bad,” Dave answered, “but I suppose, Herr Ober-Lieutenant, that it must be classed with the fortune of war. Now, as to the identity of the civilian who lies dead in a berth aboard your late command, it may be that, if you were ready to tell something about the reasons for his presence on board, and why he had in his possession this paper——”

Here Darrin spread out the wet sheet of paper that he had brought from the submarine.

“I can tell you nothing about either the civilian or that paper,” declared von Bechtold, doggedly.

“That is your own affair,” Darrin admitted. “I shall not make any attempt to force you.”

“You had better not!” declared the German, fiercely. “I can die, but I cannot betray my country. Yet have you no heart?—when I tell you about my five little children whom you would deny the privilege of ever seeing their father again?”

“If I were to suppress my report of your activities as a spy,” Darrin continued, “I would be guilty of betraying my country and my country’s allies. It would also be necessary for me to induce my subordinate officer to do the same thing. You will realize the impossibility of our doing such a thing. On the other hand, between now and the time that you are tried by court-martial you will have time to reflect upon whether you wish to try to save yourself from the death sentence by explaining to the British authorities the full meaning of what had been written on this sheet of paper and also the reasons for that civilian being aboard your craft. Then, by throwing yourself on the mercy of the court, you might escape the full penalty meted out to a spy.”

“I shall not do it,” declared von Bechtold, rising and drawing himself to his full height.

“Nor do I believe I could be induced to tell what I knew if I stood in your boots. Orderly!”

To the marine who entered Dave gave the order to summon the guard. Von Bechtold was taken back to the “Logan’s” brig, and locked in for absolutely safe keeping. Darrin went up to the bridge.

"Do you feel sorry for the fellow?" asked Dalzell, when he had heard an account of the interview.

"No more sorry than I do for any man who is down and out," Dave replied, truthfully. "Now that he is captured and his spy work ended, I believe that ships on these waters will be much safer."

"He will be just one Hun less, after a firing squad has finished with him," Dan rejoined.

Dave nodded thoughtfully.

"War breeds savage ideas, doesn't it?" demanded Danny Grin, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Not breeds, but brings out," answered Darrin.

They were nearing the coast now. Destroyers, patrol boats, drifters and mine-sweeping craft sighted the "Logan" and her prize, and the shrill whistles of these hunters of the sea testified to their joy over the capture.

Then the destroyer and her prize entered the port. Darrin brought his craft to anchorage, while the captured submarine was anchored not far away. The German prisoners were taken ashore under guard and turned over to the British authorities.

Ober-Lieutenant von Bechtold, under the charge of being a spy, was marched away under a special guard.

And then Dave made haste to present himself, with the half-destroyed sheet of paper in his pocket, before the flag lieutenant of Vice Admiral Speare.

CHAPTER V—DAVE TALKS OUT IN COUNCIL

There was much joy aboard a squadron of six more destroyers, just arrived from Uncle Sam's country, when, on steaming into port, they heard the news of the capture.

So far as Dave was concerned the document that he had discovered, mutilated as it was, had supplied hints that filled the British Admiralty and the American naval commander with deep apprehension.

Both Darrin and Dalzell were present in the crowded council room on board the vice admiral's flagship. There were other American naval officers, as well as a few American Army staff officers present. Their faces displayed anxiety.

"It is too bad," one of the American army staff officers declared, after scanning the damaged sheet under a magnifying glass, "that so much of this is obliterated. Of course, Mr. Darrin, we know that you acted promptly and that you did all in your power, and at considerable risk, to preserve this document. From the disconnected sentences that we can decipher, it would seem that at least sixty of the enemy's submarines are to concentrate in near-by waters. It is also plain that their mission is to destroy the convoy escort and sink the troopships that are nearing these waters—troopships that convey the entire One Hundred and Seventeenth Division of the United States Army."

"It would be a frightful disaster, if it came to pass," boomed the deep tones of a British naval officer.

"It shall not come to pass!" declared an American naval officer.

"Easily said, and I hope as easily done," replied the British officer. "But you Americans have not yet begun to lose ships loaded with troops. We Britishers have had some sad experiences in that line. Never as yet, though, have we had to face a concentration of sixty enemy submarines!"

"The way it looks to me," said another American army staff officer, gravely, "is that, while the destroyer escort will surely sink some of the enemy submarines, yet just as surely, with the enemy in such force, will some of our troopships go to the bottom. It is mainly, as I view it, a question of how many troopships we are likely to lose, and how big a loss of soldier life we shall suffer."

"Sixty submarines!" uttered a British naval officer, savagely. "We haven't an officer on a destroyer who wouldn't gladly go to the bottom if he could first have the pleasure of sinking a few of these deep-sea pests!"

"A distressing feature is that we cannot decipher the very part of this document which states where the submarine concentration is expected to strike," declared a naval staff officer.

"How many British destroyers will be needed to reinforce the available American destroyers?" asked a British officer, apprehensively. "For we have so many uses for our destroyers, on other work, that it is difficult to guess where we are to find destroyers enough to help you Americans."

This was known, by all present, to be only too true. The British Navy, from super-dreadnoughts to

the smallest steam trawlers, was painfully overloaded with work.

"As Mr. Darrin is a destroyer commander with an uncommonly good record to his credit," said an American naval staff officer, "and as we have not yet heard his opinion, I think we would all like to have his views."

Dave Darrin glanced at the American naval commander, who sent him an encouraging nod.

"We know, then, gentlemen," began Dave, "just how many American destroyers are to act as escort to the troopship fleet that is bringing the One Hundred and Seventeenth Division across. We know, also, just how many destroyers under our flag can be taken from patrol duty to safeguard the troopship fleet. We know the length of the sailing line of the troopship fleet; we know the speed of our destroyers. It seems to me that the answer is to be found in these known facts."

"What is your suggestion as to the plan, then?" asked an officer.

"Gentlemen, in the presence of so many officers of wider experience and greater knowledge, I feel embarrassed to find myself speaking."

"Go on!" cried several.

Darrin still hesitated.

"First of all, Mr. Darrin, in offering your suggestion, tell us what number of British destroyers you believe that you will need to reinforce the American destroyers that are available for protecting your troopship fleet," urged one.

Dave still hesitated, though not from shyness. He did some rapid calculating as to the length of the line of troopships sailing in the regular order. Then he figured out how many destroyers could give efficient protection against sixty German submarines.

There was tense silence in the council room. At last Darrin looked up.

"Well," demanded the insistent British naval staff officer, "how many of our British destroyers do you think, Darrin, are needed to help out your American destroyers?"

Dave turned his face toward the American vice admiral.

"Sir, and gentlemen," he replied, "if we had three times as many destroyers we could use them. I have an opinion on the subject, but it will sound so childish to you that I should prefer to sit back and let older heads offer suggestions."

"Darrin," spoke the flag lieutenant, after a nudge and a whispered word from the vice admiral, "this is no question of age, nor is it wholly a question of experience. Demonstrated ability, ability backed by a record, is entitled to a hearing here. You have done your figuring, and you have reached certain conclusions. How many British destroyers do you believe we shall need to help out the American destroyer fleet that is now available?"

This amounted almost to an order to speak up. Dave reddened perceptibly, opened his mouth as though to speak, closed it again, then cleared his throat and called out steadily:

"Sir, and gentlemen, it is my opinion that the American naval forces available for the work can do all the work! I do not believe that we need an ounce of British help that would be so graciously extended if we asked for it!"

There was a moment's silence.

"No help needed from us?" demanded the British naval staff officer.

"It would be welcome, sir," Dave declared, "but you cannot spare the help. Whatever assistance you gave us at this time would weaken your lines of defense or offense at some other point. They are American soldiers who are to be protected, and——"

Here Darrin's voice failed him for a moment. He felt as though the more than score of pairs of eyes that were regarding him sharply were burning him. He swallowed hard, but returned to the charge and went on, slowly, in words that rapped like machine-gun fire:

"I would stake my soul that the American Navy can safeguard the passage of the One Hundred and Seventeenth Division of the American Army!"

There was a gasp. The words were bold, but, if true, they solved a vexing problem. The spirit of the United States Navy had spoken through Dave Darrin's lips.

"Darrin," shouted an American staff officer, bringing a fist down on the table, then springing to his feet, "you've answered for us! You've given us our chart. I'd trust the best troopship fleet we'll ever send over the ocean to the guarding care of a dozen young Yankee naval commanders of your stripe."

In an instant the enthusiasm became infectious. A cheer arose, in which the vice admiral joined. The British naval officer of the booming tones left his seat and went over to grasp Dave's hand.

"Darrin, I wish we had you in our Navy!" he said, simply.

There was little more left to be agreed upon. It was decided, however, that a combined fleet of British and American patrol boats should be in readiness to swoop down and save lives in case any of the American troopships should be torpedoed.

The council soon broke up. All that was now left to be done was for the vice admiral and his immediate staff to formulate the exact plans for the protection of the One Hundred and Seventeenth Division. Even after the destroyer fleet had turned itself loose on its task, further instructions could be sent in wireless code.

"Gentlemen," said the vice admiral, rising, "I thank you for your attendance, for your consideration of the problem, and for whatever help you have been able to extend. And I can see no objection," he added, a twinkle in his eyes, "to your giving three cheers for Lieutenant-Commander Darrin."

Proud? Not a bit. As the volleys of cheers rang out deafeningly, Dave Darrin felt as though he would enjoy sinking through the deck.

But Danny Grin was there, and he undertook the job of feeling proud for his chum.

CHAPTER VI—THE GLOW-WORM OF THE SEA

Out upon the tossing sea once more. It was a wonder that the "Logan" did not sit much deeper in the water, for she carried a most unusual load of ammunition of every useful kind.

Out upon the sea, and seemingly alone at that. Not a sail was visible to the officers on the taut little destroyer, not a trail of smoke appeared on any part of the horizon. Indeed, the present speed and low fuel consumption aboard the "Logan" allowed only the thinnest wisps of smoke to issue from the raking funnels of the destroyer.

Had Dave needed other destroyer company, for any urgent reason, a signal snapping from his radio aerials would bring one, perhaps two, American destroyers to him within an hour. For some of these bulldog little fighting craft, that were out after the deep-sea pests, were capable of making more than thirty knots an hour.

The "Logan" had been out four days. Though headed westward at this moment, she had not been moving steadily westward, for she was now not more than three hundred and thirty miles west of the coast of Ireland.

On this fourth day, as on its predecessors, the destroyer steamed along at cruising speed. Though the crew knew nothing of Germany's proposed big submarine drive directed at the troopships conveying the One Hundred and Seventeenth Division, yet every marine and sailor felt that something unusual was in the wind. The lookouts had been instructed to aid their vision by the free use of their marine glasses and precautions out of the ordinary had been taken in other directions.

"The Germans are using a new submarine periscope, slimmer than any that they have heretofore employed. They hoist it for only a few seconds at a time and do not send it as far out of the water as they did with the old style periscope. The man who sights a periscope in time will save our ship."

That was the word constantly passed about by the "Logan's" officers. Every sailor hoped that he might be the lucky one to discover a periscope in time to lead to the bombing of one of the pests.

Dave had reached the bridge at seven bells. Dalzell was now below, sleeping as soundly as though he were back in the old home town of Gridley. Lieutenant Curtin was on the bridge watch.

"It's odd, Mr. Curtin, that we haven't sighted a submarine in four days; that we haven't had the slightest visible reason to suspect the presence of one," Dave remarked to his subordinate officer.

"Very likely, sir, we're too far out," Curtin replied.

"Yet we have every reason to believe that they've extended the danger zone further westward," Darrin continued.

"That's the belief of the fleet commander," Curtin answered, "but there's always a chance of his having guessed wrong. Why isn't it just as probable," he added, in a much lower tone, "that the Huns have decided to have a try at the troopship fleet fairly close to land?"

"It wouldn't be likely," Dave went on, in an equally low tone. "For one thing, Mr. Curtin, the enemy would want their first try farther out. Then, if they missed, they'd have another chance,

perhaps, closer to land."

"If they missed on their first try, the Huns would have to run their submersibles on the surface in order to overtake the troopship fleet for another chance. They couldn't travel under water and overtake the troopship fleet."

"Quite right," Darrin admitted in a whisper. "Still, I see another answer to the problem. Of the sixty submersibles believed to be on the job twenty may have been sent far to the westward, the other forty remaining nearer to the coast. The twenty submarines could make a desperate try. Then, if they failed, the remaining forty could take up the job closer to shore."

"Then you don't believe all the German submarines engaged are concentrated at one point, sir?"

"Impossible to say," Darrin rejoined. "I don't like to form opinions on any subject without facts to go on."

"It's strange; not a steamer sighted today," Lieutenant Curtin resumed, after a few moments' scanning of the sea. "During our first three days out we met plenty of armed freighters. Today, not a sail or a stack sighted. Can it be that the subs are further west, and that they've overhauled and sunk several freighters?"

"We've heard no appeals for help. Every freighter carries wireless apparatus in these days," Dave argued.

"True, but sometimes the torpedo shock puts a ship's radio out of commission from the moment of impact."

"I do not believe that the freighters are being bothered," Dave announced. "Granted that there are undoubtedly subs enough in these waters to raise the mischief with cargo steamers. If the subs didn't have the luck to silence the wireless outfits on the cargo steamers at the first shot, there would be chance of word reaching the troopships of unusual danger, and that would lead to redoubled vigilance on the part of the destroyer escorts. My belief, Mr. Curtin, is that the cargo boats will have a rest until the fate of the troopship fleet has been decided."

"Then you believe, sir, that the absence of cargo boats today is due to——"

"Probably due to the fact that there was one slack day in clearing cargo boats at American ports, and also because of an equally slack day in British ports."

Then fell silence. Both drowsy, despite their realization of the need of keeping awake and on the alert, both young officers moved about on the bridge, ever maintaining a sharp lookout.

They were still pacing back and forth when the sun went down below the horizon toward the distant United States. Lieutenant Beatty, fresh from a sleep, came up on the bridge, saluting his commander.

"Mr. Beatty, you've no other duty at present," Darrin greeted him. "Will you do an extra bit and remain on the bridge with Curtin?"

"I'll be very glad to, sir, for I'm feeling fit after my sleep," replied the lieutenant, heartily.

"I'm going below for a brief doze in my chair. If I'm wanted, call down to some one to rouse me. I'll sleep for an hour or so. But be sure, Mr. Curtin, to see to it that I'm called if anything happens, no matter how slight an occurrence it may seem to be."

"Very good, sir," from the smiling Curtin.

"And glad I am to give the 'Old Man' a bit of a relief," quoth Beatty to his brother officer. "I never knew a commander before who spent so much of his time on deck or bridge, except in a gale. Mr. Darrin doesn't appear to think that he needs more than a third as much sleep as other persons require."

"He told me to call him in an hour or so," grinned Lieutenant Curtin. "Unless something turns up his instructions will allow me to let him doze at least two hours."

No sooner had Darrin doffed cap and sheepskin and settled back in his chair than his eyes closed and he was cruising in the Land of Nod.

Nor did he stir enough to wake until an orderly, sent from the bridge, entered and shook his right arm.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the sailor. "The officer of the deck wants to know if you wish to be called now."

"In another hour," said Darrin, drowsily, and dozed off again.

Which message was received with high glee by the two conspirators for Dave's comfort when they received the news on the bridge.

"Only one drawback to it, Curtin," said Beatty. "When the 'Old Man' finally wakes he'll imagine he can stand watch for twenty-four hours without more sleep."

"Maybe, by that time, he'll have to," retorted Curtin. "So we'll let him gather in all the rest that he can get now."

And Darrin slept that added hour. When called the next time he rose straight to his feet.

"It was stupid of me not to wake an hour ago," Dave reproached himself, after glancing at the clock over the desk. "But just look at dear old Danny-boy! He's slept nearly twice as long as I have. If things remain dull this evening I won't have him called, either. He needs the rest, poor old chap!"

Donning cap and short coat the youthful commander went out on deck and then started on a tour of inspection. Presently he neared the stern just in time to see one of the two stern lookouts leap upon the other and bear the latter to the deck. The assailant gripped his victim around the throat, administering a severe choking.

"No, you don't!" yelled the upper man. "I caught you that time, and I'll bet you've done it before. Marine guard, here—stern watch!"

A midship lookout passed the word, but Dave darted forward out of the shadows.

"Get up, Ferguson," Darrin commanded. "Back to your post. You've no right to take your eyes away from your particular work. Get up, Jordan."

The latter, the sailor who had been attacked, rose to his feet, sullenly rubbing his throat.

"Ferguson, why did you attack Jordan?" Dave demanded.

"Look astern, sir!" Seaman Ferguson replied, pointing to the wake of the destroyer. "Do you see that gleam on the water, sir? It's something that Jordan dropped overboard. It's some tricky, dirty work, sir, or I'll eat my guess. I've known since last night, sir, that Jordan was tricky. He tried to get me to look another way to-night, but out of the corner of one eye I saw him drop something overboard—and then that thing in our wake began to gleam."

By this time the solitary marine guard on deck duty had arrived aft. Beholding the commanding officer, the sea-soldier saluted and stood at attention.

"My man," Dave ordered, "take my compliments to Lieutenant Curtin and my instructions that he is to make a careful turn and try to go back through our wake. He is to be very exact about going over the very wake of this craft. The message delivered, report back here."

Jordan, who had turned deathly pale, glanced about him as if meditating some foolish flight.

"Now, Jordan," Dave began, taking the young sailor firmly by the arm, "what was it you threw overboard?"

"A—a—" began the accused one.

"Yes, come out with it," Darrin commanded.

"I didn't throw anything overboard, sir. Ferguson is a liar."

Whereupon Seaman Ferguson, though he still kept his eyes turned in the direction imposed by his watch duties, clenched both fists hard.

"It won't do you any good to deny, Jordan," Dave insisted. "We're going back and find that—whatever it was that you threw overboard. Better tell me now!"

As if to confirm his words the "Logan" began to turn in a half circle. At the same time the marine returned.

"Take Jordan below. See that he's searched and then confined in the brig," Dave directed.

With infinite care the "Logan" sought her recent wake. It was no simple task on such a night, when the new moon had already set. And, travelling at such easy speed, the "Logan" had not stirred up anything like the foamy, suds-like wake that trailed after her when she steamed at fighting speed.

By the time the turn was made the glowing object that Ferguson had pointed out was no longer visible. Carefully the destroyer picked her way back. They were a bit out of the straight line, though, as Darrin presently found reason to believe, for a tiny glow, looking like a point of dim light in the near distance, was finally sighted about three points off the port bow.

"Two points to port," Dave passed the word. He was now well up forward of the bridge, watching the surface of the ocean intently. "Steady! Stop!... Half speed astern.... Stop!"

The glowing object was now in plain sight as it tossed on the swells. Darrin gave the order to

lower a cutter, instructing Ensign Phelps to go along and haul in that glowing object.

There was no need to watch it from the "Logan." Mr. Phelps, from the cutter, could make it out distinctly. Soon he reached it, a seaman bending over the side and picking up the object.

"Pass it to me at once," directed the ensign, and an instant later took possession of it. By the time the boat had been hoisted to the davits Mr. Phelps leaped down to the deck and joined his commander.

"Did you observe, sir? This thing glowed, while in the water," declared the ensign, holding up a bottle of about a pint capacity, tightly closed with a rubber stopper. "Yet when I got it in out of the water it stopped glowing, and looked as dull and dark as it does now. I believe it's coated with a transparent substance that glows only when the thing is in the water. Have I your permission, sir, to drop it in a fire bucket and see?"

"Go ahead," Dave assented.

Phelps walked to a near-by fire bucket and thrust the bottle in the water. At first nothing happened. After a few seconds, however, the bottle began to glow dimly, then gradually increased in brightness until it became clear and mellow.

"That's enough for that," Darrin nodded. "Now bring it into the chart-room, Mr. Phelps, and we'll look it over."

Their entrance awoke Dalzell, who stretched, then sprang up.

Dave hastily explained to his chum what had happened, at the same time going to the desk and turning on a stronger electric light.

Holding the bottle up against the light, Dave was able to make out what looked like a folded piece of paper in it, nothing else.

"At all events," smiled Dave, as he seated himself before the desk and glanced through the bottle glass, "I do not see any reason to believe that I shall set off any explosive by drawing out the rubber stopper."

Nothing disastrous happened as the stopper was withdrawn. Holding the bottle up to the light once more, peering through the neck, Darrin saw that it contained only the folded paper. Careful work with a penholder consumed five minutes of time before the paper was pried out, whole.

Dave spread it on the desk before him,

"Phelps, you read German better than I do, I believe."

"I can make a stagger at it, sir."

"Look this through and translate for me," Darrin requested.

Slowly, and with a good deal of care, Phelps translated in these words:

"U. S. Destroyer 'Logan.' 8.15 P. M. (Date) Longitude —; latitude —. Course, west by southwest. Carries three times usual amount of ammunition. Speed, eight knots."

The actual date was given; longitude and latitude were correct enough.

When Phelps had finished reading Dave Darrin leaned back in his chair, pain expressed in his face and eyes.

"A traitor on board! An American on this craft who has sold himself to the Huns! In the name of mercy how can such a thing be?"

CHAPTER VII—DARRIN HAS A SPY SCARE

"Tell the orderly to pass the word to the marine corporal to bring Jordan here," Dave ordered, after a dazed instant.

That order was quickly obeyed. Seaman Jordan, shuffling his feet, his eyes roving shiftily, nevertheless maintained a half-defiant, half-injured air.

"Jordan," demanded Dave, without a moment's waiting, as the man was placed before him, "why did you drop this bottle overboard?"

"I didn't, sir."

"But Ferguson says you did."

"He's a liar, sir."

"Where did you get this bottle?" Dave rapped out.

"I didn't get it, sir; I never saw it before."

"Have you any more of these bottles?"

"Naturally not, sir."

"What is the transparent coating on this bottle that makes it glow soon after it reaches the water?"

"I don't know anything about it, sir."

"Jordan, don't you know that, in maintaining this defiant attitude, you are only injuring your own case?" Darrin demanded, warningly.

"I can't tell you anything else than I'm telling you, sir," the sailor cried, angrily. "I have been telling you the truth and I won't lie, sir."

