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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BOY ALLIES ON THE NORTH SEA PATROL



“Great Scott!” ejaculated Frank, “It’s a girl!”

The Boy Allies
On the North Sea Patrol

OR

Striking the First Blow at the German Fleet

By Ensign ROBERT L. DRAKE

AUTHOR OF

"The Boy Allies Under Two Flags"
"The Boy Allies With the Terror of the Seas"
"The Boy Allies With the Flying Squadron"



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THE BOY ALLIES ON THE NORTH SEA PATROL

THE BOY ALLIES ON THE NORTH SEA PATROL

CHAPTER I.

SHANGHAIED.

"Help! Help!"

Frank Chadwick, strolling along the water-front in Naples, stopped suddenly in his tracks and gazed in the direction from whence had come the cry of distress.

"Help! Help!" came the cry again, in English.

Frank dashed forward toward a dirty-looking sailors' boarding house, from the inside of which he could distinguish the sounds of a struggle.

As he sprang through the door, at the far end of the room he saw a little man in a red sweater, unmistakably an American, apparently battling for his life with two swarthy Italians, both armed with gleaming knives.

Frank jumped forward with a cry, and as he did so, the Italians turned and fled. The little American wiped his face on his sleeve, and then turned to Frank with outstretched hand.

"You came just in time," he declared. "I thought it was all up with me."

"I'm glad I did," replied the lad, grasping the other's hand.

"Yes, sir," continued the little man. "If you hadn't-a-come, them dagos would-a-done for me sure."

He led the way to an adjoining room, Frank following him. He sat down at a table and rapped loudly upon it.

"Let's have a drink," he said, as a greasy-looking Italian in an even more greasy apron entered the room.

"Thanks," replied Frank; "but I don't drink."

"Oh, come on now," urged the other; "take something."

"No," said Frank with finality. "I must go," he continued, turning toward the door. "I am glad to have been of some assistance to you."

But even as he turned the American in the red sweater stamped twice upon the floor and a trap door fell away beneath Frank's feet. The lad caught a glimpse of water below.

His elbow struck the floor as he went down, and he fell head-first into a small rowboat. His head struck the bottom of the boat with sickening force, stunning him.

It was almost an hour later when his wits began to return to him. He took in the scene around him. He stood on the deck of a small schooner, and a great hulk of a man with an evil face stood near him, arguing with his friend of the red sweater.

"What is this thing you've brought me?" shouted the big man. "If we don't look out we'll step on it and break it. It hadn't ought to be around without its ma."

"Oh, he'll do all right, captain," replied the red sweater. "But I've got to skip or I'll have the patrol boat after me. Do you sign or not?"

"Well, I'll tackle this one, but if he ain't up to snuff he'll come back by freight, and don't you forget it."

The red sweater pocketed a note the captain handed him, went over the side of the schooner and rowed off.

Frank gazed about the schooner. Several dirty sailors, fully as evil looking as the captain, were working about the deck. Apparently they were foreigners. The captain appeared to be an American.

The captain, Harwood by name, turned to Frank.

"Get forward," he commanded.

Frank drew himself up.

"What's the meaning of this?" he exclaimed. "I demand to be put ashore."

"Is that so," sneered the big captain; "and why do you suppose I went to all this trouble to get you here, huh? Now you listen to me. I'm captain of this here tub, and what I say goes. Get forward!"

Still Frank stood still.

"Look here," he began, "I——"

The captain knocked him down with a single blow of his great fist, and kicked his prostrate form. Then he picked him up, caught him by the neck and the slack of his coat and ran him forward to the hatchway, and flung him below.

As Frank picked himself up there descended upon him a deluge of clothes, followed by the captain's voice.

"There's your outfit, Willie, and it won't cost you a cent. You've got two minutes to get into them, and I hope you won't force me to give you any assistance."

Frank Chadwick was a lad of discretion. Therefore he made haste to change, and in less than the allotted time he again emerged on deck.

Frank had just passed his sixteenth birthday. Always athletically inclined, he was extremely large for his age; and his muscles, hardened by much outdoor exercise, made him a match for many a man twice his age, as he had proven more than once when forced to do so.

His father was a well-to-do physician in a small New England town. For a lad of his years, Frank was an expert in the art of self-defense. Also he could ride, shoot and fence.

While the lad was by no means an expert with sailing vessels, he nevertheless had had some experience in that line. At home he had a small sailboat and in the summer months spent many hours upon the water. Consequently he was well versed in nautical terms.