"I don't ask you to lie," Darrin observed coolly.

"But you won't believe me, sir."

"No," said Dave, rising. "I don't. Corporal, take this man back to the brig. And see to it that you don't repeat anything that you have heard here. As you go out pass the word by messenger to the officer of the deck to have Seaman Ferguson relieved. As soon as that is done Ferguson is to report to me here."

So swiftly are orders carried out on a destroyer in war-time that it was less than a minute later when Ferguson knocked, entered, saluted, and stood, cap in hand, before his commanding officer.

"Ferguson," Dave began, "outside of your being stationed with him, have you seen much of Jordan?"

"About as much, sir, as I see of any shipmate who isn't any particular friend of mine."

"Have you been on unfriendly terms with Jordan?"

"Not until I caught him at tricks to-night, sir."

"Ever had any trouble with Jordan?"

"Fought him twice, I think, sir."

"Any bad blood between you two?"

"No, sir; that is, nothing more than disputes that blew over at once after we had used our fists on each other."

"Who won the fights?"

"I did, sir."

"And you have not looked upon Jordan as an enemy?"

"No, sir."

"What has been your opinion of Jordan as a seaman?"

"He always seemed to know his business, sir."

"Did he perform his duties cheerfully?"

"I thought so," Ferguson replied.

"Now, Ferguson," Darrin went on, "you two have chatted quite a bit, haven't you, when on station side by side?"

"Yes, sir, whenever we found the time hanging heavy on our hands."

"What did you talk about?"

"Sometimes, sir, we talked about the fun that can be had on shore leave, but more often about submarines and the war, sir."

"And what was Jordan's attitude toward the war?"

"I don't know that I understand you, sir."

"Did Jordan speak as if he believed the United States did right to enter the war?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"He talked, did he, like what you would call a good American?"

"Yes, sir; always, when the subject was mentioned."

"And you believed him loyal to the United States?"

"Yes, sir; up to last night."

"What happened then?"

"Why, sir, Jordan got me to look off to starboard, and my back was turned to him for a moment. I felt, rather than saw, that he had dropped something overboard. I looked quickly astern at our wake. I now feel pretty sure, sir, that I saw something glowing floating on the water astern. You may remember, sir, that at this time last night there was a heavy phosphorescent wake. And we were making faster speed last night, too, and our propeller turned up more of the phosphorescent stuff in the water, if that is the right way to express it, sir."

Darrin nodded his comprehension of the description, and went on:

"Last night was the first time you had any suspicion of Jordan?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he do anything further last night to arouse your suspicion?"

"No, sir."

"Did you watch him?"

"Yes, sir; like a hawk. But I'm pretty sure that he didn't know I was watching him."

"Did you report your suspicions to any officer?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"Because I didn't have anything but a hazy suspicion to report, sir, and I wouldn't like to carry tales or rouse suspicion against a chap who might be altogether decent."

"Then your previous fights with Jordan didn't cause you to dislike or suspect the man?"

"Certainly not, sir. I don't fight that way. When I've a bit of a scrap with a mate, sir, the fight is over, with me, when it stops."

"Yet you felt that you should keep an eye on Jordan to-night?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you believe that Jordan dropped this bottle overboard into our wake?"

"I'm positive that he did, sir."

"Did you see him do it?"

"No, sir," Ferguson replied, without hesitation.

Dave Darrin had followed a style of questioning that is common to the Army and the Navy when one enlisted man makes a report against another enlisted man. Dave's first object was to make sure that there was no really bad blood between the men, and that the charge wasn't merely a matter of getting square. Secondly, Darrin was trying to make up his mind as to Ferguson's keenness and reliability as a witness. By this time he had made up his mind that Seaman Ferguson was telling the truth according to his best knowledge of what had happened, and that he had spoken without prejudice.

"Ferguson," said the young destroyer commander, promptly, "I am satisfied that you have answered me truthfully. I also commend you for your prompt action to-night. As to your failure to make a report of your suspicions last night I believe that you have justified yourself."

"Thank you, sir. If I may, I would like to ask the lieutenant-commander a question."

This way of putting it, addressing Dave in the third person, is quite in keeping with the custom of the service.

"You may ask the question," Dave nodded.

"Then I would like to ask the lieutenant-commander, sir, if I would have done better to have reported my suspicions last night?"

"It is impossible to answer that question for every case that might arise," Dave told him. "Navy men, whether enlisted or commissioned, dislike tale-bearers. In war-time, however, and under peculiar conditions where extreme peril always lurks, and where the act of a spy may destroy a ship's company in a twinkling of an eye, it is usually permissible to report even vague suspicions. The officer to whom such a report is made will quickly discover that it is probably only a vague suspicion, and then he will not be unduly prejudiced against the suspected man."

"Thank you, sir."

"Do not talk this over with your mates, Ferguson. The less that is said about the matter for the present the better I shall like it. That is all for the present. You have done a good bit of work, Ferguson."

"I thank the lieutenant-commander."

At a nod from Darrin the seaman saluted and withdrew.

For the next five minutes Dave sat, alternately scanning the message and studying the appearance of the bottle. At last he looked up at his brother officers.

"Mr. Phelps, you will make it your next duty to search Jordan's effects. In his duffle bag or hammock space you may find more of these bottles. If you do not, you will extend your search further, as your judgment dictates. If there are any more of these bottles on board I wish them found and turned over to me."

After the ensign had gone Dan drew on his sheepskin.

"After this spy scare," he announced, "I'm off to make an inspection. Perhaps I may find something connected with this matter."

"If you go by the brig, Danny-boy, you might tell Jordan that at any time when he wants to open up and speak the truth he may send in word."

"Very good, sir."

Left by himself Darrin went to a filing case, turned to "J" and brought forth Jordan's descriptive card. This is a card that contains full information as to an enlisted man's name, his age, a personal description, extent and kind of service, education, qualifications, disciplinary record, the grades in which he has served, the ships and shore stations on or at which he has served, and more information along similar lines.

Jordan's card showed that the arrested man had joined the Navy five years before, as an apprentice, at the age of nineteen; his work had always been well done; he had never been in serious trouble; his reputation was good. His home address was given and the names of his parents stated.

"No help from this source," Dave mused, as he returned the card to its proper place in the drawer. "Assuming that Jordan is guilty, then Jordan is not his real name, and he's really a German, not an American. For Jordan's treachery might cause the sudden destruction of this craft, and no American, no matter how bad, would sell out for mere money when he knew his treachery was likely to result in his own sudden death. No American, good, bad or indifferent, would be capable of such devotion to Germany, but a German would. Therefore I suspect that Jordan is really a German, who enlisted under a false name. It may even be that German authorities, foreseeing the coming of the war, and suspecting that the United States might be drawn into it, ordered this young fellow to enlist in peace times that he might be at hand as a spy when trouble did break out. If that is true of Jordan, I wonder how many other German spies also succeeded in enlisting in our Navy before Germany went to war at all? Jupiter, but that's a startling question! For that matter, have we other German spies aboard the 'Logan?'"

The idea was enough to cause Darrin to settle back in his chair, a prey to rushing thoughts.

CHAPTER VIII—THE BATTLE FOR THE TROOPSHIP FLEET

Earlier that same evening a group of Uncle Sam's soldiers stood at the bow of a steamship. Back of them, on the spar deck, other groups lined the rails on both sides.

For some minutes there had been silence, but at last one of the group in the bow spoke.

"Late to-night I expect that we shall enter the outer edge of the Danger Zone."

"If the Huns and their subs are there to meet us it will kill a lot of the monotony," declared another soldier.

"I wonder if the Huns will put up any real excitement for us in that line," said a third.

"Getting nervous, Pete?" asked the first speaker, with a short laugh.

"Not a bit," replied Pete, hiding a yawn with his left hand.

"Nothing to get nervous about," spoke up a fourth soldier. "The Huns are bully at sinking unarmed freighters, but so far, if they know anything about getting convoyed troopships they haven't used much of their knowledge."

"Still, they do get a troopship once in a while," spoke up another soldier, in a serious tone. "They may get us."

"Won't amount to much if they do," declared Pete, boldly. "Some of us would get off in the boats, and the rest of us would drop into the water with our life-belts on. Then we'd soon be picked up by a destroyer and we'd be all right again. Pooh! This so-called submarine 'menace' makes me tired. With all their submarines and all their bluster the Huns don't do enough damage to our troopships to make it worth all the bother they have to take."

"Anybody going to stay awake all night, to see if we get it during the dark hours?" inquired another.

"No; what's the use? If we don't get hit there is no use in losing our sleep. If we do get hit there's always plenty of time for the men to turn out and fit their life-belts on."

"If I thought we'd be attacked during the dark hours I'd like to stay up here on deck to-night and be on hand to see what happens when the attack comes," said a soldier in a group that was moving bow-ward from the port rail.

"Forget it," advised a corporal. "The guard would chase you below if you tried to stay on deck. After 'hammocks' is sounded no man is allowed on deck unless he is on duty. If there is an attack to-night the guard will have all the fun to divide with the forward gun-crew."

A young naval petty officer standing just behind the bow gun wheeled abruptly, eyeing the soldier lot.

"Don't you fellows get nervous," he said. "This is my seventh trip across on a troopship, and to date the only thing I've seen to shoot at is the barrel that is chucked overboard when we're to have target practice."

"Who's nervous?" demanded Pete.

"All of you," replied the bluejacket calmly.

"Don't you believe it!"

"That is not calling you cowards, either," the bluejacket continued. "And let me give you a tip. If we're still afloat when daylight comes, don't any of you strain your eyesight looking for submarine conning towers sticking above the water. There won't be any. No matter how many subs there may be about, they know better than to expose themselves with so many destroyers around and all the troopships armed. The most that any Hun submarine commander would show would be a foot of slim periscope for a few seconds, and it would be so far away that no one but a fellow used to looking for such things would see it. Want my advice?"

"If it's any good," nodded the corporal.

"It's as good as can be had," retorted the young bluejacket. "Here is the line of thought for you. Unless you're detailed for guard or lookout duty, don't bother looking for subs at all. Don't even give any thought to them unless the attack starts. Keeping your mind off submarines will give you a better show to keep your hair from turning gray before you reach the trenches."

This troopship was one of the pair that led the fleet. A long double line of ships it was. Some of the vessels were of eight or nine thousand tons; others were smaller and still others much smaller. They moved in two lines that were widely separated, and even in the lines the intervals between ships looked long to a landsman. Ahead a torpedo boat destroyer of the United States Navy scurried briskly, often scooting off to one side of the course. Other destroyers were out to port or starboard, while one craft manned by vigilant officers and men brought up the rear of the long fleet.

Every now and then a destroyer, for no reason apparent to a landsman, darted between ships and took up a new post, or else turned and scurried back to its former relative position.

This fleet was the present ocean home of the One Hundred and Seventeenth Division, United States Army. On one of the ships the most important passenger was Major General Burton, division commander. On another troopship the "big man" was Brigadier General Quimby, commanding the Three Hundred and Twenty-second Infantry Brigade. Brigadier General Sefton's Three Hundred and Twenty-first Infantry Brigade was also with the fleet, along with Brigadier General Strong's brigade of one heavy field artillery regiment and two light field artillery

batteries.

There were Engineers and Medical Corps units on the ships of this fleet, Quartermaster field transportation units, Signal Corps men, and units of various other auxiliary branches of the service. First and last, some twenty-four thousand officers and men of the Army. Some of the ships carried horses and mules, others tractors. Great quantities of ammunition of all types were carried by this fleet; stores of food and medicines, batteries of artillery, ambulances—in a word, all the vast quantities of equipment, ordnance, clothing and the other items that go to meet the demands of troops on foreign field service.

A really huge Armada it was, considering the actual number of fighting men that it carried. A dark, uncanny-looking fleet it was, too, with an air of stealth and secret enterprise that could not be dispelled. Nowhere on any of the troopships did a light glow that could, by any possibility, be seen by those aboard another craft. Visible lights had been forbidden from the very moment that the ships had set sail from American ports.

To this rule of no visible lights the sole exception, occasionally to be observed, was the use of the red, white and blue electric lights that sometimes glowed briefly from the yard-arms of the vessels. These lights, slangily called “blinkers,” convey necessary messages from one war craft to another at sea.

Nineteen thousand fighting men and some five thousand to serve them behind the fighting lines in France, were thus crossing the ocean, under dark skies, and with every ship in complete darkness. It was a weird sight, and Uncle Sam’s soldiers aboard these ships had not yet gotten over the wonder of it.

All through the fleet, conversations as to the probability of submarine attack on the morrow, or on succeeding days, were infrequent and brief. Hardly a soldier, however, was fooled by the absence of talk on the subject. Each soldier knew that he was thinking a good deal about the chances of the ship’s being torpedoed on the high seas, and he knew, too, that his comrades were thinking of the same thing.

At last the bugles through the fleet softly sounded the call to turn in. Nearly all of the men had remained up on deck this evening. Now they stole below, hurriedly making up their bunks, and as hurriedly undressing and getting in under the blankets before “taps” should sound.

And so the decks were left to the gun-crews, to the lookouts and the members of the guard posted there. Below, on the berth-decks, some of the soldiers slept little, if any, that night. Others went promptly and soundly asleep.

It was on this same night that Lieutenant-Commander Dave Darrin was presently obliged to put out of his mind, as far as possible, further thought of the supposed treachery of Seaman Jordan, for they were on their way to the rendezvous where they were to meet the troopship fleet.

Dan Dalzell, as executive officer, came in breezily, saluting briskly and giving his cheery report as to the results of his inspection:

“All secure, sir.”

Dave was on the bridge, with Lieutenant Briggs, when Ensign Phelps came to report that he had been unable to find any of the looked-for bottles in Jordan’s duffle-bag or other effects, or, for that matter, anywhere else.

“Very good, Mr. Phelps. Thank you. I recommend that, until your watch is called, you get all the sleep you can. To-morrow there may be no sleep for any of us.”

Later in the night cautious signals, “blinker” lights, were observed off the port quarter.

The “Logan,” comprehending, replied with her own “blinkers.” The two craft presently came closer, and after that kept each other company, for the destroyer “John Adams” was also bound for the rendezvous of the early morn.

Two hours before dawn Darrin gave the order to lie to. The “Adams” also stopped her engines, nearly, for the destroyers had reached the point of rendezvous. Soon afterward a third destroyer signalled and joined; not long after that a fourth. There were two more on hand before dawn.

Through the dark sky came three short, quick flashes of a searchlight. It was the “Logan” that returned this signal. Then other signals were swiftly exchanged with the craft to the westward.

“The troopship fleet is going to be punctual to the minute,” Darrin remarked to his watch officer.

“And our biggest time will be ahead of us, sir, I’m thinking,” responded Lieutenant Briggs.

“In a way the big time will be welcome,” smiled Dave. “Even if we are unfortunate enough to sustain some losses the Hun will get the worst of it.”

“Why do you say that, sir?” Briggs inquired.

"Because, so far, in every encounter with naval vessels or troopships the Hun has seemed fated to get the worst of it."

In the east a pale light appeared in the sky. This slowly deepened. Then came the early red and orange tints of what promised to be a bright day.

"There's the troopship fleet!" cried Darrin, joyously. "The head of it anyway. We'll soon see more of it."

Lieutenant Briggs held his glass for a full thirty seconds on the first ships visible to the westward.

"And there goes our signal to join!" exclaimed Darrin, as bunting broke from the foremast of the leading destroyer with the fleet. "Acknowledge the signal, Mr. Briggs, and give the order for full speed ahead."

Racing westward went six torpedo boat destroyers to meet their comrades of the Navy and of the Army.

As they drew nearer, those on the destroyers could see a wild waving of hats by the soldiers crowding the decks of the leading transports. One moment the hat-waving was visible; then as suddenly it ceased, and the spar decks were nearly bare of men, for mess-call had sounded for breakfast. The only soldier who fails to answer mess call is a sick or a dead one.

"Follow second destroyer on port line," came the signal from the leading destroyer to the "Logan." "After taking position meet any emergency according to best judgment."

So the "Logan" raced along to the north of the fleet, then made a swift, curving sweep and moved into the assigned position.

From the decks of the nearest transports, soldiers, as they returned from their meal, blithely waved their caps again. Cheering was forbidden, as such noise would drown out orders that might be given for the handling of the ship. But those Of Dave's jackies who could, waved back good-humoredly.

For some minutes after taking position, Darrin found himself running along with the troopship "Cumberland," and the distance between them was but a few hundred yards.

Dave had turned to watch the movements of the destroyer ahead in the line when he heard a starboard lookout call:

"Torpedo coming, sir, on the port beam!"

Like a flash Darrin wheeled to behold the oncoming trail.

Lieutenant Curtin, now on the bridge watch, gave quartermaster and engine-room swift orders, while Ensign Phelps signalled the "Cumberland."

Like a racehorse in full career, the "Logan" bounded forward and made a sharp turn to port. At the same time the "Cumberland" oblied sharply to starboard.

On came the torpedo. The soldiers on the troopship deck watched its course with fascinated eyes.

The "Logan," having swerved enough only to clear the deadly missile, now darted in again, her nose striking what was left of the torpedo trail. On she dashed, gun and bomb crews grimly waiting, every man on duty alert on the destroyer's decks.

Cutting the wind the "Logan" raced on her way, her bow throwing up a huge volume of water. Dave, on the bridge, saw his staunch little fighting craft near the starting end of the tell-tale torpedo trail. And there on the water, moving eastward and at right angles with the direction of the path, was an ill-defined, bulky something which, from the destroyer's bridge, looked like a submerged shadow.

Quickly rasping out a change in the course, Dave saw the "Logan" overtake that shadow in a matter of seconds. The shadow was much less distinct now, for the sea pest was submerging to greater depth.

It was Darrin himself who seized the handle of the bridge telegraph.

Answering the signal sent by Dave to the engine room, the "Logan" made a magnificent leap forward just as the destroyer's bow reached the point over the tail of the shadow.

"Let go the depth bomb!" he roared. The signal was passed to the bomb crew to "let go!"

Over went the bomb. The "Logan" still leaped forward.

Then, astern of the rushing craft, came a muffled roar. A great mass of water shot up into the air, like a compressed geyser. Before the column of water had had time to subside big bubbles of air came up in myriads and burst on the surface.

The instant after the explosion of the depth bomb, the "Logan" turned on the shortest axis possible, her propellers slowing down somewhat.

"The 'Cumberland' is still afloat and not hit, thank Heaven!" Darrin uttered fervently.

Only the troopship's quick turn to starboard had saved her. The torpedo had sped past by less than five feet from her rudder.

Another turn, and Dave came up with the scene of the explosion. Oh, cheerful sight! The water was mottled with great patches of oil. More cheering still, sundered bits of wooden fittings from a submarine floated on the water. Two dead bodies also drifted on the swells; the remaining Huns on the shattered craft must have gone down with the sea pest.

"Not bad work, Mr. Curtin," Dave remarked, calmly, as the destroyer once more moved into her place in the escort line.

"May we have as good luck every time," came the fervent response of the watch officer.

Word of the bomb hit had been signalled along the line. It was hard indeed that the soldiers were not allowed to cheer!

But had the morning's work really begun?

CHAPTER IX—WHEN THE ENEMY SCORED

The sun had risen through a haze, which is in favor of a fleet on the defensive, as there is not so much glare from the water to confuse the vision of lookouts.

However, there was no attack in the next hour. The fleet continued on its way only as swiftly as the slowest transport could move, for it is an axiom at sea that the speed of a fleet is the speed of its slowest ship.

Suddenly Dave recalled to mind the prisoner, Jordan, locked in the brig below.

"Corporal," he called down, as that noncommissioned officer of marines passed across the deck, "in case we are hit and are sinking, make it your duty to remember Jordan, in the brig. Turn him loose before we abandon ship—if the day's work comes to that."

"Humph!" Pete was saying to his soldier comrades forward on one of the leading transports. "The Germans must be hard up when they can send only one sub to tackle a fleet like this."

"I don't care if the Huns send fifty or a hundred of their pests," broke in another soldier. "The subs have no show. Did you see that destroyer? Scoot! Pouf! Hm! Where's that submarine now? I tell you, fellows, after all, submarines are good only for sinking unarmed schooners."

"Still, they've sunk more than a few armed steamers," argued a comrade.

"If they did," maintained the former speaker, warmly, "then it was because the lookouts and gunners were asleep. You wait! If we meet a dozen of these Hun submarines to-day you'll find that they won't get any of our ships."

"I'm going to do my bragging after we land," interjected an old sergeant dryly. "I always enjoy my bragging best after I get over my scare."

But the long quiet proved too good to last. The almost simultaneous barking of guns from three troopships and from two destroyers called swift attention to the fact that the fusillade was aimed at a periscope off starboard. Nearly a dozen shells struck the water all around the spot where the periscope had vanished. From about the same point a light streak appeared on the water.

Signalling back instructions to the transports as to their course, a destroyer darted out of line to go after the submarine after the fashion that Darrin had employed. Ere long the destroyer swerved in a sharp curve and headed back for her place in the escort line, signalling at the same time:

"Nothing left for us to do. A shell from one of the guns engaged hit the pest under water and poured oil on the troubled waters."

In the meantime, the endangered transport, which had promptly and intelligently obeyed the steering order, had barely escaped the torpedo fired at her.

Spirits now ran high in the troopship fleet. Uncle Sam's soldiers had seen the threatened ships saved, and had also seen Uncle Sam's sailors show how easily a submarine may be fought—sometimes.

After that the fleet proceeded on its uninterrupted way for so long a time that the noon meal had been eaten calmly by the voyaging soldiers. Few of them thought it worth while to cut that meal

short in order to go on deck again.

Especially did Pete and his friends feel indifferent to the best that the Huns could do out here on the water. Just then there came a terrific shock. It was an explosion, followed by a crash that caused the ship to stagger over to starboard, though she quickly righted herself.

"They've got us!" yelled Pete, jumping up from the table, overturning his coffee and starting for the upper deck on a run.

Then, ashamed of his nervousness, Pete stopped running and tuned down to a slow walk toward the companionway stairs from the mess deck. Others were running, with a resulting jam on the stairs.

"What are we going to do?" one soldier asked Pete.

"Do the same thing that we've been doing ever since we came into the Service, I guess," drawled Pete. "And that is, we're going to listen and obey orders. Stop shoving, you fellows. We won't get up any faster for crowding."

Soon staff and line officers appeared at the head of the stairs, issuing sharp, steady commands that stopped all signs of a possible panic.

"Keep your wits, men, and the last of you will reach shore all right," called an officer who was forcing his way down the stairs. "Some of you men turn aside and give me a chance to get to the deck below."

His coolness, and his willingness to be on the mess deck calmed the excitement of many a young soldier who was eager to get up to the spar deck. From a deck rail in front of the chart-house a major with a lusty voice shouted down:

"No excitement, men! This ship, if she sinks, will be a long time doing it. There will be time to get every man off, and it will be done if you listen to orders and obey them."

That torpedo had struck deep into the ship's vitals, stopping the engines instantly.

Only here and there was there a soldier who did not have his life belt on. These now scrambled for their belts.

From the flagship of the destroyers at the head of the line swift signals were wigwagged and repeated down the lines. One of them read:

"'Logan' stand by 'Castle City' for rescue work."

Instantly Dave ordered the full-speed signal telegraphed to the engine room, then added, as the destroyer raced down the line:

"Keep all gunners and lookouts at their stations, Mr. Dalzell. Mr. Briggs will take charge of manning and lowering our two launches and the cutters, and will stand by to lower away."

The destroyer "Adams" had already caught a hawse-line from the "Castle City" by the time Dave's craft reached the scene. With the hawser made fast the destroyer was towing the stricken transport out of the fleet line.

"Lower away," Dave commanded, after he had dashed past the "Castle City" and had lain to. Overboard went the launches and cutters, and Lieutenant Briggs was soon alongside the transport, which was also lowering well-filled lifeboats.

His own boats and the ship's boats Briggs had towed in strings. On orders from the commander of the destroyer flotilla, other troopships halted long enough to take on the rescued ones.

Still another destroyer had to hasten to the assistance of the "Logan," for the "Castle City" was rapidly settling lower in the water.

Never had naval small craft worked at greater speed, yet necessity moved faster. The transport had by now heeled well over to port. She could not keep afloat much longer.

"Those who cannot get into the boats now will have to jump," shouted Dave Darrin.

So excellent was the control by the regimental officers on the "Castle City" that even now there was no panic. Soldiers gathered at the points indicated, and sprang overboard when ordered to do so. The ship's crew, too, were now jumping.

Among them crept the destroyer "Logan," her sailors throwing lines, while a side gangway was also lowered for the use of those who could swim to it.

Scores of soldiers were soon on the "Logan's" deck. These were directed to seek warm quarters below where they could dry their clothing. Many of the soldiers preferred to remain on deck to aid in the rescue of their comrades. Having cast off after finishing her job of towing, the "Adams"

was now busy, too, in rescue work.

At last, when no more heads appeared on the water, and no more men were in evidence on the decks of the sinking transport, the order was signalled for the rescue-work destroyers to stand clear.

"She'll plunge by the head within five minutes," Dalzell declared, as the "Logan" steamed clear.

Bang! bang! bang! Destroyer and troopship guns, up near the head of the line, had suddenly begun blazing away.

Half a dozen periscopes showed short lengths, briefly, above the water, but the number of faint streaks across the sea showed that other enemy submarines were attacking without first taking periscope sights.

"It's the general attack on the fleet, that we expected!" Dave Darrin shouted from the bridge. "Stand by! Remember that fractions of seconds count in carrying out orders now."

Then Lieutenant Beatty caught sight of a periscope above the water, some eight hundred yards away. One of the "Logan's" forward guns spoke in sharp challenge. The biggest submarine sea fight of all was now on!

CHAPTER X—THE HOTTEST WORK OF ALL

From the troopship line, as the "Logan" dashed away, Darrin could hear the guns of the transports that were coming up and near enough to take part in the fight. Wherever a periscope showed itself it was bound to invite fire from half a dozen gunners in almost the same instant.

"Sorry, but you soldiers will all have to go inside and remain there," ordered Lieutenant Dan Dalzell. "We have no room for any one on deck except our crew."

To most of the soldiers it seemed hard to be deprived of a view of the only thing that interested them, but Navy officers, in issuing orders, have a way of speaking that does not admit of doubt as to their meaning.

"There goes the 'Castle City' by the bow," called a lookout, but Dave Darrin, his eyes searching for a torpedo trail, took his word for it and did not turn to look.

"Torpedo wake, sir, three points off port bow!" sang out a lookout.

Dave turned this time; the telltale line was there. His orders rapped out and the "Logan" started by the shortest cut to reach that line and to locate its source.

Even as they raced to find that submarine, a gunner on the "Logan" fired at the briefly visible periscope of another enemy craft.

Suddenly, not more than two hundred yards away, a periscope reared itself in their path, though not more than two feet of its length appeared above the water.

Intensely alert, Lieutenant Beatty himself sighted and gave the order to fire. Nor was this an easy task, for the destroyer, to avoid ramming and ripping out part of its own hull, veered aside from the direct line.

"Fire!" yelled Beatty.

The shell gave a good report of itself. It was plain that it had made a hit of some sort, though below the surface.

The destroyer swung again to face its prey. Higher came the periscope, then the conning tower emerged. It was then observed that the conning tower had been struck and a hole put through it on one side. Small though the hole was, if the craft had submerged further instead of rising, she would have been submerged for all time.

Lieutenant Beatty calmly sighted for the next shot. Just as the deck of the undersea boat came awash the manhole sprang open and the heads of two German sailors appeared.

"They're going to try to man a gun and fight us," Darrin concluded, swiftly.

"Fire!" ordered Beatty, calmly.

That shot could not have been better placed. It struck the tower fairly, exploding inside. It killed both men at the manhole, hurling them into the sea. Probably it killed the officer in the conning tower as well.

Beatty did not stop here. Another shell had been loaded in at the breech of the gun, and he bent forward to sight just as the upper part of the hull came into view.

"Fire!" It was a clean hit, just at the water line. Hardly an instant later, it seemed, the same gun spoke again—another water-line hit.

"Bye-bye!" murmured Dave, as he ordered the course changed. There was no need to wait, or to plant another shot, for the inrush of water had settled the fate of that submarine so speedily that there wasn't the slightest chance for any of the Huns to save themselves. That pest settled quickly, then disappeared from view.

"Clean work—great, Mr. Beatty!" Dave called down briskly.

Mr. Beatty, though he acknowledged the compliment with a salute, did not turn to look at his superior, as prescribed by regulations, for his keen, swift glance was sweeping over the waters ahead.

And not more than a hundred yards ahead of them a faint "wake" crossed their bow, headed for one of the ships of the transport fleet. Instantly the "Logan" turned into that trail, following it back at racing speed.

It looked like Dave Darrin's lucky day, for they plunged over the dark, heavy shadow of something that was not far below the surface.

Knowing his speed and the length of his own craft Dave timed the instant just right, then shouted:

"Let go the bomb!"

A depth bomb was instantly released over the stern.

By the time that it exploded the speeding destroyer was safely out of the way of any danger from its effects. A huge, thick column of water rose, as if overboiling from a monster pot.

"Put about and go back to observe," Darrin directed, nodding to the watch officer.

Even before they were fully about an exultant hurrah came from a lookout forward.

"Was she hit, lookout?" Dave shouted.

"'Hit' is the right word, sir," came the response. "On that spot, at this minute, there's more oil than water."

In another instant Dave also beheld the big, spreading mass of oil. There was no need of investigating further. He turned in search of other enemy craft.

Ten minutes passed without sight of one near enough to engage Darrin's attention. It would not be good judgment for the "Logan" to go hunting in some other craft's territory.

At last, a thousand yards away, a conning tower, with only a stump of a periscope remaining, rose through the waves. Time was, in the war, when a shattered periscope obliged a submarine to choose between rising to the surface and sinking, but later periscopes were so adjusted that they could be shot away without imperilling the safety of the underseas craft. This emerging craft showed also a damaged tower, and the rising had to be of the quickest order.

"I hope that chap isn't going to surrender," muttered Dave, as he ordered the "Logan" headed straight toward the sea monster. "It takes too long, in a fight like this, to receive a surrender and remove the prisoners."

In a very few seconds, however, the enemy relieved his apprehensions. Beatty fired two shots, both of which went a few feet wild. In that time the German commander rushed men out to the bow gun. Though her tower was damaged, the craft could still fight on the surface.

One after another eight German sailors leaped out to the deck, throwing their six-inch forward gun into fighting position.

R-r-r-rip! Rat-tat-tat-tat! Two machine guns on the "Logan" were turned loose. One German sailor, then another, was hit, fell and rolled from the wet platform into the sea.

Bang! roared out Lieutenant Beatty's gun, but the shot did nothing more than tear away a part of the conning tower's top.

Still the machine guns played upon that Hun gun-crew. Three more of the enemy were laid low, two of them rolling overboard into the sea.

A flash leaped from the German gun. A swell, lifting the bow of the submarine at that instant caused the shell to go screaming overhead, so close to the bridge that the three officers there "ducked" without realizing that they were doing so.

Aiming for the German gun, Beatty sent in a shell that pierced the top of the hull twenty feet ahead of the gun.

“Cooler, old chap!” Lieutenant Beatty breathlessly adjured himself, and spent perhaps half a second more in the sighting this time.

Just before he fired, the Huns let go with their big piece again. The shell struck the “Logan’s” foremast, damaging it, though the mast did not go overboard.

Two sailors on lookout, hit by flying pieces of steel, were hurled into the air. One dropped to the deck, a hopelessly mangled mass of torn flesh; the other seaman was knocked overboard.

Dave turned to look at that wreck of a human being as it struck the water. He knew there was no life in the man, so gave no order for recovering the body.

Down below sailors sprang to lift the dead man, who had dropped there, on to a stretcher. They carried him below, to be buried later.

Beatty did not delay his firing an instant. This time the shell struck at the base of the enemy’s tower. A fragment of the exploding shell must have hit one of the German gun-crew, for a man fell on his face and rolled overboard. However, that mattered little in the fight, for still Hun reinforcements came through what was left of the conning tower.

“I seem able to hit everything but that gun or the water-line,” fumed Lieutenant Beatty, enraged with himself.

Hit though the tower had been, and though, also, three or four members of the Hun crew must have been killed in those hits, the steering gear of the submarine was still left and the grim craft was maneuvered in a way to challenge admiration.

Considerate of the feelings of the officer with the forward guns, Darrin had refrained from giving one order, but now passed the order to the machine gunners to concentrate their fire on the enemy hull at the water line.

The water alongside the submarine began spurting in tiny jets. This sieve-like riddling would presently settle the fight, unless the Hun gunners got in just one shot where it would tell best. The fight, therefore, was not yet won by the destroyer.

“Fire!” ordered Beatty, in forced calm. Then, all in an instant, that young naval lieutenant threw up his hands.

CHAPTER XI—A TRAP AND ITS PREY

Not that he was hit. Oh, no! Beatty’s last shot had done its work well. In the enemy’s hull, at the water-line, a great, jagged hole had appeared.

Responding to the inrush of water the submarine heeled. And then a strange sight was witnessed. Just as the breathless sailors on the “Logan” looked for the underseas craft to plunge under the waves she did something very different.

How it happened no one can ever tell; the cause none can guess with anything like certainty.

Did a chorus of despairing shrieks come from the bowels of that dying sea monster? There were those on the “Logan” who were sure they heard cries of terror.



The last shot.

Instead of sinking, the submarine continued on over—and turned turtle. Her dripping hull glistened in the forenoon sun!

It was too much for the tensed nerves of the American sailor men.

“Hurrah!” they let loose. “Hurrah! Hur—”

“Stop that cheering!” rose Darrin’s heaviest tones over the tumult. “The enemy are dying.”

“They’re only Huns!” answered a voice from below.

But the cheering died away and Dave’s voice carried far as he answered:

“I know they’re only Huns, and a bad lot, but they fought us well. We’ll cheer for the victory later, but not for the fate of men who are dying there.”

Darrin then gave the order to steam in close and to stand by to rescue any swimmers who might appear in the water.

Twice the “Logan” circled the overturned enemy. Save for two of the men who had been shot away from the submarine’s gun platform, and who were dead, none of the enemy were to be found.

Now it was that the young commanding officer had an opportunity to turn about and see how it was faring with the other American vessels.

All firing had ceased. The fleet was proceeding on its way. Darrin was some distance astern of the rearmost ships of the troopship fleet.

“Men, it looks as if our fight were over for the present,” Dave called down in hearty cheery tones. “From the bridge we cannot see the head of the fleet, nor can we hear the sound of firing.”

Accordingly all speed was jammed on. The “Logan,” saluting the rearmost scout of the destroyer flotilla, steamed on to return to her own position in the line. As he passed a sister ship Darrin signalled:

“How many transports lost?”

“Only the ‘Castle City,’ we understand,” came the response.

“Any lives lost?”

“We don’t know.”

“We lost two men.”

“Condolence,” signalled the rearmost rear-guard craft.

"Any naval vessels lost?" Dave inquired.

"None that we know about."

"How many enemy submarines sunk?"

"Several; don't know the number," replied the other destroyer.

"Now you may cheer in earnest, if you want to," Darrin shouted down from the bridge as the news was passed around.

And right royally did those jackies cheer. The rescued soldiers were now permitted on the "Logan's" deck, and contributed their own quota of cheers.

Dan came up to the bridge with a paper in his hand.

"The commanding general of the Army division will be asking for the names of soldiers on the various ships of the naval fleet who were rescued from the 'Castle City,'" Dalzell explained. "So I've taken the names of all the Army people we have aboard the 'Logan.' Here's the list. It foots up seventy-seven enlisted men, with two officers."

"Good enough," rejoined Dave. "Keep the list until called for."

No sooner was the destroyer within signalling distance of the transport that carried Major-General Burton, than a wigwagged demand came for that list. It was received and checked up.

The American loss, to the Army, had been one troopship, one officer and five enlisted men; to the Navy, with no ships lost, four men had been killed, including the two on the "Logan," and one seaman had been wounded.

The German loss in officers and men could only be guessed at. But it was definitely known that thirteen of the Kaiser's submarines had been sent to the bottom.

"However," Lieutenant-Commander Darrin observed, when he and his executive officer had considered the report, "we are not yet through the Danger Zone. We may have another battle stiffer than the one just concluded."

"Tell me something!" begged Danny Grin, his eyes gleaming. "Out of the thirteen pests sunk four are placed to the credit of the 'Logan.' Are we the people—or something like it—in this morning's job?"

"Now run along," Dave advised laughingly, "and don't allow your head to be enlarged, either on your own account or your ship's. The best we can claim, Danny-boy, is that we were very fortunate. As officers and men we're no better than are to be found all through the Navy."

"There's one question I'd like to ask you before I trot," Dan insisted, with one of his famous grins.

"What is it?"

"It may have some bearing on future fight engagements," Dalzell continued, his grin slowly fading.

"When will you find time to tell me what the question is?" Darrin asked smiling.

"How many submarines were probably engaged this morning?"

"I haven't any more idea than you have. I was too fully occupied with our own affairs to be able to watch the whole field."

"But that document led us to believe that about sixty would be engaged," Dalzell continued. "The question is, how many submarines were pitted against the fleet this morning?"

"I don't know how many," Dave admitted. "But I see your point. If the entire sixty were not engaged—and I doubt if any such number attacked—then we must look for a second mass attack."

"Yes, sir," nodded Dalzell, now wholly the serious, subordinate naval officer.

"The thing is worth taking up," said Dave. "I'll signal Captain Rhodes on the flagship of the destroyer flotilla and find out what he has to say."

Back came Captain Rhodes' answer within a minute:

"No accurate figures at hand. Believe enemy numbered something like thirty craft. Extreme vigilance needed until we reach port."

"There you are," Dave said, when the signal had been read. "Take command, Mr. Dalzell, and be the sharpest little sailor on the ocean. I'm going below on another matter."

Once at his desk in the chart-room Dave sent for Seaman Ferguson.

"Does Seaman Jordan smoke cigarettes?" asked Darrin.

"Yes, sir."

"Is he really addicted to them?" Dave continued.

"Is he, sir?" exclaimed Ferguson. Then: "Pardon me, sir, for answering like that. Jordan smokes his head off when he can get the chance and has enough of the pesky things."

"Thank you," Dave nodded. "That is all, except the caution to say nothing to any one about my question. Send Reardon here."

Big, red-faced, with huge hands, a deeply bronzed skin and a sly, merry twinkle in his eyes, Reardon was a sailor of the best type. Dave knew the man's loyalty and shrewdness, as well as Reardon's great faculty for holding his tongue at need.

"Reardon," directed Dave, "place a chair here at the desk and write a note at my dictation with this pencil."

"Aye, aye, sir! Ready," announced Reardon, taking his seat and picking up the pencil in his big right hand.

"Write this," said Dave. "'Sorry for you. Looks like you got a raw deal. I'll be glad to help you, if you want cigarettes or anything. Don't nod or speak to me, but wait for your chance to slip this paper back to me. Write on it what you'd like.'"

"Now," Darrin resumed, as the sailor looked up, "go below and stand where the guard at the brig can see you, but don't let your shoes make enough noise for Jordan, who's in the brig, to hear you. Signal to the guard to stroll slowly in your direction. When he reaches you tell him that you are ordered by me to slip a note to Jordan, but that the guard is not to mention the fact to any one. Tell the guard, from me, to stand so as to give you a chance to slip the note. Then, twenty minutes later, you are to get down there again and give Jordan a chance to hand you his reply. Slip this pencil in with the note."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Not even his eyes expressing any question or curiosity, Reardon left the chart-room. Going below he stepped into the passage-way that led to the brig. Cat-footed he walked along until he caught the eye of the marine guard. From the point where he halted Reardon was not visible to any one standing at the grated steel door of the little, cell-like brig in which serious offenders against discipline were confined until tried or released.

Reardon's first signal was to place a warning finger over his lips. Then he brought his hand up to a smart salute, next pointing above, which the marine at once understood to mean that Reardon was there on an errand for some officer. Next by stepping softly, and motioning with his hand to the floor, and then to his own position, he signified that he wished the marine to come to him.

No fool was Fitch, private in the Marine Corps, which contains few if any fools. So well did he understand that the occupant of the brig had no suspicion that his guard was looking at any one beyond. Then Private Fitch took a few turns in the passageway, after which, yawning slightly, and humming softly to himself, he strolled along the passageway until he reached the big sailor.

"I've orders from Lieutenant-Commander Darrin to slip a note and a pencil to Jordan in the brig," whispered Reardon. "You're not to see me. Bye and bye you're to give Jordan a chance to write an answer, which I'll come back and get."

"Lieutenant-Commander Darrin's orders, eh?" whispered the marine, eyeing the big sailor keenly.

"Which the lieutenant commander gave me himself," nodded Reardon. "And you're not to say anything about the matter."

"Go ahead, when you're ready," nodded Private Fitch, turning and strolling back.

A full two minutes Reardon waited. Then, making no further effort to walk softly, the big fellow stepped down the passage way.

"Looking for a berth in the brig?" asked Fitch, jocosely.

"Now, why should I?" demanded Reardon. "And me a good conduct man. 'Tis more likely you'll get a place there yourself."

"Not me," returned the marine. "There are only six of us and a corporal on board, and we're all needed. You know, Reardon, marines are important people, since one marine is the fighting equal of three sailors."

"Is it so, now?" demanded Reardon, in an amused tone, as he halted before the brig door. "What time did ye get up this morning, Mister Fitch?"

Pacing the floor behind the barred door with the restless step of a caged animal, Seaman Jordan only scowled at the bantering pair. But Reardon had halted with his back close to the steel bars. In one hand behind him was a pencil with a scrap of paper folded around it.

Jordan hesitated. He was afraid of some trap, but his position was desperate. He was accused of treason. Perhaps this big sailor was a friend in need. After a moment or two of hesitation, Jordan prolonged his walk until it brought him close to the bars. Then, while Private Fitch was glancing down at the lock of his rifle, Jordan stealthily grasped note and paper and dropped them in a pocket.

Reardon remained for a few moments more, bantering the marine good-humoredly. Soon after Reardon had gone, the marine strolled slowly out of sight. In the brief interval before he was back Jordan hastily scanned the note. It looked utterly innocent. Turning the paper over, Jordan hurriedly wrote:

"Cigarettes and matches, as soon as you get a chance. There are times when the guard isn't here. When in action, and all hands at quarters, there's a long chance to smoke."

Twenty minutes later Seaman Reardon returned, "joshed" the marine briefly, and secured pencil and paper from the prisoner.

Seaman Jordan waited a long time for his cigarettes and matches. For Dave Darrin, as soon as he had received the paper and Reardon had saluted and gone out, went to the safe and took from it the paper that had been fished out of the bottle rescued from the deep. For some minutes Darrin compared the writing on the two pieces of paper.

"Of course, one is in German script, and the other in English," Dave communed with himself. "But let us see what Phelps thinks of it."

Ensign Phelps, who was a bit more than an amateur handwriting expert, came at request and scanned both papers. Then he went out, returning with a magnifying glass with which he examined both writings.

"Of course the two different styles of script make the comparison difficult," Mr. Phelps declared. "Still, I am certain a better qualified expert than I will say that the same hand executed both writings."

"Then Jordan's last chance is gone, I'm afraid," replied Dave gravely, as he took the two sheets and filed them carefully in the safe. "Before, there was a chance for Jordan to get off at his trial by court-martial, for, while Seaman Ferguson was morally certain that Jordan dropped the bottle overboard, he would not be able to swear positively to it. If this note given by him to Reardon, however, proves Jordan of being the writer of both sheets, then his conviction as a traitor looks pretty certain. Phelps, these are the most serious days in the history of our great country. If any man in the American uniform is a traitor to our Flag and cause, then I want to see him punished."

"That would mean death at the hands of a firing squad," mused Ensign Phelps.

"Death before a firing squad," Darrin assented gravely. "It is the only punishment for such a crime!"

CHAPTER XII—DAVE HUNTS A BIGGER FIGHT

Of much less beam for her length than the average yacht, the "Logan" was rolling from side to side at a dizzy angle when Dave Darrin, after a nap of an hour and a half in the chart-room, turned out.