This summer Frank and his father had been touring Europe. The war clouds which had hovered over the continent for weeks had finally burst while father and son were in Germany. In getting out of the country the two had been separated, and for two days now the lad had been unable to find Dr. Chadwick.

Frank was well up on his history, and this, together with the fact that his mother was of English

descent, turned his sympathies with the allies. Also he was a student of literature and languages, and could converse fluently in French, German and Italian.

As has been said, Frank was a lad of discretion; which is the reason he appeared upon deck again within the two minutes allowed him by the captain.

He emerged from below with blood upon his face and the grime of an unclean ship upon his hands. As he came on deck he saw the crew of the schooner hurrying forward, six of them, Italians every one. On the quarterdeck stood the captain.

"Look at Willie," shouted the captain in great glee. "Clap on to the starboard windlass brake, son."

Frank saw the Italians ranged about what he supposed was the windlass in the bow. He took his place among them, grasping one of the bars.

"Break down!" came the next order, and Frank and the Italians obeyed, bearing up and down on the bars till the slack of the anchor chain came home and stretched taut and dripping from the hawse-holes.

"Vast heavin'!"

Frank released his hold on the brake. Orders came thick and fast now, and Frank's experience with his own sailboat stood him in good stead, and soon the schooner was beating out to sea.

The wind blew violent and cold, and the spray was flying like icy small-shot. The schooner rolled and plunged and heaved and sank and rose again. Frank was drenched to the skin and sore in every joint.

The captain at length ordered the cook to give the men their food.

"Get forward, son," he commanded, fixing Frank with his eye.

Frank descended below. The Italians were already there, sitting on the edges of their bunks. The cook brought in supper, stewed beef and pork. A liquor that bore a slight resemblance to coffee was served. This was Black Jack.

"Well," muttered Frank, looking at the mess of which the Italians were eating hungrily, "I've got to come to it some time."

He took his knife from his pocket, opened the big blade and cut off a piece of pork. This he forced himself to eat. Then he once more went on deck.

Half an hour later the captain emerged from his cabin. Then he and an Italian he called Charlie, who, in the absence of a mate, appeared to be the second in command, began to choose the men for their watches. Frank found himself in the captain's watch.

"I may as well tell you," he said to the captain, "that I'm no sailor."

"Well, you will be, son," came the reply. "You'll either be a sailor or shark bait."

The watches divided, the captain said to Frank:

"Son, I'm going to do you a real favor. You can berth aft in the cabin with Charlie and me, and you can make free of my quarterdeck. Maybe you ain't used to the way of sailormen, but you can take it from me those are two real concessions."

"Will you tell me where we are bound, captain?" asked Frank.

"I'll tell you it's none of your business," came the sharp reply. "You do as I say and ask no questions."

About an hour later Frank turned in. The captain showed him his bunk. It was under the companionway that led down into the cabin. The captain bunked on one side and Charlie on the other.

As Frank made his way to his bunk, he saw a sight that caused him to catch his breath in surprise.

In a fourth bunk, above the one in which the captain slept, was the figure of another man. Approaching closer, Frank saw that the man was bound and gagged, and apparently unconscious.

"Hmmm," he muttered. "Wonder what this means?"

And at his words the occupant of the bunk moved slightly and moaned.

CHAPTER II.

MUTINY.

Frank went over to the bunk and peered in. At that moment Captain Harwood's voice broke upon his ear.

"Looking at my little long lost chum, are you, son?" he said in a low, gentle voice. "Well," and his voice grew suddenly harsh, "don't do it! You keep away from there! You hear me? You keep away or I'll feed you to the little fishes!"

He aimed a vicious blow at Frank, which the lad avoided only by a quick backward leap. The captain took a step forward as though to continue his attack; then changed his mind and said:

"I don't want to hurt you, son, but you'll have to keep away from my property."

The captain turned on his heel and went on deck.

In spite of the captain's warning, Frank once more approached the man in the bunk; but he kept a wary eye on the door. Putting his foot on the edge of the captain's bunk, he pulled himself up.

The bound man was still moaning feebly. Frank removed the gag from his mouth.

"Thanks," said the man in a low voice in English. "I didn't think I could stand that thing in my mouth another instant."

"What's the matter, anyhow," demanded Frank. "Why are you kept a prisoner here?"

"It's a long story," was the reply, "and I haven't time to tell you now. But I can say this much, for I don't believe you will repeat it. I'm in the English diplomatic corps and am on an important mission. My capture must be the work of treachery. I suppose I am to be turned over to the Germans."

"I thought diplomacy was a thing of the past," said Frank. "Of what use is diplomacy now that practically the whole of Europe is at war?"