The wind had freshened; spray dashed over the decks and water flooded the scuppers. Every now and then a spurt of water raced across the bridge as the destroyer heeled over in that roughening sea.

Dave had pulled on his rubber boots, strapping the hip extensions high up. His sheepskin coat was fastened up tightly under his chin, and the collar turned up over the lower part of the knitted helmet that he drew over his head.

Thus covered and concealed until his mother would not have known him had she encountered him unexpectedly, Dave stepped out on deck, clumsily clambering the steps to the bridge, one hand holding tightly to the hand-rail. Dalzell was up there, standing not far from Lieutenant Curtin. Forward, up in the bow, looking half drowned, paced an ensign whose night glass was not long at any time from his eyes.

On the superstructure amidships another officer paced, and still another on the deck astern.

There was little sleep for any officer. Not one of them but was aware that at any instant the

lurking foe might strike, and then would begin a desperate, tragic game of blind man's buff over the slashing, spray-topped waves.

A shaded light threw a confined ray on the bridge compass. Dave barely glanced at this latter instrument, for had not Dan been there while the young commander slept?

"Nothing seen, sir; some signals—that's all," was Dalzell's terse report.

No grin appeared on Dan's face now. It had been a tense vigil for him.

"Go below and get some sleep," urged Dave.

"Don't need any," Dalzell declared stubbornly.

"It's an order, then, Mr. Dalzell," Dave answered briefly.

Grumbling, Dan took a final look into the night, then slowly clambered down the steps.

"I'm aware, sir, that an attack may be tried at any minute," said Lieutenant Curtin, "but don't you believe that it will be postponed until after daylight?"

"Yes," Darrin made reply. "And if we're to have an attack between here and port, I'd rather have it to-night. Neither troopship nor destroyer is showing lights, so the Huns couldn't use their periscopes. They might, of course, use their sound devices, and launch torpedoes towards the sources of sounds, but that's a clumsy and wasteful way of torpedoing an enemy. Attacking on a night like this, the only sure way would be for them to come to the surface. That would give us an ideal chance. With searchlights playing in every direction we'd pick up a lot of the submarines and hit them within the first minute and a half. No; unless for the novelty of the thing, the German commander won't risk a night attack. Results for him are more certain just after dawn. I believe, as much as I believe anything, that the enemy's submersibles are now waiting for us at the point where they figure that we will be at dawn."

"It will be great to meet them at their convenience," remarked Curtin, after a pause of a few minutes. "After what we did to them yesterday forenoon we know how we can rush some of 'em to the bottom, and leave the rest so far astern that they'd have to come to the surface to overtake our troop-ships."

"We know what we did, but we don't know that we can do it again," Darrin retorted. "The greatest mistake that we can make is to become over-confident. That never pays when dealing with any enemy, and least of all when the Hun is the enemy. We got away yesterday, Curtin, but has it struck you that we may have met the inferior half of the underseas fleet that the enemy has concentrated against us? Yesterday forenoon's work may have been play compared with the job that has been cut out for us. The surest way to lose a few destroyers, a few transports and thousands of soldiers and sailors, is for the naval officers with this fleet to let their confidence get the better of their alertness. Even in spite of our utmost watchfulness and best work, we may lose five thousand American lives before we reach port."

"Maybe our country would fight better hereafter if we did," muttered the younger officer. "A loss like that would serve to rouse Americans rather than to kill their fighting instinct."

"But confidence in the Navy would be largely gone," Dave rejoined. "At present the folks at home are whooping up the Navy. That's because we've had such fine luck so far. Let us lose several thousand soldiers at sea and then see how much our home people would boost for the Navy. We're judged by the goods we deliver in the form of results."

Not all of this had been said in continuous conversation, for not once did either officer remove his gaze from the black waters around them. Dave and his junior officer had spoken by snatches as they came together.

Off to starboard, several hundred yards, the dimly defined shape of a huge transport appeared. The transport ahead of her, and the one behind her, had to be located by judgment rather than by vision.

"A fellow cannot help getting nervous out here—I mean nervous for the transports," said Lieutenant Curtin, ten minutes later. "Before you came up, sir, there was a time when neither Mr. Dalzell nor I could see that nearest troopship at all."

"Did you change your course?" asked Dave, with a smile.

"No, sir; I knew we must be right, for we had followed the course to a fine line. But it was uncanny, just the same—the knowledge that we must guard the transports, combined with the belief that they had slipped miles away."

"Before you came across to this side of the ocean, Mr. Curtin, you were inclined to be a bit stout, weren't you?" Dave quizzed.

"Nineteen pounds over weight, sir."

"Cheer up! You won't grow fat during this war."

"I don't care about loss of sleep, or anything," declared the junior officer, earnestly. "I believe that I could get along without sleep, except when in port, if we could range the seas with a daily average of one enemy submarine sunk."

"If you could do that, and the other destroyers did anything at all," laughed Darrin, "the seas would soon be as safe as they were in 1913."

"Do you remember that time, sir, a month ago, when we answered an S. O. S. call and arrived in time to jump at a submarine engaged in shelling the small boats that were pulling away from the wrecked Norwegian steamer?"

"Yes."

"We missed that infernal Hun. He got away, and I am certain that I didn't sleep a real wink in the next twenty-four hours."

"Take things more easily," Dave advised. "Do your best, Curtin, and then if the Hun boat gets away, take it out in chuckling over the big scare you gave the enemy officers and crew. That's the way I do."

Calling the officer amidships on the deck to take a turn on the bridge with Lieutenant Curtin, Dave, after receiving the engine-room report over the bridge telephone, went on a swift but thorough tour of inspection. Dark as it was, he discovered that the breech mechanism of one of the forward guns was not oiled to his fancy. Three or four other slight oversights he found, and promptly rapped out orders to remedy the faults.

"In a campaign like this," he told Ensign Carter, tersely, "there can be no knowing at what moment we shall be called upon to fight for our lives, nor how many seconds of fatal delay may be caused by any lacking detail. Constant inspection is the only way to be certain that one is up to fighting mark. Inspection is not enough when made only by commander and executive officer. 'Inspection' should be engraved on the brain of every watch and division officer."

Dave glanced at the chronometer in the chart-room on his way to the bridge, and knew that the first streaks of dawn should appear in the east in fifteen minutes. Sending the relieving officer back to his station amidships, Darrin resumed his bridge vigil.

First signs of dawn came in due time. The light gained in strength until the long line of the transport fleet stood revealed, extending back further than the eye could see. Obeying signals, some of the destroyers stood further out from their charges and then raced on ahead to inspect that portion of the sea which must very soon be traversed.

"If we don't run into something before the middle of the forenoon," Dave confided to Dan, who now reappeared on the bridge after a short rest, "I shall feel easier. The nearer we draw to land the more help is likely to be afloat near us."

Just then a boom came over the water. A gun of one of the foremost trio of destroyers had spoken. Swiftly the signals came back.

Dave gave the order to have all hands sounded to quarters.

"Gentlemen," said the young commander after the crew had reached the deck, "this morning's work will undoubtedly be the real test. Within twenty minutes we'll be in the thick of a real fight!"

CHAPTER XIII—A BATTLE TRY-OUT FOR SOULS

Men had stood their watch by the guns all night long.

Boom! boom! From ahead came the sound of rapid firing. The commanders of the three leading destroyers were seasoned men experienced in their work, and were not likely to be shooting at mere shadows.

"At the best, it's snap-shooting," Dan uttered, almost disgustedly. "We cannot do our marksmanship justice when we are contending with a skulking enemy and seldom have anything more to aim at than a periscope that's up from four to seven seconds, or the wake caused by the conning tower of a submarine running near the surface."

"Occasional hits, however, show that a good deal can be accomplished by snap shooting when real gunners do it," rejoined Dave.

At this moment he read the signal for destroyers to maneuver at judgment. Dave promptly gave orders that sent the "Logan" scooting further away from the transport fleet, out on its port flank.

"Ahead, and zigzag," Darrin ordered sharply. "All the zigzag that full speed will allow."

Her turbines turning at better than trial speed limit, the "Logan" roared on her way like an angry bulldog with the speed of a grayhound.

Despite the speed, the zigzagging course kept Dave opposite the troopship he had been guarding through the night.

Just astern of the "Logan" a periscope flashed up for a few seconds. A gun was trained and fired, but the periscope had been withdrawn by the time the shell got there. A tell-tale light streak appeared on the surface of the sea astern of the destroyer, one of whose signalmen waved a warning that was superfluous, for the troopship at which the torpedo had been aimed had already started off on a zigzag course, and escaped by a matter of feet.

From the head of the squadron came back the signalled order:

"All troopships zigzag!"

"Looks like a crazy marine waltz!" reflected Danny Grin as he caught a second's glimpse of this strange maneuver.

Darrin did not turn to see what had become of the submersible at which one of the "Logan's" shells had been fired. The enemy was undoubtedly unharmed and under control, and there would be another destroyer on the spot in a jiffy. Dave believed that they were not yet in the thick of the Hun trap and he kept a sharp lookout ahead.

"Second destroyer astern of us just signalled a hit," Dan uttered presently, in a tone of glee.

"Must be the one that we tried for," was Darrin's comment.

In the meantime, both the British authorities and the American Admiral at the base port were being constantly informed, through radio messages, of just what was now taking place on this part of the sea.

"Assistance already on the way; watch for it," came back the reply from the admirals.

"Humph! There's no vessel that sails that can reach us in season if it didn't start from port a few hours ago," was Dalzell's puzzled comment.

Not very long after that the leading ships of the fleet knew that they were in the thick of the enemy ambush. The courses of several torpedoes were observed, but, thanks to the zigzagging of the vessels, no transport or escort had yet been hit.

"Signal coming, sir, to commanding officer of the 'Logan,'" reported the signalman on the destroyer's bridge.

"'Logan' will drop out of line and hunt enemy submarines on commanding officer's judgment," Dave Darrin read.

"That's because of our record yesterday," Dan Dalzell chuckled. "We are looked upon as the star performers of the flotilla."

"We'll do our best to be the stars again to-day," Dave confided to his chum after he had given his orders.

With a rush and roar the destroyer headed northward, nor did Darrin come about until he was something like fifteen hundred yards away from the troopship line.

"Submarines usually try for hits at from six hundred to a thousand yards," he explained to Dalzell, as the racing craft hurried on her way. "A German commander, with his eyes on the transports, might not think to turn his periscope in the opposite direction at a time like this."

"But his sound-detecting device will tell him where we are," Dan hinted.

"Not with all the gun-fire and the noise of so many hurrying craft," Dave answered. "Wait and see."

Phelps was sent to join the two seamen forward. From that position he could see any torpedo trail that started between the "Logan's" position and the transport fleet. Within less than five minutes Phelps detected a white line of seething foam, and Dave steered his ship straight to the spot where the Hun craft was believed to be.

"Fire as fast as you can, Mr. Phelps," was the order Darrin transmitted.

So closely had Phelps got the range that the "Logan" drove straight to the torpedo's source. There the long, vague outline of a submersible was barely discernible under the deep blue of the sea.

"Over her!" Darrin ordered.

At their station the depth bomb men stood at alert, awaiting the word at which the bomb would

be released by the touch of a finger.

As the destroyer swept over the submersible's hull Dave shouted:

"Let go bomb!"

It was then that the finger touch was applied. Over the stern slipped the amazing mechanism which contained a steel shell. It was adjusted to go off automatically at a depth of thirty feet. Nothing within a hundred feet of the point of its explosion could escape being shattered.

Bump! came a heavy explosion. The "Logan" herself shook and plunged as a column of water shot up astern.

Instantly Dave ordered the ship about, for the dropping of another bomb, in case the first had failed.

No need, though, for the spreading of oil on the surface of the water showed how effective a hit had been made.

"Now, for more of the pests!" uttered Dalzell, gleefully. "We must beat our record of yesterday."

Darrin did not reply. Outwardly calm, but with muscles set and every nerve tensed to the tingling point, he stood almost on tip-toe, grasping the forward rail, peering ahead and to either side.

But at least one German captain had caught him, so far out of line, for, from the starboard watch, forward, came the brisk warning:

"Torpedo, sir, on the starboard bow!"

In the same instant Dave had seen it. The trail was racing to meet the "Logan" well forward.

Not risking even the delay of a shouted order, Darrin reached for the lever of the bridge telegraph and set the jingle bells in the engine room a-clatter. His quick order threw the propellers into reverse and then full speed astern. At the same time he swung the bow around.

Had he tried to zigzag it is doubtful if he could have escaped. Had he gone straight ahead the torpedo would have hit him just below the waterline.

As it was, the missile of destruction passed by a scant dozen feet from the "Logan's" bow.

This was the single instant of safety for which Darrin had worked. Now, he ordered speed ahead, and swung around, sailing straight to the spot where he believed the enemy to be.

By the time he was at that spot nothing was to be seen of the undersea boat. Submerging to greater depth the wily Hun had glided away to safety.

"Now, what does that German fellow mean by holding down our record in that fashion?" Dan demanded, wrathfully. "He's no sportsman, not to take a chance."

"He may get us yet," was Darrin's quiet answer.

It was Lieutenant Curtin who first discovered a number of small specks away over in the eastern sky.

"They're not clouds," said Dave, eyeing the specks through his glass, "but at the distance I can't make out what they are."

"If they can't turn over submarines to us, I hardly care what they are," muttered Dan Dalzell to himself.

With the fleet dashing forward, and the specks moving nearer, it was not long before watchful eyes behind glasses discovered just what the specks were.

"Now, we'll see something interesting," quoth Darrin.

"They're coming to take our glory, instead of adding to it," Dan insisted.

"What do you care who puts the Huns on old Ocean's bed, as long as they arrive there?" Dave asked, coolly.

"Will they put any Huns there?" Dalzell inquired, doubtfully.

"If they don't, we can still sail in and help ourselves to the best we can find," laughed Dave.

CHAPTER XIV—TEAM WORK BETWEEN SKY AND WATER

From mere specks the oncoming objects grew larger and larger, until, to the unaided eye, they

stood plainly revealed as hydroairplanes.

They were British, too, and built especially for the purpose of detecting and destroying submarines. Tommy Atkins calls this type of airplane a "blimp."

From high up in the air observers are able, when the light is right, to see a submarine at a depth of about one hundred feet below the surface. Having detected a submerged enemy craft the hydroairplane flies over it, dropping a bomb.

"That they can see a submersible at such a depth makes me wonder why the hydroairplane doesn't take the place of the destroyer," observed Lieutenant Curtin.

"The crew of a hydroairplane can see the submarine at a greater depth under water than can a destroyer," Dave explained, "but owing to the height at which they are obliged to observe they cannot drop their bombs as accurately."

"Then the chaps yonder are not likely to be of much service to us to-day."

Coming still nearer, one of the hydroairplanes made signals which the flagship of the destroyer flotilla answered. Then through the fleet ran the signalled message:

"When possible the hydroairplanes will destroy enemy boats by bombing. A smoke bomb in the air will denote position of submarine at that moment. Destroyer commanders will act accordingly."

"Then the British flyers yonder will fight on their own account, or scout for us, as seems best," Dave announced.

One of the great flying craft neared the position into which the "Logan" was steaming. Suddenly she swooped a bit lower and let go an object that dropped fast, going out of sight under the water.

There was a turmoil ahead among the waves. As the destroyer moved forward those on her decks saw oil spreading over the water.

"Signal a hit, then follow the airship," Dave directed.

Moving, now, no faster than did the destroyer, the hydroairplane scurried about through the air, swooping, banking, diving and rising. At last, apparently she located another submarine. A bomb dropped, but Dave, driving his ship through the water after the explosion, found no tell-tale oil signs.

"Wide of the mark," signalled the Britisher.

Presently the hydroairplane again caught sight of the prey it was stalking. Another bomb fell, but still no hit.

"We'll fly just over the enemy," wirelessed the hydroairplane. "At the instant you're fairly over we'll signal you."

"That's the right way to hunt," declared Danny Grin, under his breath.

Acting on the suggestion Darrin steamed in until he was directly under the air craft. The signal came. Dave ordered a bomb dropped, and steamed rapidly away from the place of the coming explosion. Then he swung around, driving back at full speed.

"A hit," signalled the airship.

"Easy, when you do all the work," Darrin signalled back. "Be good enough to find us another mouthful."

By this time the cannonading on all sides had become incessant. Despite the cloudiness of the night, the day had turned out bright, in a season when bright days do not abound in these waters. On such a day, though the periscope metal is dull, the drops of water adhering to the shaft make it a fairly bright mark.

Wherever a periscope showed, the handlers of more than one gun took a chance at it. Several broad patches of oil marked the graves of Hun submersibles and their crews.

The wake made by a conning tower was sure to lead a destroyer away in pursuit of that same tower. The hydroairplanes followed many of these wakes, in nearly every instance locating the sea monsters for the destroyers.

Besides, the torpedo trails in themselves served to lead the destroyers to many an enemy craft.

"This is the right combination," Dan muttered to Lieutenant Curtin. "Airship and destroyer combined have an advantage that puts the submersible on the run or out of commission altogether. It takes the credit away from the destroyer too."

"I don't care where the credit goes, if the pests are sunk," Curtin answered. "If we had had these airships yesterday we wouldn't have lost the 'Castle City.'"

"But the hydroairplanes do not go so far out as we were sailing yesterday," Dalzell reminded the watch officer.

"I know it, but I believe that a type could be made that would have no difficulty in crossing the ocean from shore to shore."

Now the "Logan's" guns were at it again, with a barking din that made conversation difficult.

By this time only one hydroairplane remained with the head of the fleet, which was believed to have passed through the submarine ambush. The others and a decided majority of the destroyers were now maneuvering anywhere from the middle to the rear end of the transports.

Finally the fight centered on the tail end of the transport fleet. Here the submarines were doing their best to "get" a transport.

Another hour, and the fleet believed itself to be clear of that submarine concentration. Not that vigilance was relaxed, however. No troopship had been struck to-day, but the fine work might be easily undone by carelessness on the part of either hydroairplane or destroyer commanders.

Two hours after the attack began Darrin received signalled orders to return to his former position in the escort line.

"Thus endeth the second chapter—apparently," commented Danny Grin.

During this engagement, as on the day before, the soldiers who crowded the destroyer had been ordered from the decks during the fight. They were now notified that they might come out.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon when the leading hydroairplane signalled a report that the sea ahead was strewn with wreckage. Ship after ship sailed through this mute evidence of the enemy's presence and detestable work. Spars with clinging cordage floated by. Wooden hatchcovers, overturned boats, oars, chairs, wooden boxes, bales of soaked cotton and what-not were in the litter that strewed the sea over a broad area.

One of the overturned lifeboats was overhauled. The name on her stern showed that she belonged to a nine-thousand-ton freighter, carrying a naval gun crew and fore and after guns.

"The loss of the ship is bad enough," said Dave, soberly, "but there is nothing to indicate how many lives were lost."

An hour later, however, three boats, containing some forty men, women and children, were overhauled. The freighter had carried passengers.

When the lifeboats had been overhauled, and the occupants taken off by the destroyer "John Adams," the shivering wretches had a sad tale to tell. It was at that moment believed, and afterwards confirmed, that some sixty persons had lost their lives.

"Even after we pulled away in the small boats," sobbed an American woman, "the brutes shelled us."

"A cook in our boat was hit," a man took up the narrative. "The shell struck him at the waist, hurling his head and trunk overboard and leaving his legs in the boat. And a child's head was shot from its shoulders. You noticed the splashes of blood in our boat? I'm fifty-nine years old, but if any recruiting officer in four armies will accept me I'm ready to enlist and fight these beasts—navy or army!"

"And I'm going to enlist!" quivered a young boatswain's mate. "I can't get into the trenches soon enough. I won't take any German prisoners at the front, either," he added, significantly.

Late in the afternoon, not many miles from the submarine base, French and American destroyers waited to escort the transport fleet the rest of the way to France. At about that same hour the evening papers in Berlin declared that an American transport fleet had been encountered, and that nine of the ships, containing more than twenty thousand American soldiers, had been sent to the bottom. The truth was that one transport had been sunk and eleven Americans killed and wounded!

Many of the destroyers that had brought in the transport fleet to the point where the new escort awaited it, now turned seaward once more. Dave Darrin and the "Logan," however, were under orders to go to the base port, for the trial of Ober-Lieutenant von Bechtold was close at hand.

When Dave and Dan went ashore they took with them Seaman Jordan under close guard.

After slipping that note to Seaman Reardon and then receiving no further results from it, Jordan had suddenly suspected the ruse that was likely to put his neck in a noose. So now, as he went ashore, that young seaman was gloomy and pallid.

Hardly had Darrin stepped on the wharf when a waiting jackie saluted smartly.

"Why, hullo, Runkle!" cried Dave, halting, for this sailorman had been of great assistance to him in former undertakings.

"I'm glad to see you, sir," exclaimed Runkle, who bore the device of a boatswain's mate. "I thought you were in these waters, sir."

"And I wish I had you on my ship, Runkle," Dave went on, earnestly.

"Begging your pardon, sir, I see that you have Hartmann a prisoner."

"Who?"

"Hartmann."

"Do you mean the sailor under guard?"

"Yes, sir."

"You call him Hartmann?"

"Yes, sir—Gus Hartmann—old Jake Hartmann's son. I ought to know him. We hail from the same home town."

"Speak to him," murmured Dave, then turned to the prisoner with:

"Jordan, here's a boatswain's mate who says your name is Hartmann."

"It must be so, sir, if he says so," returned Jordan, sulkily.

"Then you admit your name to be Hartmann?"

"No, sir; but I can see that I am not to get any show whatever, so I may as well give up hope."

"Runkle," said Dave, after signalling to the guard to take the prisoner on, "I shall have to arrange for you to be on hand. That young man will undoubtedly be tried for treason. He enlisted under an American name, and your testimony that his real name is Hartmann will be valuable for the prosecution."

"If young Hartmann is guilty of treason," Runkle burst out hotly, "I would be glad enough to have the job of drowning him myself."

"Is Jordan, or Hartmann, a citizen of the United States?"

"He was born in America, I understand, sir, but his father was born in Germany, and, so I was told, never took out naturalization papers."

When the accused sailor had been locked up, and three secret service men came on board, Dave Darrin aided them in searching for more of the bottles that glowed when dropped in water.

Jordan, or Hartmann, had been employed at times under the ship's painter. In the paint storeroom the secret service men, after some search, found a board in the floor, back of some boxes, that could be pried up, moving on a hinge. In a hiding place underneath were four bottles identical with the bottle which Darrin had recovered from the water.

Reporting to American Base Headquarters, Dave was much astonished to find orders there relieving him from command of the "Logan."

"I didn't know my work had been as bad as that," Darrin smiled.

"Not bad work at all," replied the staff officer who had handed him the order. "In the first place, you'll be here to attend the court-martial of Ober-Lieutenant von Bechtold. Then there's the case of your own seaman, Jordan, or whatever his name may be. You'll have to testify at his court-martial, too. After both trials are over you will be ordered to the new duty to be given you."

"I don't suppose that I am expected to inquire what that new duty is?"

"As yet I cannot tell you about the new duty."

"Who will command the 'Logan,' if I may ask?"

"Curtin. He has just received his step, and is now a lieutenant-commander."

"And I have my step, too!" cried Danny Grin, coming up behind his chum and waving an official looking envelope. "I'm a lieutenant-commander. Been detached from service on the 'Logan' and must await new orders."

"That goes for both of you," said the staff officer smilingly.

"I wish I had a line on the new duty, though," said Dalzell, as he turned away.

"So do I," half-sighed Dave. "But wishing doesn't do much for a chap in the Service."

Turning, they walked briskly toward the naval club frequented by British and American naval officers. There, by good luck, they found Curtin, who had just come ashore.

"There are orders for you at the admiral's office," Dave reported. "I may as well tell you, Curtin, that Dalzell and I are detached for other duties; that you have gotten your step to a lieutenant-commandership and that you are to swing the 'Logan' from now on. Congratulations, old man! And I know you'll make a record at your new post, just as you have made in your lower grades."

"And remember, my boy," grinned Dan, "we won't be a bit jealous, no matter if you succeed in sinking the Kaiser's entire submarine fleet!"

Curtin's face showed his joy. He immediately wrote and submitted to the censor a cablegram informing his wife that he had been promoted and given a command. Further information he could not send.

"What are we going to do this evening, Danny-boy?" Dave inquired.

"I don't know, but I expect my activities will be confined to guessing what my new line of service is to be."

"If Curtin has attained to independent command, there's a big chance that you will also," Dave observed.

"That would separate us," muttered Dan, looking almost alarmed. "David, little giant, I don't believe I'll be able to serve as well if I'm not on the same craft with you."

"Nonsense!" laughed Darrin.

"Fact!" Dan insisted.

"Then what are you going to do when you become an admiral?"

"I'll have lots of time to think that over," retorted Dalzell.

Three days later the von Bechtold trial came off before a court-martial of British naval officers. The German commander was found guilty of having landed in Ireland as a spy, and was condemned to be shot, a sentence soon afterward carried out. He would give no information about the civilian found dead on the submarine, but the stranger was believed to have been a civilian government official from Berlin.

Right after that Hartmann, alias Jordan, was placed on trial before an American court-martial on a charge of treason. His trial was short because the prisoner broke down and confessed his identity as a German spy. He implicated two German spies then in Ireland, both of whom had been masquerading as Swedish ship-brokers. These two latter were captured, tried by the British naval authorities, and sentenced to death. Jordan was ordered shot, and soon afterward paid the penalty of his crime before a firing squad.

Runkle, who had been a witness against Hartmann, alias Jordan, was now detached from the ship on which he had been serving, and was placed on waiting orders.

And then, one morning, Dan broke in on Darrin at the naval club, his eyes gleaming.

"I've got my command and my sailing orders!" he shouted, gleefully.

"What ship?" Dave asked, springing up.

"The 'Prince'!" Dalzell exclaimed, jubilantly.

"Never heard of that craft," Darrin returned, his eyes opening wide. "She doesn't sail from this port, does she?"

"No," and Danny Grin, his mouth wreathed in smiles, named a near-by port.

"When do you take her over?"

"To-morrow."

"And sail?"

"Same day."

Darrin gripped his chum's hand, murmuring:

"I wish you all the success in the world, Danny-boy," he called, heartily.

"How would you like to go with me?" Dalzell continued, eagerly.

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"About taking you as a passenger," Dan went on. "You'll go as my guest, if you favor me to that extent. I spoke to the flag lieutenant about it, and he said that your orders would not be ready for two or three weeks yet, and that you will have plenty of time to sail with me if you so desire, and be back in time for your new detail. Do you want to go?"

CHAPTER XV—DAN'S TURN TO GRIN

"Stop your nonsense, Danny-boy, if you'll be so good. Of course you know that I want to go with you. But can't you tell me something about the 'Prince'?"

"Not a word," Dan protested.

"Or the kind of work in which your ship is going to engage?"

"Not a word!" Dan Dalzell laughed merrily. "Will you go?"

"Yes; of course, old chum."

"I thought you would," Dan continued, "so I took the liberty of obtaining official permission for you to go along with me. Here it is, over the admiral's signature."

Dave eagerly scanned the official-looking, typewritten sheet. It was simply a written permission, and gave not the slightest clew to the nature of Dan's new venture.

"Dan Dalzell, I believe that you're going to keep me on the guessing rack," Dave declared.

"You don't believe anything of the sort," Dalzell laughed; "you *know* it."

"All right, then," sighed Darrin, good-humoredly, putting away the official envelope in an inner pocket.

"Then you're going with me?"

"Yes, sir, and right into the jaws of whatever mystery you have arranged for me," Dave said.

"Mighty glad of it," cried Danny Grin, gripping his chum's hand again. "I don't believe you'll be sorry either. It's a humorous adventure on which you and I are going to embark."

"If there's any humor to be found in this great, grim war," Dave retorted, "then it will prove a most welcome relief from the kind of work that has been holding our attention."

Dave had already cleaned up all matters relating to the transfer of command on the "Logan." Hence there was nothing to hinder his departure by train at daylight the morning following. For two hours the chums rode, then alighted at a port town so small that its name is never heard on this side of the water.

Within five minutes the two young naval officers, carrying their worn-looking suit-cases, reached the water-front. Dan's heavier baggage had gone on ahead and Dave carried none beyond what his suit-case contained.

The harbor was a small one. Dave had seen it all ere they reached one of the three small wharves of which the water-front boasted.

"Humph!" he remarked. "So you must wait for your ship to come in?"

"I don't believe so," Dalzell returned.

"But there is no warship in this harbor," Darrin remonstrated. Indeed, the only craft above the size of small boats were a battered old tramp steamer, a former trawler, now a patrol boat, a steam fishing-smack and a schooner.

"All the shipping in this harbor combined wouldn't make a proper command for a lieutenant-commander in the United States Navy," Dave observed. "Dan, you've been grinning ever since you brought me the veiled news yesterday. It is now about time to unmask and tell me what you're up to in the way of mischief."

"That would be to open up the case of the watch and show you the whole works," Dan retorted, mockingly.

"Then I give it up," sighed Dave.

In response to a mere hand signal a boat put off from under the quarter of the battered tramp. As it neared the wharf Dave's wonder grew.

"So that old tramp steamer is going to act as tender, and take you out to your new ship?" Dave inquired, feeling as mystified as he looked. "Have a care, Danny-boy. That tramp won't keep afloat long enough in an open sea to take you far!"

But Dalzell made no reply. Instead, he walked to the steps that led down to a landing stage, returning the salute of the seaman in the stern of the row-boat. Plainly the tramp could by no possibility be Dan's "new" ship, for not even a man in the boat-crew wore the uniform of the United States. Though the men showed bright, intelligent faces, their garb was of the most nondescript character worn by seafaring men.

Dan gravely led the way to seats in the stern.

"Shove off!" ordered the coxswain. Then the men gave way at the oars. Dave watched their rowing. To an amateur eye the handling of the oars wasn't so bad, but it was utterly different from the rowing done by a smart man-o'-wars crew. Dave felt the mystery deepening.

Nor did it grow lighter when the boat was driven in at a rickety side gangway. For, looking up, Dave saw a frowsy-looking lot of heads of men who were lounging at the rail and looking down at the water. The name of this frowsy-looking craft, Darrin discovered, was the "Prince."

Dave went aboard on what would have been called the quarter-deck on a more pretentious craft. Dan led the way at once into the deckhouse and into a passage-way.

And right here Dave received another jolt. Inside, a clean-cut looking sailor lad, in new, handsome U. S. uniform, saluted smartly, at the same time stepping forward to take both suit-cases.

"Take Mr. Darrin to his cabin," Danny Grin directed, gravely. "Then bring my bag to my quarters."

In another moment Darrin had seen three more smart-looking jackies. He was then ushered into his cabin, and his bag placed inside the doorway.

"Hm! This cabin doesn't look as bad as one might expect," Dave Darrin murmured to himself. "But what can the game be? Danny-boy is certainly carrying on this joke in a mighty mysterious fashion."

Hanging up the sheepskin coat that he had carried on one arm, Darrin next removed his long uniform overcoat and hung that up also. There came a brisk knock at the door.

"Lieutenant-Commander Dalzell's compliments, sir, and will you join him, sir?" inquired the messenger at the door.

"Gladly," assented Darrin, drawing aside the curtain that fell over the doorway and stepping outside.

His conductor led him forward into a large cabin.

Just as he entered Dave's puzzled glance fell upon several pairs of boots standing in a row near the door. He gasped when he realized that they were high, lace affairs, of a distinctly feminine pattern that were in fashion on Broadway the last time he had seen that famous thoroughfare.

And here, right in front of him, stood Dalzell, earning every letter in his nick-name of Danny Grin.

"I didn't know that you had ladies aboard, Danny," Dave remarked, halting and gazing at the shoes.

"Who said we had?"

"But those—" began Darrin, pointing at the footgear that had aroused his wonder.

"Newest thing in service shoes," laughed Dalzell.

"Have your own way about it," Dave chuckled.

"It's a fact, just the same," Dan retorted. "And say! Are you thoroughly discreet? Can you keep a Service secret?"

"I can hand you a wallop in about a half a second," Dave Darrin retorted.

"I am answered," Dan replied, gravely. "Follow me."

Just at that instant a girlish figure came through from the connecting cabin. Dave couldn't see her face, which was closely veiled. But from that other cabin came a roar of laughter. Dave Darrin felt like pinching himself to see if he were awake.

"Come on in," chirped Dalzell. "The water's fine to-day."

Taking Dave by the arm he piloted his chum into that next cabin.

And now, indeed, Dave Darrin had reason enough to wonder if he were awake.

For three long tables occupied a good part of the cabin. And on these tables uniformed jackies, their faces all a-grin, were laying dresses, women's coats and hats as they took them from boxes.

CHAPTER XVI—ABOARD THE MYSTERY SHIP

"Looks great, doesn't it?" demanded Dalzell, in an undertone, after the sailors had stood at attention and had received their orders to "carry on."

"It would look all right in a dry-goods store," countered the thoroughly mystified Darrin, "but what does it mean here?"

"Why, that's the secret," was Dan's unsatisfactory answer.

"I give it up," said Darrin hopelessly.

"Wise old head!" approved Dalzell.

Right here Dave received another jolt. The girl whom he had seen in the first cabin now returned, lifted away the veil, removed hat and wig, and stood revealed, from the shoulders up, a most unmistakable young man with a good-looking but wholly unfeminine face.

"Is this a public masquerade, and are the proceeds to be devoted to the Service?" Dave inquired.

But Dan replied only with a baffling wink.

"Oh, well," rejoined Darrin, "I can wait if you can. If you're through with me here, I'm going back to my cabin."

"Have you no more questions?" Dan inquired mockingly.

"None that are likely to be answered, so I'll leave you to your amusements."

"Too bad," murmured Dalzell to himself after Darrin had vanished, "for now Dave is sulky."

In this surmise, however, Danny Grin was quite wrong. Darrin merely refused to waste more guesses on a mystery that he could not solve, and had gone off to see what he could make out of the appearance of things.

"It's one too many for me," Darrin finally confessed to himself. Removing some of his clothing and his shoes, he lay down on a lounge, drawing a blanket over him.

For such a hulk as the "Prince" looked to be, the steam-heating plant was in excellent order. In the warm air Darrin dozed gently off, though not before the reflection had passed through his mind:

"I might have guessed that the 'Prince' was some such looking craft as this. It was named the 'Prince' for the same reason that folks always give that same nickname to the mangiest-looking dog in town."

A little later Dan glanced in past the curtained doorway. Finding his chum asleep he tripped silently away. The anchor must have come up noiselessly and all commands must have been issued in low tones, for when Darrin awoke, rose and glanced out through the porthole he found the craft under way upon the open sea.

By the time that he had drawn on his shoes Darrin heard a rap at the doorway, followed by a messenger's announcement:

"Luncheon will be served in the wardroom, sir, in fifteen minutes."

So Darrin completed his toilet, then hailed a messenger and learned where the wardroom was situated on this ship of mystery.

Stepping into the room ahead of time, Dave found only one young ensign, who saluted him.

"This is some strange craft," observed Darrin.

"Yes, sir," assented Ensign Stark.

"But suited to her mission, I dare say."

"Oh, yes, sir; hardly a doubt of that," smiled the junior officer, but he added no hint of information as to the "Prince's" mission, and Darrin was much too good an officer to press his question.

A minute or two later two other ensigns entered, and on their heels came Dalzell with a young

engineer officer and a surgeon. Dan presented his junior officers to his chum, then explained:

"Usually, of course, on a war craft, the 'Old Man' dines in state alone, or with his guests. But the 'Old Man's' dining room is in other use on this cruiser, so we will dine with the juniors so long as they permit it."

"I suppose the 'Old Man's' dining room has been converted into a cashier's cage for the Monday bargain sale you are planning," hinted Darrin.

"Why, yes, Darry; something like that," grinned Dalzell.

The meal had not proceeded far when Dan leaned toward his chum to whisper:

"By the way, I forgot to say that the rules require that no officer or man of the Navy shall appear outside in uniform. You brought along civilian clothes, I believe."

"A suit, yes."

"And I have an old overcoat and cloth cap I can loan you," Dan added. "I will have them sent to your cabin."

So, after he had returned to his own quarters, Dave waited, after donning civilian garb, until the promised articles had arrived. Then, putting on the coat and cap, he made his way forward and outside.

Coming out on the spar deck Darrin found plenty of use for his eyes. Forward the "Prince" carried rather high bulwarks. Darrin had noted that in the harbor. But now he saw that which no observer on shore would have had reason to suspect.

In the bulwarks, on either side, were sliding doors or ports, and, behind these, in each instance, mounted on a carriage, was a very capable-looking naval gun.

Besides, on either side, was a machine gun, rigged to a platform that could be raised high enough to make the guns effective, even with the mark not more than a hundred feet from the hull.

"Rubber!" shouted Dalzell, joyously, from the bridge, as Dave strolled slowly forward.

"Some ship, all right," Darrin called back. He then retraced his steps, making for the bridge, where Dan and Ensign Peters stood, both of them attired like merchantmen officers.

"What do you think of her?" demanded Danny Grin, as his chum took stand beside him.

"You told me it was going to be a humorous adventure," Dave suggested. "I haven't yet discovered where the laugh comes in."

"Oh, we can't laugh," quoth Danny Grin, "until we find something to laugh at."

"Of course," Dave pursued, his eyes twinkling, "the 'Prince' is a good deal of a joke in herself."

"And those hidden guns are the point to the joke," Dan retorted. "But wait a few hours, or a few days. Oh, you'll laugh!"

There was, however, in Dan's eyes the next moment, a grim look that considerably belied his words.

Dave hadn't really tried hard to worm the secret from his friend, and now he gave it up altogether, but asked teasingly:

"Are you going to call upon me for any work, beyond saving your scalp when you get into too tight a corner?"

"You're a guest aboard, without duties," Dan informed him, then added, seriously:

"But I won't deny that I realize how valuable your counsel may prove in some sudden emergency."

Somehow, Darrin found that he tired of being on the bridge of a ship on which he had no duties, no authority. Leaving the bridge, after a few minutes, he descended and roamed the decks, fore and aft. Wherever he encountered sailors outside he found them in the garb of merchantman sailors; below decks they wore the uniform.

The "Prince" was kicking along at about eight knots an hour, and was already out of sight of land. It was when he strolled down into the engine room that Dave was astonished to find engines that were furbished up to the last notch of perfection. Moreover, his practised eye noted that the engines looked as though capable of vastly faster work than they were performing.

"These engines appear to be the best part of the craft," Darrin remarked to the engineer officer.

"They're good engines—the best that the British know how to make," nodded the engineer

officer. "But for that matter, they're not much behind the rest of the boat. She looks worse than she is, sir. The 'Prince' is renamed; she was a mighty good-looking craft before the naval camouflage gentlemen took her in hand and made such a tough-looking ship of her."

From the course Darrin knew that the "Prince" was heading into the submarine zone. Dan was surely hunting trouble, and he had a knack of finding it.

Dave soon found time hanging heavily on his hands. He was glad that he had brought along two novels, and these he read in his cabin. Dinner hour was welcome because it occupied some of the time. At this meal, too, he met Lieutenant Bixby, executive officer, who had been busy elsewhere at luncheon time.

Later in the evening Dan came down from the bridge, visiting his friend in his quarters.

"Darry, I'm in hopes we'll be able to spring our joke before long," he cried briskly.

If he had hoped to rouse his chum's waning curiosity he was disappointed, for Dave only covered a yawn with his left hand and languidly inquired:

"So?"

An hour later, when the chums were still talking, Lieutenant Bixby knocked at the door.

"I wish to report 'all secure' sir," said the executive officer.

"And the ladies—?" queried Dalzell.

"In high spirits, and the best of good humor, sir."

The two officers returned smiles, but Dave Darrin did not appear to be looking their way.

"Are you going to turn in?" asked Danny Grin, as he rose to depart.

"Before long," Dave nodded. "But I'll leave things so that I can turn out fast if I hear your whistle signalling to abandon ship."

Into Danny Grin's eyes a mischievous look flashed, but all he said was:

"Good night, chum."

"Good night, Danny-boy."

After one of the most refreshing sleeps he had enjoyed since the war began, Dave turned out the next morning, on first waking, with the realization that the "Prince" was still on her way on the high seas, and that there had been no alarm.

"That sleep must have cleared up my wits," mused Darrin, as he turned water into the stand-bowl. "I think I begin to see the object of this voyage by the seemingly crippled old 'Prince.'"

Whether he had solved the mystery remained to be seen. At that moment the ship's hoarse steam whistle began the first of a series of long blasts.

CHAPTER XVII—THE HUMOROUS ADVENTURE

"Abandon ship, eh?" thought Darrin, springing to complete his toilet.

In his civilian attire he hastened down the passage-way and up to the spar deck. And here, as he would also have seen had he looked aft, a remarkable scene was being enacted.

At the first sound of the whistle, which had now begun its wailing anew, the crew had sprung to clear the boats for launching.

"Will I be in the way on the bridge?" Dave called up.

"Come right up," Dan nodded.

Darrin was beside his friend in a jiffy.

"Over there," said Dalzell, nodding.

Off to starboard about a mile distant, a German submarine lay rolling. In the morning light the tower stood out against the horizon, magnified in size. The submersible's deck also showed, with sailors standing by the forward and after guns.

"We'll get a shell in a moment," spoke Dalzell, calmly, as the second sounding of the whistle signal ended.

Though the "Prince" carried wireless apparatus for installing at need, no sign of it was visible in

the form of aerials and connections, so the first shell was aimed not at the foremast, but at the single broad, tall smoke-stack. It missed by only a foot and went screaming to port.

For the third time the "Prince's" whistle sounded, "Abandon ship." Members of the crew sprang up into two of the boats. A few men who looked like civilian passengers hastily followed. Then a feminine bevy raced out on deck.

"I thought so," said Darrin, nodding comprehendingly. "Dan, you've everything here but the children."

Those who had already entered the boats now turned to help the wearers of skirts. The two boats were swung out. After that, a third boat, similarly loaded, was also swung out on the davits. Blocks and falls creaked as the boats and their human freight were lowered.

Fortunately, the sea was not rough. All of the boats reached the water safely and rowed away.

From the submarine a puff of smoke at the muzzle of the after gun announced the rushing departure of another shell. This missile struck the water barely fifty feet in advance of one of the boats, but disappeared without doing any harm.

"At their old, dirty tricks of terrorizing and murdering passengers in the small boats!" muttered Dan Dalzell, savagely. "And yet, at one time, there were Americans who wondered why we entered this war!"

For a fourth time the "Prince's" whistle began its serial wail. Now, however—clever ruse!—the whistle's sound was feebler, the jets of white steam smaller and fainter. It looked as though the boilers had been emptied of steam.

"Heinie von dem Sub has concluded that we're a dead proposition," chuckled Dalzell, as the submarine, instead of firing other shots at once, moved in closer. On she came, this dirty, gray pest of the sea, until she was within three hundred yards.

"Abandon completely before we sink you!" was the message signalled from the enemy. "Your captain and chief engineer must come aboard us with all ship's instruments and papers."

"Shake out the signal, 'Your message understood,'" shouted Dan from the bridge.

After a moment the flags composing the signal were started toward the "Prince's" foremast head.

As Darrin turned from watching the submarine he beheld naval gunners, this time in uniform, and with Ensign Peters in charge, taking the range carefully.

At some signal that Darrin did not catch, a whistle sounded shrilly. Now, from the deckhouse below a detachment of Uncle Sam's jackies in uniform dashed out.

"Open ports!" called Ensign Peters, as some of the men sprang to the guns.

All in a jiffy the sliding doors in the bulwarks were shoved back and gun muzzles were run out. Crisply the orders issued. Within a few seconds the first gun spoke, and right after it the other two.

One of the shots struck the submarine's hull aft, ripping off several plates.

"Hurrah!" yelled Dalzell. "Now, let's see 'em try to dive. But fire fast and straight, before the Huns take it out of our people in the small boats!"

One shot the enemy fired, aimed at one of the "Prince's" guns. Over the top of the bulwarks it went, missing them by only a few feet.