"That's just it," was the reply. "The whole of Europe is not at war. Italy is still neutral, but unless something happens she is likely to throw in her fortunes with Germany."

"But what have you got to do with that?"

The man in the bunk was silent for a few moments.

"All I can say," he replied finally, "is that I am supposed to see that something happens; or rather, I should say, I am to help."

"But how did you get here?"

"I was trapped. There is a traitor somewhere. It looks as though I am done for. The Germans know me. They will show me no mercy."

"Surely, it's not as bad as all that!" exclaimed Frank.

"Worse, if possible," was the reply.

"But I can't believe Captain Harwood, an American, would be engaged in work of that sort."

"Harwood!" exclaimed the man in the bunk. "A more villainous pirate never lived. I know him of old. I don't know how he happened to be sailing at this exact time. He certainly is not making this trip on my account alone. He's up to some other game."

Frank was struck with an idea.

"But the crew," he exclaimed. "Can't we get some help from them?"

"Don't you bank on that," was the reply.

"But—" began Frank.

The man in the bunk interrupted.

"Sh-h-h!" he cautioned. "Footsteps!"

Frank listened a moment; then with a quick spring jumped into his own bunk just as Captain Harwood again appeared. The captain approached him. To all appearances Frank was sleeping soundly. The captain grunted and then approached the man in the bunk.

"So!" he exclaimed. "I've got you again, eh! Well, this time you won't get away. You don't think I've forgotten I spent two years behind the bars on your account, do you? I haven't. You hear me!"

He struck the helpless man a blow with his fist.

"Why don't you answer me?" he demanded; then smiled to himself. "Oh, I forgot. Guess I'll remove that gag and let you say something."

He climbed up and leaned over the occupant of the upper bunk, then started back with a cry.

"How did you remove that gag?" he demanded; then continued, "O-ho I see. Little Willie boy, eh! Well—"

He turned toward Frank and at the same moment the man in the bunk let out a cry of warning.

But Frank was not to be caught napping. As the captain turned toward him he sprang to his feet and placed himself in an attitude of defense. He knew that he was no match for the giant captain, but he determined to give a good account of himself.

"Well, well," cried the captain advancing, "little Willie is going to fight! What d'ye think o' that?"

He doubled his huge fists and took another step forward; but at that instant there came a fearful cry from on deck.

The captain paused, and Charlie's voice came down the hatchway in a loud wail:

"Help!"

Captain Harwood sprang toward the door, and as he went through it he hurled back over his shoulder:

"I'll 'tend to your case when I come back, son!"

A moment later there came cries from above and the sound of a furious struggle. Frank rushed up the hatchway to the deck, where a terrible sight met his eyes.

Surrounded by all six of the crew. Captain Harwood was battling desperately for his life. Time after time he struck out with his great fists, but his blows failed to land. The nimble Italians skipped back, then closed in again. By the wheel, Frank saw the unconscious form of Charlie.

Long, wicked-looking knives gleamed in the hands of the Italians. Bleeding from half a dozen wounds, the giant captain continued to fight off his enemies.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Frank. "I can't stand here and see him killed!"

He sprang forward and, before his presence was noted, struck down one of the Italians with a blow of his fist.

The captain noted with a nod this aid from such an unexpected source.

"Good work, son!" he exclaimed.

Frank turned to another of the Italians, but as he did so the man he had knocked down arose, stooped and picked up a belaying pin that lay nearby, and struck Frank a heavy blow on the head.

The lad dropped to the deck unconscious. At the same moment the other Italians sprang upon the captain with even greater ferocity. In vain he tried to fight them off. Two he knocked down with hammer-like blows of his great fists. Then, seizing a descending arm, he twisted sharply and a knife fell clattering to the deck.

At the same moment another Italian sprang upon his unprotected back, and buried his knife to the hilt. Three times the captain spun around on his heel, then fell to the deck on his face. Instantly half a dozen knives were buried in his back. The captain gave a great sob, shuddered, and lay still.

Roughly the Italians picked up the great body, carried it to the rail and threw it into the sea. The body of Charlie was treated in a similar manner. Then the Italians approached Frank.

As they picked him up he groaned. Consciousness was returning.

"He's still alive," came a voice. "What shall we do with him?"

"Overboard with him anyhow," came the reply.

"No," said another voice. "Let him live. Tie him up and put him below with the other prisoner. There is a good price on the head of one, according to what the captain said. The other may be worth something."