That was a game at which two could play. Ensign Peters aimed a gun at the base of the submersible's forward gun. A cheer of joy went up forward on the tramp steamer when it was seen that a hit had been registered as aimed. The enemy now had only his stern gun, and he swung quickly to bring it to bear.

Ensign Peters now aimed at the base of the stern gun. But he missed it, for, a second before, one of the other guns in the "Prince's" battery had struck the submarine just below the water line.

"Good enough!" roared Dalzell in trumpet tones. "Now, let's see the rascal fight!"

Evidently in reply to signal or command all the sailors on the enemy craft ran to the conning tower and vanished inside.

"Called to see if they can repair the leak and submerge!" guessed Dalzell, and passing his conjecture down to the gunners on the spar deck below. "Make submerging a cinch for them!"

Three more shots barked out, almost together. One went a shade wild, one hit the upper hull, but the third was planted just below the water-line.

"Good-bye!" called Dan, derisively.

Then the "Prince's" steam whistle, with a sufficiently good head of steam this time, sent the recall to the small boats, which immediately put about.

The submarine was sinking fast. Eight or ten men managed to get through the tower to the deck just before the pest sank out of sight.

"Some of those men are swimming," Dan shouted. "Stand by with lines! We'll give them a chance! More than they'd do for us, though!"

Several of the German swimmers sank at once. Perhaps they preferred to drown, fearing the tortures that their home papers declared were meted out to submarine sailors by officers of the Allied Powers.

Two enemy seamen, however, were found afloat as the "Prince" drew closer and lay to. Lines were cast to them, both catching hold. The swimmers were then hauled aboard. Dan Dalzell went down to the spar deck in order to question them.

Both were loutishly stupid in appearance, and plainly were badly scared as well. Their ragged, oil-stained uniforms gave them the opposite of smart appearance.

"Do you men speak English?" Dan demanded, eyeing the pair as the deck watch arraigned them before him.

The duller-looking of the pair shook his head, but the other replied:

"I speak id somedimes, a liddle."

"What craft was that you came from?" Dalzell queried.

"The U 193."

"How many ships have you sunk?"

"I vas not by der ship before dis cruise," replied the German.

"How long had you been out this time?"

"Zwelf (twelve) days."

"How many ships did you sink on this cruise?"

"You vas der first vun," said the man, dully.

"I think we'll survive our misfortune," smiled Dalzell, grimly. "How many submarines have you served on?"

"None, in dis var," was the answer.

"And you won't serve in any more during this war," rejoined Dan. "Don't you fellows feel like criminals, firing on women and children, and committing wilful and useless murder all over the high seas?"

"Vat?" demanded the fellow, stupidly. "Vat?"

Dan had to repeat the question in two or three different forms before it sank in.

"Chermany got to vin by der var," replied the seaman, with a shrug of his broad shoulders.

"Why don't you win, then, by fair fighting?"

"Chermany got to vin der var," the fellow replied, stolidly. "Der vay, it makes noddings."

By which he meant that Germany must win, but that the means by which she won did not matter.

"Why must Germany win?" Dan demanded impatiently.

"Because Chermany is Chermany; because she is der ruler of der world," came back the ready answer.

"If Germany is really the ruler of the world, she'll have to prove it, and take a century of hard fighting to do it," Dan clicked. "Has it ever struck you, my man, that Germany is the bad-dog nation of the world?"

"Chermany is der fine, der great nation of der vorld," insisted the prisoner, stubbornly.

"Wouldn't a fine nation act like a fine nation?" demanded Dalzell. "Wouldn't it respect the rights of other peoples? Wouldn't Germany, if a fine nation, fight according to the rules of honor and decency, and not like pirates?"

Again it required repetitions, in other words, to drive the query home.

"Chermany is Chermany," declared the stolid fellow. "Chermany must vin der var because Chermany must rule. It is right dot der Chermans should tell der rest of der vorld vat is. Vat Chermany must do to vin it is right for her to do, but vat you Amerigans do is wrong. You are only pigs, und you help der pigs of English. You are all pigs, und Chermany shall punish you good for vat you do!"

"When?" asked Dan, derisively.

"Negst year! You vait, you see! Den der var vill over be, und der Amerigans on deir knees shall be!"

"The war end next year?" Dan derided. "Not unless Germany has been whipped soundly by that time."

"Chermany cannot be vip'," insisted the prisoner. "Chermany, she always fight! Blenty in dis var. Den, ven der var stop, she begin get ready again, she get ready again to fight der negst var. Chermany cannot be vip', but Ameriga shall down mit her knees go, und Chermany shall says vords dot Ameriga does not like to hear. You vait, you see! Chermany is der von real fighting gountry of der vorld. Not all der rest of der vorld can vip her! It cannot be done. Chermany over all!"

"And that's the whole story, from a German point of view," Dave muttered in an undertone. "This fellow looks stupid, but his leaders are just about as stupid. Isn't it a waste of time to talk with him, Danny?"

"I'm afraid it is," Dalzell nodded. "But this is the first chance I have had to get a German's real view of the war. This fellow is too stupid to conceal anything, so he has told me the truth as he sees it. Yet, as you say, Dave, it's the whole story, and he cannot tell me any more than he has told if I should question him from now until midnight."

Then, to a petty officer:

"Take these fellows below and lock them in the brig. Place a guard over them. See that they have the usual ship ration, and see that sufficient fresh water is offered them at all times. It's warm in the brig, so they can take off their clothes until the garments are dry."

Stolidly the pair marched along, out of sight and hearing.

"Chermany over all! Chermany must rule der vorld,'" Dan mimicked. "We've got their number, David, little giant. Uncle Sam and his international friends will have to kill, cripple or lock up most of the men of Germany before we can hope to knock the foolishness out of their heads."

"Which we'll proceed to do so thoroughly," quoth Dave Darrin, "that, hereafter, not even a German head will be capable of holding such foolishness as they now talk!"

CHAPTER XVIII—DANNY GRIN PROVES HIS METTLE

With her boats secure, and all hands, including the recent "lady passengers," on board once more without loss, the battered-looking "Prince" turned on her way.

All that day she sailed, yet found no submarine confiding enough to rise and take a chance at her shabby-looking hull.

"Of course there is one big chance you have to take," said Darry, at dinner in the ward-room that night, "and that is the danger that a submarine will think this old hulk worthy of sinking by means of a torpedo."

"No sub will shoot a torpedo at us," rejoined Dalzell, "if she once gets a look at us. A torpedo costs a small fortune, while a shell or two cost nothing by comparison. The idea in sending out a trap-craft like the 'Prince' is that no German naval officer would think of throwing away a torpedo on her."

"Of course," Dave admitted, "the greatest danger is that a German shell, fired above water, will cripple you and put you out of business."

"It's a sporting chance, to be sure," Dan admitted.

"If your engines were stopped by a shell, and you couldn't maneuver for position, and therefore couldn't use your guns, and a German submarine crew took you prisoners, the sight of your guns would insure that all hands on board would die painful but sure deaths."

"It's that sporting element of risk that makes the game so pleasant," Dan retorted.

His junior officers chuckled.

"I'm glad you all take it the way you do," was Dave's cordial rejoinder. "It adds a lot to your chances of success."

"And just what do you think our chances are?" Dan pressed home. At this the junior officers listened eagerly, for Darrin's sound judgment was fast becoming a tradition in the Navy.

"Your chances," Dave declared, "are that you probably will sink several submarines. Then, one of these days, you'll either get the unlooked-for torpedo, or else you'll meet a master in strategy or gunfire, and you'll go to the bottom—and another bright plan will be given up by the Allies. But I hope you'll do a huge lot of damage before the probable end comes."

That night the "Prince" prowled the seas, and when Darrin awoke in the morning she was headed toward her home port, that time might not be wasted to the westward of the locality where German submarines were likely to operate against merchantmen.

Nor had Dave taken more than one look overboard before he discovered that the "Prince" now lay much lower in the water.

"Our water ballast tanks are filled," Dan explained. "That gives us the appearance of being heavily loaded, as with American wheat, for instance."

"Soldiers, wheat and ammunition are the things the Germans most enjoy sending to the bottom," Dave nodded. "Really, it is too bad that this seeming old tub doesn't look good enough to carry troops."

"Oh, I think that even as a cargo tramp we'll draw the fire of any submarine whose commander gets a glimpse of us," Dan replied.

Within ten minutes after he had said it a submarine rose, fifteen hundred yards away, and, without firing, signalled to the "Prince" to lie to.

Almost instantly "Abandon ship" shrieked from the steam whistle, and the early performance of the day before was gone through with. After the boats had started away, bearing sailors and men and "women" passengers, the submarine came up closer.

All in a jiffy the ports were opened and all three shells from the starboard battery landed in the enemy hull. There was no fight after that, the submersible sinking before any of the crew could get clear to save themselves.

"Do you begin to see the joke?" demanded Danny Grin, grimly. "Are you prepared to join in the laugh at the Germans?"

"If the 'Prince' continues her good work for a fortnight," smiled Dave Darrin, "the ocean will be a lot safer place for American troopships."

"I'm beginning to feel," Dan remarked, "that I can highly endorse the intelligence of those who sent me out on this errand."

"The errand is a good one, anyway," Darrin laughed, teasingly.

The rest of the day passed without other incident than the appearance of two destroyers, one British and one American. Each of these war craft signalled to ask if convoy were desired, to which Dan signalled a courteous, "No, thank you."

"Won't those chaps feel sold when they learn, if they ever do, what kind of an outfit they wanted to protect?" Dan chuckled.

Just before dawn, next morning, Dalzell was roused from a nap and called to the bridge.

"Gun-fire dead ahead, sir," reported Ensign Stark. "Don't you make out the flashes, sir?"

"Yes," nodded Dalzell, after he had taken and used the proffered glass. "Some one is catching it, but is the victim a steamship, or is it a submarine that some destroyer has overhauled? Oh, for just sixty seconds I'd like to have our wireless rigged!"

Ensign Stark had already ordered the speed increased, and so reported, but Danny Grin, as he heard the firing, seized the engine-room telephone and ordered all speed possible crowded on.

Thus he swept along, without lights, until within a mile of the bright-red flashes, which he could now see without the aid of a glass.

At this point speed was reduced to eight knots and the "Prince" moved along more moderately.

"What is it ahead?" asked Dave Darrin, who had just turned out and come briskly up to the bridge.

"It's a one-sided fight," Dan answered, "but I don't know the kind of craft. Undoubtedly one is a submarine. She can't have been very seriously hit, either, or the firing would be ended."

"You have a searchlight?"

"Yes, but with the strictest orders not to use it except to save ship and crew," was Dan's answer.

Soon after, despite the darkness, the chums were able to make out a steamship ahead, heeled well over to port. And the flashes of a gun were so close to the water as to indicate that a submarine was firing, even before its outlines could be made out.

"The cowardly hounds!" blazed Dave, indignantly. "They've got that ship sinking, and all they're doing is terrorizing the poor wretches aboard by slow, systematic murder!"

"I'll get them as soon as I have light enough for a gunner's sight," muttered Dan Dalzell. Calling a boatswain's mate under the bridge, he directed him to hoist a Norwegian flag at the stern, and to bend and hoist the signal:

"We wish to save crew and passengers."

"And that's the truth, too, though perhaps not all of it," snorted Dalzell, all of whose fighting blood had been aroused by the cowardly proceeding going on ahead.

In hoisting the Norwegian flag he was wholly within his rights as a naval commander. Under international law a naval commander is entitled to hoist any neutral or belligerent flag, including even that of the enemy, in order to maneuver into fighting position. But, before he can fire a shot, the commander must hoist the flag that he actually sails under.

In this instance Dan would give the "Prince" the assumed character of a neutral merchant ship that desired to play a humane part. No real Norwegian skipper would have been likely to take such a chance, as it would only have invited the destruction of his craft.

Dawn came quickly now. With the first streaks Dan ran up the signal and sailed daringly in. The submarine, which lay ahead, had ceased firing. The doomed ship took the plunge and vanished, but in three boats and on six rafts a frightened lot of men and women were seeking to get away from Death.

"Lie to and abandon ship!" signalled the German commander, as soon as the presence of the "Prince" was made out.

But Dan, with the range, took the bull boldly by the horns. Opening ports in a jiffy, and with gun crews at quarters on both starboard and port, he gave the firing order.

"Give 'em 'Chermany over all,' and put it all over them!" commanded Danny Grin savagely.

Three shells left the starboard battery before the astounded German commander had realized that it was a fighting craft that menaced him.

Two of the shells flew over, striking the water beyond, but the third crashed through the plates of the conning tower, exploding inside and blowing off part of the top of the tower.

No sooner had the guns been fired than Dalzell changed the course to bring the port battery into play.

"Give 'em 'Chermany over all' all over again!" roared Danny Grin's voice. "Oh, it's a great game, don'd it?"

A laugh rose from below, but that laugh was drowned by the joint crash of all the guns of the port battery. Another shell entered the submarine's tower, and two struck the hull, inflicting more deadly damage.

And now a machine gun began to play over the hull of the sea monster, sending such a storm of bullets that one had to admire the courage—or was it despair?—of a German officer who dared the leaden tempest and sprang from the tower with a white flag, signalling surrender.

"Cease firing!" roared Dalzell through a megaphone. "But load and stand by ready for some German brand of treachery."

Undoubtedly the German officer knew that he stood under the muzzles of loaded guns. His face white and set, he signalled his offer to surrender.

"We'll accept you as prisoners if you act honestly," was signalled back by Dan's order. "But we'll blow you into the air if you try to play a single trick on us."

Acting under further orders a collapsible boat was put over the side of the submarine. The captain, the second-in-command and the engineer officer came over to the "Prince" on the first trip, two men returning with the boat to bring other prisoners. In the meantime the rafts and boats from the sunken ship were turning back to the rescuer.

Barely more than half of the Germans had been gotten clear of the submarine when that unlucky craft foundered. Two survivors were picked up from the sea, but the rest went down into the

great salt-water grave.

“Periscope on the port quarter!” rang a lookout’s hail.

Dalzell rushed to the port end of the bridge, glass to his eyes.

Yes, there was the tell-tale tube above water, some eight hundred yards away, the sun shining on the water drops that clung to it.

“Periscope on the starboard quarter!”

Dan performed a sprint to the starboard end of the bridge, to find the news only too true, though the periscope vanished within a second or two after he had sighted it.

“Ware torpedo, on port quarter!”

Moving like a jumping-jack, Dan’s right hand reached for the lever of the engine-room telegraph. Half-speed ahead! Full speed!

“Ware torpedo on starboard quarter!”

There was no time to observe the torpedo wake traveling toward the “Prince.” Dalzell’s orders were based on what he had seen of the locations of the two periscopes.

A sharp, oblique turn to starboard, then a further turn just as the propellers began to kick at full speed.

Both torpedoes passed astern, their courses crossing. The maneuver brought the tramp around so that the starboard battery could now be trained on the submersible to the southward.

Her commander, taking desperate chances, rose to the surface to open with his forward gun.

Fatal mistake! Only one gun barked from the “Prince’s” starboard battery, tearing a hole in the Hun’s hull. And now Dalzell completed the turn to give his full attention to the remaining submarine. She, commanded by a more cautious man, had vanished.

Not for long, however, for a line on the water revealed the wake made by the conning tower as she headed straight for the “Prince.”

Again Dan’s orders rapped out. The seeming tramp steamer, developing a speed that could not have been looked for, maneuvered so as to run, bow-on, at the submersible.

The craft to the southward was sinking, but the one to the northward was coming straight. A light streak on the water shot out in advance of her while the “Prince” was making her turn. Seeing that he was bound to miss, the Hun commander let loose with his other tube. The “Prince” completed her maneuver, and now showed only her bow to the enemy, her hull standing away in a straight line between the courses of the two torpedoes, which dashed on by her and were lost in the distance.

As the craft were rapidly nearing each other, Dan, by the aid of his marine glass, located exactly the beginning, or nearer end, of the conning tower’s wake.

“She may submerge and come up astern of you!” muttered Dave Darrin.

“We’ll see!” ground out Dalzell, between his teeth, still holding the glass to his eyes.

There was no question of getting the range, for the two craft were lessening the distance, altering it, every second that passed.

Still Dan headed on, knowing that the enemy could submerge and change her course at greater depth.

“I’ve got only one chance in a million to get that rascal!” Dalzell growled to his chum.

“And apparently the enemy has all the other chances in the million—but it’s a great game!” cried Dave Darrin.

Dan held on steadily, his motto “Win or sink!”

CHAPTER XIX—A GERMAN VIEW OF SUBMARINES

Suddenly the Hun craft, as indicated by the trail of bubbles in her wake, made an oblique turn, going off to Dan’s port. But Dan kept on, shouting down to the spar deck:

“Stand by the port guns! Not a shot unless ordered!”

A moment or two and the submersible, as indicated by the bubbles on the water, had turned

head-on again coming close to the surface. She was now in position to deliver two torpedoes.

It was the moment for which Dan had waited.

"Let go with all three guns, port battery!" he yelled. "Rapid fire."

Three jets of smoke and flame shot out from as many muzzles. The gun crews rushed to reload.

"One hit!" shouted Dan. "Again!"

"Two hits—and she's done for!" yelled Dan, joyously, as he scanned the water. "Good work, men!"

The hits had been made by guess, except for the guidance of the wake, while the submarine ran barely submerged. Even Dalzell's report of hits had been based on appearances. But now the "Prince," plowing on her way, steamed into a patch of oil-strewn water and out of it again.

"I'll be satisfied if there is no more fighting in this day's work," Dan confessed, mopping the icy perspiration from his forehead.

"Danny-boy, you've done a big enough day's work to satisfy the greediest of fighters!" cried Dave, gripping his chum's hand.

"Now we'll look after the prisoners, and pick up the survivors from the wrecked steamship," proposed Dan.

Then, as he glanced out forward, where a small, sullen German mob stood scowling under guard of armed sailors, he added:

"In view of what we've seen to-day I'm sorry we have so many prisoners."

"Dan, that's not humane," rebuked Dave.

"I don't feel humane," Dan admitted, simply. "What I've seen to-day has made my blood hot. I'd be willing to let go, with both batteries, at the whole German people."

"Thank goodness you can't do it," laughed Darrin. "You'll cool down soon, Danny."

Putting back, Dan ran the "Prince" toward the boats and rafts from the sunken steamship. While overhauling them he went down from the bridge and approached the German prisoners.

"Who was the commander of this outfit?" Dalzell inquired, in English, of course.

"I was, and am," replied a scowling German officer.

"Your name?"

"Sparnheim!"

"Then, Sparnheim, all I have to say to you is that you may have been commander, but now you'll take orders, instead of giving them. Do you feel any shame for what you did to that steamship?"

"I don't," was the frowning answer. "I attacked enemies of Germany and of the Kaiser!"

"What did the women in the boats yonder do to Germany, or the Kaiser?" Dan demanded.

"They sailed the sea, at least," retorted Sparnheim.

"Is that a crime?"

"But the German government had warned all passengers from the sea!"

"Under the impression that the German government owned the sea?" Dalzell demanded, ironically. "To-day's work, so soon after light and sunrise, must have shown you that others have something to do with the control of the sea. Three of your accursed submarines have gone to the bottom."

"Yes, through your treachery!" hissed the German officer.

"Treachery?" Dan asked, with a hard smile.

"Yes; you hoisted a flag that does not belong to you."

"We fired under our own flag. That is a right recognized by the nations."

"It was treachery, just the same," insisted the German. "You were afraid of us, so you took a cowardly advantage."

"Treachery! Cowardly advantage!" Dalzell repeated, in disgust. "We destroyed your craft. But did you not try to destroy ours? Cowardly advantage? Of what use would submarines be to your

people if you scorned taking cowardly advantage? Sparnheim, you are paid as a German officer?"

"To be sure," admitted the other.

"Then you are making your living as an assassin—as a cowardly murderer. And the nation that employs you is no better than you are, but a partner in your crimes."

"It is not true! We are not murderers, not criminals!" raged the prisoner. "We fight that Germany may live!"

"If she must live by such cowardly work as is done by her submarines, then she does not deserve to live," Dan retorted. "I am not going to take advantage of your helplessness. I regard you as a man with a lost soul, and to that extent I am sorry for you. I wanted your view of your crimes, and could not forbear to express my own opinions. We know each other's views, and do not need to talk further."

The "Prince" had lain to again, for now she had overtaken the first of the boats from the foundered steamship. A gangway had been lowered and the men and women who had taken to the small boats were now coming up over the side.

"Which animal among them commanded the craft that sunk our ship?" demanded a woman hoarsely, as she eyed the sullen Germans. Dan pointed out Sparnheim.

"You killed several men and two women and a baby!" cried the woman, pointing an accusing finger at the quivering Sparnheim. "The baby was mine! One of the men that you murdered was my husband! May you never know another moment of happiness!"



"You murdered my husband."

Beside herself, she tried to spring past the sailor guards to attack the fellow with her own hands.

Darrin came along just in time to take hold of one of her arms.

"Come, madam," he urged, soothingly, "do not foul your hands by touching such a beast."

"I wish I could have him hanged—the murderer!" cried the woman, passionately.

"I am more cruel than you, then, madam," Dave continued, as he led her away step by step, "for I would have the wretch live a long life. No matter how long he lives his ears must be filled with the shrieks of dying women and children. He must hear the cries of the drowning and the moans of the wounded. He must start in terror from his sleep at night, for he has done foul deeds that will haunt him as long as memory lasts. He has lived the sneaking, cowardly life of a pirate, and is steeped in all the foulness of piracy. His has not been the life of the brave fighting man, who willingly grants the foe an equal chance. He has murdered and pillaged. This fellow can never, as long as he lives, escape the accusations of his own lost soul."

"It is a lie!" foamed Sparnheim. "A lie, a lie, a lie, I tell you! What I have done, I have done as a loyal and patriotic German. What I have done was for my country and my sovereign!"

"To be sure," Dave agreed, "but you can never shift your part of the burden from yourself. Your life will be one of misery."

Others of the passengers had crowded forward to share with the frenzied woman the storm of reproaches that she visited upon these Germans, but Dan felt that matters had gone far enough.

"All rescued survivors will please step inside," he called out. "We will register your names and make the best possible provision for you."