It was now dark; but suddenly the little schooner was the center of a dazzling light and a shot rang out over the water. Dimly, could be made out the outlines of a battle cruiser. A second shot rang out—a command to heave-to.

"Quick!" cried one of the mutineers, apparently the leader of the gang. "We must make a run for it. Tie this dog up and throw him below!"

Swiftly Frank was bound hand and foot and tumbled down the hatchway. In falling the knot that bound his feet became unloosened and he freed his legs with little difficulty. But try as he would he could not release his hands. He made his way to his bunk and lay down.

"What's the matter?" came the voice of the man in the bunk.

Frank explained matters to him.

"Good!" was the reply. "They can't get away from the cruiser. It is undoubtedly a British ship."

But both were doomed to disappointment. A heavy wind had sprung up and now was blowing a gale. With all sails set, the little schooner soon lost itself in the darkness, and when morning dawned there was not the sign of a sail as far as the eye could see.

CHAPTER III.

JACK TEMPLETON.

Jack Templeton stood in a shady grove in a little hamlet on the north coast of Africa. A lad of seventeen, he was the only white person in the village, or in fact for many miles around. He had come there with his father five years before.

His father's reasons for thus practically burying himself alive, Jack did not know. He had started up a little store and had made a bare living selling goods to the natives. Twice a year a ship brought him stock enough for the ensuing six months, but except at these rare intervals, a white man was seldom seen in the village.

A year before Jack's father had died, and Jack had inherited the little store. Now he was following in his father's footsteps. Of his father's past life he knew next to nothing, beyond the fact that his father, by birth, was an Englishman, and, before coming to the little African village, had lived for some years in the United States.

In spite of his youth, Jack was of huge stature. Always tall for his age, he had filled out so rapidly that now at seventeen he was well over six feet and big all through. His strength was immense, and there were no three natives in the village that could stand up against him.

His father had been a scholar, and Jack was a keen student. He spoke several languages besides English and one or two native dialects.

As Jack stood in the little grove this warm afternoon he kept an attentive eye on a shabby looking schooner that was creeping up from the south. At a distance of about a mile from the shore the schooner luffed up, hoisted a dirty red ensign and dropped her anchor; a fishing canoe, which had paddled out to meet her, ran alongside and presently returned shoreward with a couple of strangers.

Jack made no move, in spite of the fact that he was well aware that the strangers, probably, were headed direct for his store. To-day he was in no mood to meet a white man, for he was not quite ready to take his departure from the village.

The canoe landed, the strangers stepped ashore and disappeared. Presently a file of natives appeared moving toward the shore, each carrying a large basket of provisions. Then suddenly two white men appeared, running.

They jumped in the canoe, the men pushed off and the little craft began to wriggle its way through the surf. At the same moment another figure appeared on the beach, and made unmistakable signs of hostility to the receding canoe.

Jack recognized this figure. It was his assistant. As Jack crossed the sand toward the village, the black assistant came running toward him.

"Dem sailors am tiefs, sar!" he gasped, when he had come within earshot.

Jack comprehended in a moment. "Do you mean they didn't pay you?" he demanded.

"Yes, sar! No, sar!" exclaimed the assistant excitedly. "Dey no pay nuttin'."

"All right," said Jack calmly. "We'll go aboard and collect for it then."

"All canoes out fishin' 'cept dat one," exclaimed the negro, pointing to the one carrying the sailors back to the schooner.

"We'll wait for that one, then," replied Jack.

The two sat down on the beach to wait. The negro said nothing. He knew Jack too well to try and dissuade him from his purpose, so he kept his own counsel.

The canoe ran alongside the schooner, and having discharged its passengers and freight, put off for its return to shore. Then the schooner's sails began to slide up the stays; the canvas aloft began to flatten out to the pull of the sheets. The schooner was preparing to get under way.

The canoe had now reached the beach and Jack and the black assistant climbed in. Then they put off toward the schooner.

As the canoe bounded forward, Jack suddenly caught the sound of the schooner's windlass pawl. The anchor was being hove up.

The natives in the canoe bent to the work. The canoe swept alongside the schooner and Jack, grasping a chain, swung himself up into the channel, whence he climbed to the bulwark rail and dropped down on the deck.

The windlass was manned by five men, plainly Italians. A sixth was seated on the deck nearby.

"Good afternoon," said Jack. "You forgot to pay for those provisions."

The seated man looked up with a start, first at Jack, then at the assistant, who now sat astride the rail, ready either to advance or retreat. The clink of the windlass ceased and the other five men came aft grinning.

"What are you doing aboard this ship?" demanded the seated sailor in halting and very poor English.