Having gotten the rescued ones well aft, Dan turned to the petty officer in charge of the prisoners.

"March them down to the brig," he ordered.

Sparnheim drew himself up, then indicated a younger man at his side.

"Me? You know who I am. And this is Lieutenant Witz. When you send my men to your brig, what do you do with us?"

"We won't separate you," Dan assured him, with a smile.

"I demand to know where you will send us. That is, if we are not to have the freedom of the deck?"

"You will both go to the brig with your men," Dalzell answered.

"But we are officers and gentlemen!" cried Sparnheim, indignantly.

"Gentlemen!" repeated Dan Dalzell, a world of irony in his tone.

Then to the petty officer:

"To the brig, with the whole lot of them!"

Sparnheim struck at a sailor who took hold of his arm and the sailor promptly felled him to the deck.

"I am insulted and treated outrageously because I am helpless," yelled the German, sitting on the deck.

"I am sorry that violence was necessary," Dan replied, raising him to his feet. "You have only to obey, and you will not be handled roughly."

"I will not go to the brig with common sailors!" roared Sparnheim.

"It is rough on the sailors," Dan agreed, "so I shall have to apologize to your 'common sailors' and ask them to endure your company. If they maltreat you, you can make complaint, you know."

It required two husky sailors to drag Sparnheim below. Witz, who was more tractable, went as ordered, head down, and eyes lowered.

"The air is sweeter now that they're gone," Dan confided to his chum.

"Much!" Dave agreed, dryly.

Soon after that the last of the survivors from the sunken steamship were picked up and made as comfortable as possible.

It was not until the following morning that these survivors, and the German prisoners as well, were transferred to an in-bound destroyer.

Then the "Prince," with a farewell toot of her whistle to the destroyer, turned her nose about and steamed off in search of such further enterprise as the broad sea might hold in store for her.

CHAPTER XX—DAN STALKS A CAUTIOUS ENEMY

"Shall we escort you in?"

It was the following morning, and the "Prince" was proceeding eastward. An American destroyer, roaring along on her way, funnels belching clouds of black smoke, her engines at full speed, her whole frame quivering, sent this signal to the "Prince":

"Do you wish convoy?"

"No, thank you," Dan signalled back, as the destroyer slowed down for an answer. "We can look out for ourselves."

"You don't look it," came back the response.

"We'll get in, all right," Dan replied by signal.

"Sorry for you," came the reply. "Think we'd better stick by."

"Confound him," muttered Dalzell. "He means well, but if he stands by us he'll spoil our good chance of trapping some more of these submarines."

"Ask him who commands," Darrin suggested.

Dan ordered the question signalled.

"Preston," came the reply.

"We know him well enough," laughed Dave. "He was at Annapolis with us."

Dan was now quick to see the point of Dave's original suggestion, for he signalled:

"Do you remember Dalzell?"

"Danny Grin!" came the prompt response from the destroyer.

"Yes; he commands this tub," Dan signalled back.

"Oh!" came the comprehending signal from the destroyer.

Then, after a brief interval:

"Danny Grin could always laugh his way into luck. Good-bye, and success!"

"Thank you," Dan did not omit to signal back. "More of the same to you."

The destroyer increased her speed and forged ahead, disappearing in the distance.

"He knew that Dan Dalzell could take care of himself," Dave declared.

"At least," replied the "Prince's" commander, "he must have realized that I had some game out here on the water that I didn't want spoiled."

"Periscope astern, sir!" called a lookout two hours later.

Dan's watch officer turned just in time to detect, with his glass, a tube even then being withdrawn back into the water.

"Twelve hundred yards astern, at least," he reported to Dalzell. "I couldn't have picked it up without a glass, nor could the lookout."

"Watch for a torpedo," Dan directed, "although I don't believe he'll try at such a distance in his position."

This guess proved correct, for the "Prince" continued on her way for fully five minutes after that without further sign from the submarine.

That very fact made Dalzell impatient.

"Confound the Hun!" he growled. "If he won't try for me, then I'll coax him!"

Accordingly the "Prince's" engines were stopped. As soon as headway ceased, the seeming tramp appeared to drift helplessly on the waves. Dan's next move was to order men to run over the decks and the superstructure as though making repairs.

"Just what do you figure the Hun will think has happened to you?" Darrin asked.

"He'll have to do his own guessing," Dan rejoined. "I'm not going to help him solve the puzzle. But surely something must have happened to us."

For a few minutes nothing was seen, in any quarter, of the enemy craft. At last, however, a glimpse was caught of a periscope to starboard.

"He's trying to figure us out," Dan chuckled. "I hope we don't look good enough for him to waste a torpedo!"

His hand at the engine-room telegraph, Dan waited, while Ensign Stark watched that periscope through his glass.

"There goes the periscope out of sight," announced the watch officer, presently.

A full ten minutes passed. Then sight of the periscope was picked up once more, this time closer in.

"You've got him guessing, at the least," Dave smiled.

"Yes, but I'm still hoping he won't guess 'torpedo,'" was Dalzell's response. "Stand by, gunners!"

"There comes the conning tower," Stark announced.

"He's going to gun us, then," Dan concluded. He waited, standing almost on tiptoe, until the gray back of the sea monster thrust itself up through the water.

"Back with the ports! Let him have it, starboard battery!" Dan called to the waiting naval gunners.

Their officer had the range and all was ready. Two shells splashed in the sea just short of the submersible, the third just beyond it.

"Second round!" Dan bellowed from the bridge.

Profiting by their margins of error the gunners this time fired so true that one shell landed on the gray back forward, the other aft. The hits were glancing, so the enemy was not put out of business.

The next instant a puff of smoke left the enemy's forward gun. No bad shooting, that, for the forward gun of the "Prince's" starboard battery was promptly knocked from its mounting. Four men went down as the shell exploded.

"Two killed, sir!" came the swift report from the deck. The others, wounded, were assisted below. The shell had done further damage, for a big fragment had knocked to bits one of the sliding port doors.

Dan signalled for speed ahead, swung around, and at the same time ordered raised for instant work a machine gun that nestled in the bow of the "Prince."

"Let the enemy have it!" called Dalzell.

Straight at the submarine Dan dashed, throwing the spray high around the bows. The machine gunners, quickly getting sight, kept a steady stream of bullets striking against the enemy's hull, despite the fact that the range was constantly shifting. This keeping of the range was not difficult when shots were fired continuously, for the enemy was near enough for the officer in charge of the piece to tell by splashes of water when any of the bullets went wild.

"He won't dive now, but if he does, it will suit me just as well," Dan chuckled. "That old hull must be a sieve now."

Two torpedoes were discharged at the oncoming "Prince." One of these missed the ship narrowly. The other struck, glancingly, on the port side, forward, and disappeared without exploding.

By now the submarine was doing some maneuvering of its own. Its forward and after guns were discharged whenever possible, but the shells failed to land, until the "Prince," still managing to keep on, was within three hundred yards, and bent on ramming the enemy craft.

Over the bridge screamed a shell, passing so close that Dan and Dave ducked involuntarily.

Crash! There was a ripping of metal, a black smudge of smoke soon settling over everything, and the "Prince's" smokestack was gone, clipped off within seven feet of the point where it emerged through the deck.

Then with a quick turn of the steering wheel the "Prince" was sent crashing into the long, low, gray hull. From close to the water came the yells of the Hun crew as they scrambled up through the conning tower hatchway.

On passed the "Prince," making a wide sweep and coming back again. The submersible had already sunk from sight, leaving but few of her men struggling on the surface of the water.

By the time that the "Prince" had lowered a boat some of the Germans had sunk. Only three men were rescued and hauled in.

Lined up on the spar deck of the steamship these proved to be the second-in-command and two seamen.

"It's an outrage to deceive us in the manner that you did," angrily declared the German officer, in English.

"Take that matter up with the Assassins' Union," Dan jeered. "On this cruise I've heard other German officers call it an outrage. It appears to me that you Germans reserve the right to commit all the outrages."

"Then you've met other submarines?" scowled the young officer.

"This part of the sea must be pretty clear of the pests, at the rate we've been going," Dan

announced, cheerfully. "We had a lot of prisoners, too, but you'll find the brig empty now, for we transferred them."

"The brig?" demanded the German officer. "What have I to do with that?"

"It will be your lodging," Dan informed him. "Also your play yard."

"I refuse to go there!" exclaimed the enemy officer, indignantly.

"Oh, well, you'll be carried there, then," said Dalzell, carelessly.

"But a ship's brig is no place to confine officers," the German went on, heatedly. "As an officer I demand proper quarters."

"Take them below," Dan ordered, briefly.

For the first few steps the German officer had to be dragged. Then, realizing the hopelessness of resistance, he yielded and walked along in company with his seamen, though he called back:

"I have helped to sink many ships, and trust that I may have had the honor and pleasure of sending friends of yours to the bottom."

Ignoring the fellow, Dan went back to the bridge, thence down to the hurricane deck. Men were already engaged in removing the wreck of the smashed smoke-stack.

Emergency repairs were completed in due time, with materials kept on board for such a case.

And now, when he could safely run at full speed once more, if necessary, Dalzell gave the order to proceed. He was about to go below, to the wardroom for luncheon, when a radio operator came running to the bridge.

As has been stated, the "Prince" carried a full radio outfit, that could be installed rapidly, but Dan's orders had been to conceal all evidence of radio equipment until absolutely necessary to use it.

None the less, a small receiving station had been rigged up, and concealed, so that, though Lieutenant-Commander Dalzell's sending radius was short, he could receive messages from any quarter.

The message at which he now glanced read:

"S. S. 'Prince': Report."

It had come in code, but Dan was able to translate it without reference to his code book.

Instantly, he gave orders to have the radio outfit erected, then descended to his meal.

Later one of the radio men reported that the equipment was in shape for signalling. So the young commander sent in his report of work so far accomplished to the destroyer base at the home port.

"Excellent!" came back the hearty commendation. "Results better than expected. But ruse will soon be known, so return and report. Darrin's new orders will also be ready for him on arrival."

"Home, James!" said Dan, jovially, to the officer of the deck, when he had deciphered the coded instructions.

That night he and Dave took an extra long sleep, though both remained fully dressed, ready for summons at any moment.

CHAPTER XXI—THE S. O. S. FROM THE "GRISWOLD"

"Belle on her way, and due soon to arrive!" Dave Darrin cried, joyously, as he read the cablegram that had been handed to him on his arrival at the American admiral's headquarters.

That cablegram had lain there for days, having arrived the same forenoon that Darrin had put to sea on the voyage of the "Prince" with Dalzell in command.

Belle was his wife, his schoolboy sweetheart, whom he had not seen in many months. He had known that she was trying to induce the Red Cross authorities to send her to France, but had had no word to the effect that she had been successful.

Now he knew, from the number by which the expected ship was designated in the cablegram, that she was on the passenger liner "Griswold."

"When is the 'Griswold' due?" Dave asked a clerk at headquarters.

"Arrival date hasn't been reported," answered the clerk, "but it should be in to-day. I've an idea, sir, that the 'Griswold' cannot be far out now."

"Your sailing orders, Darrin!" hailed a staff officer, walking briskly up and holding out a bulky envelope.

"Do I have a few days in port?" Dave inquired, hopefully.

"Sorry to say that you do not. You are required to drop out with the tide at four this afternoon."

"Very good," nodded Dave, pleasantly, though he did deeply regret that he could not have a few days in port. He must miss meeting Belle, who was bound for this same port.

"Your orders, too, Dalzell," continued the staff officer, handing Dan an envelope of appearance similar to that which Darrin had received.

"Sailing orders for to-day for me, too?" he grinned.

"Same time as Darrin's," and the staff officer had hurried away.

While the friends had been out on their last cruise two big, new destroyers, lately commissioned, had arrived from the United States.

To Darrin and Dalzell, in recognition of their fine work against submarines, had fallen the commands of these new sea terrors.

The "Asa Grigsby" was Dave's new craft; to Dan had fallen the "Joseph Reed."

Ordinarily Dave would have been glad of his fine new command and prompt sailing orders. Now, he wished regretfully that he could have had a few days ashore. That he might meet the "Griswold" at sea, of which there was not more than half a chance, meant little to him. He would, in that case, pass the ship on which Belle journeyed, but that would mean nothing.

"Oh, well, it's war-time," Dave sighed, when Dan expressed sympathy. "A few years of war, you know, and then a man will have a chance to see his home folks again, once in a while."

"It's tough, that's what it is," answered Dan, sympathetically.

"No, it isn't even that," Dave rejoined, quickly. "There are thousands of men at sea on ships who may not see their wives again unless we chaps do our duty all the time. There are scores of women on the sea whose husbands will never see them again if we sleep or lag. The men of the destroyer fleet have no right to think of their own pleasure or convenience. I'm ready for sea, and I pray for a busy and successful cruise against the enemy!"

Only from the deck of the "Prince" had the two chums seen their new craft. Now they went down the hill toward the harbor, ready to report and take over their ships.

It was the first time during the war that the two chums had sailed separately. It was also Dan Dalzell's first regular command, for the "Prince" had been handed over to him only on temporary detail.

"We'll miss each other, Danny-boy," cried Dave, regretfully, as the chums gripped each other's hands at the quay. "We've been used to sailing together."

"We can have a radio talk once in a while," Dan returned glumly.

"Yes, but we're supposed to talk by radio only on official matters."

"We can at least find out when we're near each other."

After they had entered their respective gigs, and had started toward their craft, the chums waved hands toward each other.

Then Darrin, turning his thoughts to duty, tried to forget his disappointment over his inability to meet Belle.

Going up over the side of the "Grigsby," Dave was greeted by the watch officer. Then his new executive officer, Lieutenant Fernald, reported to him and greeted him. Dave's baggage was taken to the commanding officer's quarters, and he followed to direct his new steward in the unpacking.

This done, Darrin went out on deck and ordered all officers and men assembled that he might take over the command formally by reading the orders assigning him to the "Grigsby."

This formality over, Dave sent a messenger after one petty officer whom he had observed in the crew. A boatswain's mate came promptly, saluted and reported.

"I noted your face, Runkle, and I'm glad indeed to see you on this ship," Darrin informed him, heartily.

"I'm glad to hear you say that, sir," replied Runkle, with another salute. "I was ordered to this craft only this forenoon, sir."

"Yes; I'm glad to have you aboard, Runkle, for I remember that I've had some of my best luck when you were at hand. I think I shall have to appoint you my personal mascot," Darry laughed.

"I'll be that, or anything else that will serve, sir," Runkle declared, gravely, his face flushing with pleasure over Dave's cordiality.

"This is a fine new craft, Runkle."

"Yes, sir; one of the two best destroyers that the United States has put in commission since the war began. I'm eager, sir, to see the best that the 'Grigsby' can do."

"The best that the 'Grigsby' and her complement can do," Dave Darrin amended.

Then, accompanied by the executive officer, Darrin started on a tour of inspection of the "Grigsby."

"It seems a shame, doesn't it," Dave asked, "to think that a magnificent craft like this, costing a huge fortune, can be destroyed in a moment by contact with a single torpedo fired from some sneaking German submarine."

"But it seems just as good the other way, sir, to think that such a craft as this can, perhaps, sink a dozen of the submarines before she meets her own fate."

"I never fully appreciated before this war what war to the hilt meant," Dave went on, thoughtfully. "Of course I knew that it spelled 'death' for many of the fighters, but it also means the destruction of so much property, the ruining of so much material that the world needs for its comfort! The world will be hard up, for a century to come, on account of the waste of useful materials caused by this war's destructiveness."

"But may the 'Grigsby' do her share of that destructive work!" said Lieutenant Fernald, fervently. "The property that we destroy belongs to those who would set the world back a thousand years!"

"I'm afraid we must go on destroying enemy property, and our own, too, in accomplishing harm to the enemy, Mr. Fernald. The more swiftly we destroy, the sooner our struggles against the German madmen will be ended!"

All was in readiness to sail. Punctually to the minute the "Grigsby" and the "Reed," with anchors up, began to move out of the harbor. Both had their general orders as to the course to be followed, the length and duration of the cruise, too, with discretion as to changing their orders in emergencies such as might arise.

Hardly had they put out from port when the "Grigsby" and the "Reed" parted company.

For the first hour Darrin, following orders, ran at full speed, then slowed down to cruising speed. Night came upon the waters, with a crescent moon off in the western sky.

"And somewhere out on this wide waste, somewhere west of here, probably, is the 'Griswold,' with Belle aboard. And, unless she has liberty to remain in port, I shall not see her in months, perhaps, or maybe in years."

Dave put the thought aside. He was out again in the haunts of the assassins of the sea; out, also, in the track of vessels bringing men and supplies for the world's greatest fight. Disappointed as he was over the impossibility of meeting Belle, he realized how small his own affairs were as compared with the fate of the world.

At midnight he went below, for he had confidence in the new junior officers whom he had met to-day, and he wanted to be awake and on the bridge again just before dawn. So, leaving orders for his calling, he went below to his quarters.

And there he slept, dreaming of Belle, undoubtedly, until an hour before dawn, when an orderly entered hurriedly, shaking him hard by the shoulder.

"Message from liner 'Griswold,' sir, reports by radio that she has just dodged torpedo fired by submarine that is still following."

"The 'Griswold!'" echoed Darrin, awaking instantly and leaping to his feet. "You're sure of the name?"

"Yes, sir!"

Dave pulled on rubber boots and snatched his cap and sheepskin coat.

Then, a second orderly reported:

"S. O. S. from 'Griswold,' sir! Just struck and believed to be in sinking condition!"

CHAPTER XXII—DAVE'S NIGHT OF AGONY

"The 'Griswold' sinking! And Belle on board!" hurried into Dave Darrin's mind as he heard further details and learned that the stricken liner lay twenty-five miles away, sou'-sou'-west from the "Grigsby's" present position.

He darted through the doorway and sprang for the bridge.

"Full speed to the 'Griswold'!" he commanded as he darted up the bridge stairs.

But Ensign Weedon had already worked the engine-room telegraph, and hardly had Dave rested two unsteady hands on the bridge rail when he felt the dashing spray in his face, for the "Grigsby" was racing like a hound just freed from its leash.

"Heading straight to the position reported, sir," stated Ensign Weedon.

Lieutenant Fernald, also summoned, came hurrying to the bridge a few moments later.

"Like as not some of our own friends are on the 'Griswold'," muttered Fernald. "I understand she carries a large passenger list."

"My wife is on board," answered Darrin with a calmness that he did not feel.

Fernald's face fell.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Darrin. We'll do our best to reach the ship in time!"

"Yes, we'll do our level best and go our fastest, just as we would hurry to aid any other stricken ship," Darrin rejoined, steadily, though his hands gripped the rail so tightly that they showed white at the knuckles.

Weedon had already wirelessly to the "Griswold" that help was coming swiftly. Dalzell's craft, too, had picked up the radio messages telling of the "Griswold's" desperate plight. Dan was thirty-two miles away from the ship that bore Belle Darrin.

Then from the "Griswold" came this message:

"Listing so that cannot use bow or stern guns. Submarine risen and is shelling us!"

"The monsters!" groaned Dave, as Fernald, in an unsteady voice, read the radio message to him. "Ask how long the 'Griswold' can keep afloat if not hit further."

This message was sent, bringing back the alarming word:

"Cannot say, but submarine moving closer. Evidently determined to make swift job of us."

"And of course the German hears these messages!" groaned Dave. "He may even have the key to our code with commercial ships. He will now do his best and quickest to send the liner to the bottom!"

Ten minutes later this came in by way of the "Grigsby's" aerials:

"S. O. S.! Taking to our boats on starboard side. Enemy on our port! S. O. S. 'Griswold'."

"And we are still fifteen miles away!" moaned Dave.

His face was calm, but ghastly white. His lips were tightly closed over firmly set jaws. "Fifteen miles away!"

"The turbines are doing every ounce of work that is in them," said Lieutenant Fernald, in a low voice.

"I know it," Dave answered dully, staring ahead into the night. "And Dalzell will be even longer than we in reaching the 'Griswold'."

"If you could tell the captain of the 'Griswold' how long it will take you to reach him, he might know better what to do—how to hold out more successfully," suggested Fernald.

"And, if the German knows the code we are using he would know how long he could continue his wicked work and still have chance to get away," Darrin replied. "I must not send him that information. Fernald, I have some hope that I may be able to find that German pirate still on the surface. If I do—"

Darrin did not finish, but on his face there was an expression that was both prayer and threat.

The watch officer counted the miles as they were reeled off and told Dave, from time to time, how many miles yet remained to be covered.

On the bridge were screened lights—one over the bridge compass, that the quartermaster might see to keep the ship on her course; another light placed under the hood that protected the chart table.

No other light appeared, and no light whatever could have been made out on the destroyer by any one from a near-by craft.

The minutes ticked slowly by—eternities they were to Dave Darrin.

Nearer and nearer, every minute, yet was there hope of arriving in time?

“By—by Jove!” cried Fernald, at last, under his breath.

“I see it,” Dave replied quietly. “And there is another—flashes from the German craft’s deck guns. We see them on account of the elevation of the guns, though we do not yet see the German hull through the glass.”

“I can make out the ‘Griswold’,” Fernald exclaimed. “Over there! See her, yonder? She is low in the water.”

“Yes; she must soon sink, or I am a poor guesser,” Dave rejoined. “Look, Fernald! Isn’t the liner lowering her port boats now?”

“Yes, sir, and shoving rafts over, too.”

“The rafts? Ah, yes! Near the finish now, and the ‘Griswold’s’ skipper has given up hope of our help. Putting the rafts overboard is always the first step in a wreck.”

Though hoping against hope, Fernald telephoned the engine room, urging the engineer to try to get a little more speed from the engines. The chief engineer officer, himself in charge below, did his best. Billows of black smoke hung over the water astern. Bit by bit the straining engines provided more, and then a little more speed.

If it were but daylight! Men stood by the “Grigsby’s” guns, ready to fire at the word—to sight by guess, should the lieutenant-commander on the bridge call for it. Dave might have thrown on the searchlight. Should the white ribbon of light appear now, while still so far away, the German commander would know how soon to submerge.

And Dave Darrin wanted the lives of those Germans! He was not blood-thirsty, and heretofore had fought because it was his duty to fight. Now he HATED these German fiends! If he could send fifty of them to the bottom, that would be excellent. If he could drown a hundred of the Hun pirates, that would be fine! To send a thousand of them to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean—that would be something worth while!

But to send that beam of clear white light across the ocean—to signal the German commander, in effect, the word “Dive!”—that would be criminal.

“Fernald!” cried Dave, hoarsely.

“Sir?”

“Can you make out the enemy hull?”

“No, sir.”

“Try!”

“I cannot make it out yet, sir,” replied Lieutenant Fernald, lowering the glass from his eyes. “But look—the first streaks of dawn are behind us.”

“That will be of no assistance for ten minutes or more,” answered Dave. “Ten minutes! It will all be over then. Look at that flash from the scoundrel’s gun!”

The German was now shelling the boats that were trying to slip away in the darkness. Next, undoubtedly, the Hun would begin firing on the rafts, which could move little faster than the waves that slipped them along.

“Never again any mercy to a pirate! Not one surrender will I accept after this! All Germans who fall into my clutches shall go to the bottom!”

Lieutenant Fernald turned his head aside to hide a bitter smile. He did not blame Dave; his heart ached for that gallant young commander. Yet well enough Fernald knew that Darrin would never, once his rage had passed, sink a helpless foe, no matter how much he despised the wretch.

They could now, through the night glass, make out a German sailor who stood forward on the submarine’s hull, a lookout, doubtless scanning the dark lines of the destroyer rushing to the rescue. It must be that lookout’s business to try to judge the distance of the destroyer, that the submersible might remain on the surface long enough to wreak all possible havoc on the

lifeboats. Then, at the last moment, the submarine would submerge, that its commander, crew and craft might survive to assassinate ships' companies on another day!

"He knows I won't use my searchlight—he's daring me!" muttered Dave, savagely. "But, by the great Dewey! I'll use that light in thirty seconds more. Fernald, tell me when the time is up!"

Dave's next word was passed to the officer in command of the forward guns, and by that officer to the skilled, cool gun-pointers.

None except Darrin, Fernald and the watch officer knew that Belle Darrin was a passenger on the ill-fated "Griswold."

"Let your first shots set this craft's record!" was the division officer's quiet command to the gun-pointers.

No message could have been more inspiring to these veterans, on a new ship, knowing that she was one of the best of the destroyer fleet.

The "Grigsby" came rushing, roaring in, and then, slowing down, went close to the foremost of the boats from the sinking liner.

From the submarine a shell arched and struck in that boat, tearing out the bottom and throwing the occupants into the sea.

"Searchlight!" commanded Darrin.

Hardly a second did the light waver in the sky, then settled down across the submarine, making a fair mark of her.

A double bark leaped out from the forward guns. Never had pieces been better served, for one shell tore a big, jagged hole in the starboard hull of the enemy, the bottom of the rent being barely six inches from the water. The second shell went in just below the water-line, throwing up a geyser-like jet of water.

"A just fate, but a pity it could not have been made ten times more severe," muttered Dave, as, through the glass, he saw the submersible careen under the impact, with a swift listing to starboard.

There was no use bothering further about the fate of the enemy. That was already settled. There were travelers, many of them Americans, to be saved as far as saving could be done.

As though to keep the submersible mocking company, the "Griswold" gave a final lurch, then settled quietly under the waves despite the immensity of her hull.

"Put around to port—back!" shouted Darrin, his voice now cool and steady as the realization of his rescue duties came to him. "Slow," he added, warningly. "We must be careful not to upset those boats with our wash."

After making the turn, Darrin ordered the speed reduced still more, as he saw human figures ahead on the dark waves—some swimming, others floating in death.

Not waiting for the order the searchlight men deflected the light, sending a beam out across the waters as the "Grigsby," moving slowly enough now, steamed along to one side of the forms in the water. Other seamen, at the edge of the slippery deck, stood by to heave lines to those who could grasp them.

The light, as it rested upon the water at a point seventy-five yards from the destroyer, revealed a woman's features.

Dave gave a start, rubbing his eyes as though sure he was the victim of some hideous illusion.

His eyesight was excellent; there could be no mistaking.

"Belle!" burst from him, in a convulsive sob.

Before those with him could divine his purpose, Dave Darrin leaped from the bridge to the deck below.

An agonized moment he devoted to the removing of cumbersome rubber boots. Less than half as much time was required to throw off cap and coat. Then bounding forward, he leaped and sprang out, his clasped hands cleaving the water ahead of him as he struck through the waves.

Another splash, half a second later. But Darrin did not know that another swam behind him.

[CHAPTER XXIII—THE FIGHT TO BRING BELLE BACK](#)

It had really been Belle's white, motionless face that had floated by. She had been in the boat

Dave saw shattered by the shell.

Nor did Darrin once lose sight of her as he struck out fiercely until, when he was within fifteen feet of his goal, Belle sank without cry or voluntary movement.

Darrin made a great lunge forward and dived. He was seeking her, desperately!

Behind came that other swimming figure.

So true had been the aim of Darrin's lunging leap forward, that now, as he went deeper, one of his hands touched her. He seized Belle and shot up to the surface.

"A hand right here, sir!" sounded the cheery, enthusiastic voice of Boatswain's Mate Runkle. "Let me help you, sir."

Of a truth Dave was in need of help. His emotion had spent him more than the mere physical effort had done. He felt limp, weak, but the infection of Runkle's cheerful, cool tone made Dave once more master of himself.

"Take it easy, sir," advised the boatswain's mate. "They're lowering a boat."

"Can you see the boat?"

"No, sir."

"Hear it?"

"No, sir."

"Then how do you know—"

"I know an American man-o'-war's crew, sir. They wouldn't be doing anything else. All we have to do, sir, is to keep her afloat. I'll stake my soul on that, sir."

And then Dave did see a boat come into view, and heard the sturdy splash of oars—heard the coxwain's brisk orders.

So weak was Dave that he almost wished to clasp Belle to him that they might sink together and be at rest. To take her from the water only to lay her in a grave on shore—what did it really matter after all? And for himself—what?

"Stand by, bowman there!" rapped out the coxwain's voice, as the small boat shot along under rapid headway. "The boat-hook! The woman first!"

Deftly the hook was caught in Belle's soaked garments.

"And now the skipper!" called Runkle, who had transferred his support to Dave Darrin. "As for me, stand clear! I'll pull myself aboard."

Other boats came out from the destroyer. These, with the numerous boats from the sunken liner and a number of rafts that dotted the water, all had to be collected. The "Grigsby's" whistle broke hoarsely on the air, calling them in.

The boat that carried Darrin and Belle was the first to reach the destroyer. Dave bore his wife up over the side.

"I shall take her to my quarters," he informed Lieutenant Fernald. "See that the surgeon is sent there at once. Runkle, you are all right?"

"Never more so, sir," replied the boatswain's mate.

"Go below and put on dry clothing."

Dave staggered along with his precious burden into his own quarters, which he never used on a patrolling cruise. He laid Belle tenderly on his bunk and called up the bridge.

"Mr. Fernald, are the passengers from the 'Griswold' being taken aboard?"

"Yes, sir."

"Any women among them?"

"Several, sir."

"Some that do not require attention themselves and can lend a hand here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then will you find two who will volunteer to come here, and ask them to do so immediately?"

"At once, sir."

By the time that Darrin had hung up the instrument, Hunter, the ship's medical officer, had reached the doorway. He came in and bent over the figure on the berth.

"Not a chance," he said, briefly. "Drowned. But I do not believe, Darrin, that she suffered. There was a shock—"

"Shock?" Dave Darrin repeated. "Yes—a shell exploded in her boat."

"I do not believe she was wounded," went on Hunter. "It must have been the shock. She probably collapsed from the force of the explosion, and the water did the rest."

A messenger knocked at the doorway, then introduced two middle-aged women, who stepped inside promptly.

"You will do something, of course, Hunter?" Dave queried. "You will attempt resuscitation—you will try to revive her?"

"I'll try, of course," replied the medical man, dubiously. "Yes. I will work like a fiend, Darrin. Sometimes a spark of life lingers. But do not hope!"

"I shall be in the corridor outside," Dave answered quietly. "Call me when—"

Dry-eyed, but utterly haggard, Darrin stepped out into the passageway. He couldn't quite believe what had happened—didn't, in fact. It must be a dream, but soon there would be an awakening!

To his dazed mind the time did not seem long. Inside, he could hear low-voiced directions, and once he heard Hunter say:

"That much water off her lungs, anyway. My guess was right. She must have swallowed a good deal."

Then he heard Hunter using the telephone. Not long afterward a hospital man came hurrying from the sick-bay with two bags, and vanished into the cabin with them, coming out at once.

Another interval, and then Darrin was called into his cabin. In the meantime, with the help of his steward, he had changed his own clothes.

"Any hope?" he asked, in a low voice.

"There's a barest trace of pulse," the ship's surgeon replied, "but I do not believe it will last. I'm sorry. I'm doing everything that can possibly be done."

"I'm sure you are, Hunter," Dave replied.

Belle, whom the women had disrobed and rubbed, was now covered with blankets. One of the women, with a hand under the blankets, was applying a battery current.

Dave stepped forward, taking a long look at the white face and the closed eyes. Not even his hopes could conjure up the belief that a spark of life remained that could be fanned into renewed existence.

Still it was not real! Belle's spirit had not flown and left him. Hunter, eyeing his commanding officer for an instant, read his mind; he understood and felt a great surge of sympathy for Darrin.

"Poor chap!" murmured the medico. "It will be all the harder when he really does come to himself!"

A glance downward at his uniform reminded Dave that he was still an officer, that hundreds of people had been close to death, that some undoubtedly had perished, and that he could not neglect his sworn duties.

Stepping to the telephone that connected with the bridge, he heard himself answered by the voice of his executive officer.

"Am I needed, Fernald?" he asked.

"No, sir. We're still taking the rescued on board, but there is nothing you could do that is not being done by the rest of us. Any good news with you, sir?"

"Not yet, but there will be," Dave answered. "Thank you."

Then he glanced back toward the berth, to see that Dr. Hunter had prepared some liquid medicine that he was now trying to force between Belle's lips. He stepped over beside the berth and watched.

"There! She'll soon speak to us," Dave declared, as he saw Belle's eyelids flutter almost imperceptibly, and heard the faintest kind of a sigh.

Hunter, who knew that Life and Death were fighting, with Death going strong, did not reply, but stood with eyes fixed on the patient's face. He did not look for her to become conscious enough to speak.

Two or three minutes dragged miserably by. The surgeon dreaded to pronounce the words which he felt must soon be said. One of the women was still applying the battery current, the other chafing Belle's left wrist and arm. Hunter placed his stethoscope to her chest and listened, his face wholly grave.

There was another faint flutter of the lids, another faint sigh.

"You'll soon speak to me, won't you, Belle?" Dave urged, quietly, but in that silent cabin his every word was distinct.

"Shall I apply the battery to another part of the body, Doctor?" asked one of the women after a few minutes.

"One part will do as well as another," Hunter answered, in a very low voice. The woman understood, but she said no word, gave no sign, but went on with her task.

"Come, Belle," spoke Dave, now with an effort at cheeriness of tone, "we're losing a lot of time, little girl."

This time there was a somewhat more pronounced fluttering of the lids. Then came a sigh that sounded like a catching of the breath.

"Say!" murmured Hunter, in the awe of a new discovery. "That's the thing to do, Darrin! Go on talking to her. I believe that she knows, that your voice reaches her subconsciously. Talk, man, talk! But easily."

So Darrin, with a hand resting with a feather's weight on Belle's pallid forehead, went on speaking. It made little difference what he said, but every word was cheery, tender.

At last there came a longer flutter, a quicker, deeper sigh. Belle fought with her eyelids, then parted them, gazing vacantly until she saw Darrin's bronzed face.

"All right now, Belle, aren't you?" he called to her. "An all-right little girl again?"

"Dave—my—lad!"

The whisper came so low that only Darrin heard it. But Hunter lost nothing of the scene. His hand was on Belle's pulse.

"Go on talking to her," he whispered. "That's the right medicine."

So Dave continued, as cheerily as before. Belle Darrin could not follow all that he said. There was a trace of bewilderment in her eyes. The lids still fluttered, although she now breathed regularly even if low.

"That's all, sir. Now step outside until you're called," Hunter ordered, with the air of a man who has learned something new and who means to claim all the credit.

Without a word of protest Dave turned, pushed aside the curtain and stepped outside into the passage.

"How is she?" whispered a familiar voice.

"Dan!"

"I came over as soon as I got word. The passengers have been rescued in great shape. But how is Belle?"

"Weak, but she's going to mend all right—thank heaven!"

Their hands gripped.

"I was greatly worried," Dan confessed in a low tone.

"Hang it all," Darrin admitted, a new joy in his own low tones, "I believe I would have been worried to death if I had realized how all the chances were against me. But I felt as though such a thing as Belle's death couldn't be—and so it didn't happen."

"You're not talking very straight, chum, but I understand you," Dan nodded.

"And now, as to our duties," Dave went on. "Fernald assured me he could attend to everything, and I knew that of course he could. So I let him. Were any of the 'Griswold's' passengers lost? Yes, of course some must have been, for I saw the shell strike in that boat—the one Belle was in."

"Three were killed by the exploding shell, and you have two on board who were wounded by

fragments. Two more were drowned—probably because the shock stunned them and left them helpless in the water.”

“And I have been keeping Hunter with Belle all this time!” Dave uttered, rather shamefacedly. “I must call him. Perhaps he can revive the two who seemed to be drowned. Besides, some of the others need assistance.”

“Not a chance of it,” Dan continued. “I’ve had my own medico and two sick-bay men working over the cases. Both patients are dead. And there are others missing. Your executive officer is having lists made. Fortunately the ‘Griswold’s’ crew and passenger lists were saved. Your ship and mine have on board all who were picked up. Fernald should soon know just who were lost.”

So Hunter and the two women remained with Belle Darrin. Half an hour later Dave was called back into the cabin. Dan, who had remained with him all this time, still stayed outside.

“I’m going to be all right, Dave, as you can see for yourself,” Belle smiled, brightly, though her voice was but little above a whisper. “So you got me out of the water yourself? They have told me that much.”

“You’re all right again, little girl, but you must gain a lot of strength,” Dave answered, joyously. “I see old Hunter looking at me frowningly this minute—”

“I wasn’t,” interrupted the ship’s surgeon, “but you have the right idea, anyway. Mrs. Darrin is going to need sleep now, and then something light and nourishing to eat. So you’d better return to your duties, sir, and look me up later in the evening.”

“Good little girl!” Dave whispered, bending over and kissing Belle on the forehead. “I knew you’d finish your cruise all right. Now, I’m going to obey the surgeon’s orders. I’ll come back at the very earliest moment that I’m allowed to do so.”

Outside he thrust an arm gaily under Dalzell’s, and in this fashion the two chums walked briskly to the deck and bridge. They were soon busy with the figures of the day’s work. Between them, the “Grigsby” and the “Reed” had picked up nearly two hundred and fifty persons. Both craft were crowded. Five bodies had been recovered from the water, and about fifteen more people were listed as missing, though every effort had been made to discover more of those who were missing.

“I hate to think what would happen,” muttered Dalzell, “if an enemy submarine were to get between our two craft and let us have it right now—a strike against each of our ships!”

Right at that instant there came to their ears the jarring hail:

“Ware torpedo! Headed starboard—amidships!”

CHAPTER XXIV—CONCLUSION

Dave did not glance for the tell-tale torpedo trail. His hand signalled the engine-room for fullest speed. His voice gave the order for the sweeping turn that the “Grigsby” quickly made.

A few breathless seconds. The destroyer turned, then swung her stern again.

The “Grigsby” leaped forward, her bow aimed at the slender shaft of a periscope that lay in outline against the water.

Yonder, half a mile away, the “Reed” had executed a similar movement. The two destroyers were racing toward each other, each bent on ramming the new monster that had appeared between them. But Dave did not forget his forward guns.

Springing from the bridge he himself took station behind one of the guns just as the breech was closed on a load.

“I haven’t yet sighted a gun on this ship,” he announced, coolly. “I want to see what I can do.”

Seldom had a piece been aimed more quickly on any naval craft. Darrin fell back as the piece was fired. He had aimed to strike under water at the base of that periscope. This had seemed the best chance, though he knew the power of water in deflecting a shell aimed through it.

“A hit!” cried an ensign, as he beheld the periscope itself waver, then stand nearly straight before it was hauled swiftly in.

“A hit—a good one!” came the signal from the “Reed.”

“I believe we did smash the hound!” chuckled Darrin, leaning forward and taking the glass that was placed at his hand.

“Yes, sir. I can make out the oil patch ahead.”

With the glass to his eyes Darrin confirmed this report.

"That was unusual luck," he said, coolly.

"Unusual shooting, I'd say, sir," voiced the ensign.

"It's over, anyway, with that Hun pirate," declared Darrin. He ordered the course changed as soon as Dan left for his own ship. Then he went to the radio room to dictate a message to American naval headquarters at the home port. That message told of the rescue of all but a score of the crew and passengers from the sunken "Griswold," and also of the now crowded condition of both destroyers.

Within fifteen minutes the orders from shore arrived, in this form:

"Come in with rescued passengers and crew. Commanding officers of 'Grigsby' and 'Reed' directed report for new orders."

If Dave was anxious to have Belle safe on shore, the jackies on the two craft were hardly less eager to put all the civilians ashore as soon as possible, that the ships' crews might once more have elbow room.

It was not until evening that port was made. On the trip Dave Darrin barely left the bridge, but remained on duty hour after hour, refusing to close his eyes. He would take no chances whatever with this most precious cargo of men and women.

By the time that the destroyer had reached moorings, Belle was able to go up on deck, on Dave's arm. He took her ashore at once, placed her in a hotel, and arranged for medical attendance to be summoned if needed. And Runkle, with shore leave for the night, insisted on remaining in the hotel, where he could be called at any instant when Mrs. Darrin might need anything that he could do for her.

Though the flag lieutenant was present at the interview which followed at naval headquarters, it was the admiral himself who received Dave and Dan.

"You report more good luck—fine management, too!" cried the admiral, his face beaming. "You two officers do not seem to be able to put to sea without running into the sort of doings that make fine reading in the newspapers at home. You have made wonderful drives against the submarines, but your nerves must be well gone to pieces by this time."

"No, sir," Darrin replied. "I'm ready for new sailing orders to-night."

"You won't get them," the admiral retorted, bluntly. "Mr. Darrin, your wife, and ill at that, is ashore, I am informed. She was one of your rescued ones to-day."

"Yes, sir."

"Is she wholly recovered?"

"She will be, by morning, sir."

"And you are professing willingness to go on board and start with new sea orders to-night!"

"In war time, sir, I must think only of my work," Dave answered.

For a few moments the admiral sat there, regarding both young officers keenly.

"You're splendid fellows, both of you," the older man said, at last. "So good, in fact, that you're soon to be moved from these waters."

Darrin bowed, and so did Dalzell, but neither asked questions.

"A ranking British naval officer told me, this afternoon," continued the admiral, "that he felt the British admiralty could well afford to trade its best battleship for the services of two such officers as you young gentlemen."

"Are we to be turned over to join the British, sir?" asked Dave, a look of alarm in his bronzed face. "To serve in the British Navy?"

"Would you accept such an assignment?" queried the admiral.

Dave glanced swiftly at his chum before he replied for both:

"Sir, we'd go anywhere, perform any duty, under any flag, and under any conditions, at the request of our own Government," Darrin answered. "We do not belong to ourselves, but to the United States, and, through our Government, to any nation on earth to which our Government should wish to transfer us. At the same time, our choice would naturally be for service in our own American Navy."

"And that is just where it is going to be—with your own crowd," smiled the admiral. "You will also

command the same craft on which you came in this evening. But you will be changed to other waters, and you will have a somewhat different line of duty—a more dangerous line, in many ways, I may add. But the British Admiralty, in making a request of me, specified distinctly that it trusted I would be able to detail you two young officers to the work. That new work, as I just said, will also be in other waters.”

The admiral paused for a moment, but presently went on to say:

“The new duty to which you are to be detailed was known to me some time ago. That was why you were ordered to your present new commands. We wanted you to try out both destroyers, that you might know all their capabilities. Even had you struck no fresh adventures you would have been recalled by to-morrow. But you know your craft now, and each of you has tested out and learned his junior officers, and now you are surely in readiness for your new field of work.”

“However, there are some slight but necessary changes to be made in the ‘Grigsby’ and the ‘Reed’ before they will be ready for their new work. To-morrow a naval constructor will go aboard each of your ships and take charge of the alterations to be made and the new equipment to be installed. For that reason you will both be able to spend the greater part of your time on shore during the coming week.”

Within the next few minutes the admiral detailed to the delighted young officers the nature of the new work that was to be required of them. It was as dangerous as he had stated. It would also call for their tireless attention night and day. The admiral, however, could not daunt them. Work and danger are the corner-stones of successful war, and the eyes of the young naval officers shone as they saw the fullness of their new opportunity to serve.

“I shall be glad to receive my final orders, sir, at any hour, night or day,” Dave Darrin announced, as he rose.

“And I shall be, also, sir,” Dalzell promptly added.

“A week’s rest, anyway, will make you both keener and better fitted for the big job you’ve ahead of you. Gentlemen, my heartiest congratulations for your work during the last few weeks. You will do even better on your next cruise. Good-night, gentlemen.”

Back to the hotel they went. Belle was now able to chat with them, though she preferred to sit back in a big chair and to listen to their own modest accounts of what they had seen and done during the latest thrilling weeks in their lives.

The next day Belle was able to go out with her husband. After that she mended rapidly.

All too soon the period of rest and delightful recreation ended. Belle went on to her Red Cross work in France, and the orders came for which both these young naval officers were so eagerly waiting.

But what these orders were, and into what new fields of fighting it led the two naval chums, must be reserved for the next volume of this series, which will be published under the title: “Dave Darrin After the Mine Layers; or Hitting the Enemy a Hard Naval Blow.”

In this splendid new volume the newest developments of sea fighting in the late war will be set forth with a fidelity and compelling interest that will hold the attention of every reader.

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