"I've come to collect my dues," replied Jack. "I'm the owner of these provisions."

"You are mistaken," said the sailor. "I am the owner."

"Then you have got to pay me."

"Look here," remarked the sailor, rising. "You get overboard quick!"

"I want my pay," declared Jack.

"Pitch him overboard," spoke up another sailor.

The first sailor, evidently the commander, advanced.

Jack stood motionless with his long legs wide apart, his hands clasped behind him, his shoulders hunched up and his chin thrust forward. He presented an uninviting aspect.

The sailor evidently appreciated this, and for a moment hesitated. Then he came forward again. But he picked a bad moment for his attack, for he rushed just as the deck rose.

There was a resounding "smack, smack," the sailor staggered backward, upsetting two men behind him, staggered down the deck closely followed by Jack, and finally fell sprawling in the scuppers with

his head jammed against the stanchion.

The two other men scrambled to their feet and, with their three companions, closed in on Jack; but the latter did not wait to be attacked.

He charged the group, hammering right and left, regardless of the thumps he got in return, and gradually drove them, bewildered by his quickness and heavy blows, through the space between the foremast and the bulwark.

Slowly they backed away before his battering, hampered by their numbers as they struck at him, until one man, who had the bad luck to catch two uppercuts in succession, whipped out his sheath knife.

Jack's quick eye caught the glint of the steel just as he was passing the fife rail. He whipped out an iron belaying pin and brought it down on the man's head. The man dropped, and as the belaying pin rose and fell, the other men drew back.

Suddenly a shot rang out. A little cloud of splinters flew from the mast near Jack's head. Glancing forward, Jack beheld the leader emerge from the forecastle hatch and aim at him with a revolver. At that moment Jack was abreast of the uncovered main hatch. He had perceived a tier of grain bags covering the floor of the hold. He stooped, and with his hands on the coaming, vaulted over, dropped on the bags, picked himself up and scrambled forward under the shelter of the deck.

The hold of the ship was a single cavity. The forward part contained a portion of the outward cargo, while the homeward lading was stowed abaft the main hatch. There was plenty of room to move about.

For a moment after Jack dropped to this place of temporary refuge the air was thick with imprecations and the sound of angry stamping came to Jack's ears. Hardly had he squeezed himself behind the stack of bales when a succession of shots rang out.

Then there was a pause, and soon the leader commanded one of his men to follow Jack. The man demurred. None of the others would go after him.

"He's too handy with that belaying pin," observed one.

One man was struck with a brilliant idea.

"Bottle him up," he cried. "Clap on the hatch covers and batten down. Then we have him and can sleep in our bunks in peace."

"Good," exclaimed the leader.

This plan seemed to satisfy all parties, and a general movement warned Jack that his incarceration was imminent. For a moment he was disposed to make a last desperate sortie, but the certainty that he would be killed before he reached the deck decided him to lie low.

The hatch covers dropped into their beds. Then Jack heard the tarpaulin dragged over the hatch, shutting out the last gleams of light that had filtered through joints of the covers; the battens were dropped into the catches, the wedges driven home.

Jack sat in a darkness like that of the tomb.

CHAPTER IV.

FRANK MAKES A FRIEND.

It was clear to Jack that this was no place to stay if he could help it. From the first it had been evident to him that there was something wrong about the ship. Apart from the lawless behavior of the crew, there was the fact that since he had come on board he had seen no vestige of an officer.

The sailor who had first attacked him seemed to have some sort of authority. Jack naturally came to the conclusion that he was in command of the vessel. There was only one reasonable answer, which was confirmed by a certain brown stain Jack had noticed on the deck. There had been a mutiny on the ship.

Jack struck a match. The flame lighted up the corner into which he had crept and he saw several objects that he had not noticed before, a shipwright's auger, a calking mallet and probably a dozen wooden pegs, tapering at one end.

The purpose of these was unmistakable. The sailors intended to scuttle the ship. Holes were to be bored in the bottom and the plugs driven into them. Then, when the mutineers were ready to leave, the ship would be abandoned with the water pouring into her hold.

The tools suggested an idea to Jack. He picked up the auger and mallet and groped his way aft. He climbed up on the pile of sacks and crawled along until he came to the bulkhead that separated the cabin from the hold. He set the point of the auger against the bulkhead, and grasping the cross lever, set to work vigorously. He was soon rewarded by feeling the tool give with a jerk, and when he withdrew it there was a circular hole, through which daylight streamed faintly.

Jack put one eye to the hole and peered through. He could make out several objects in the cabin beyond. Having made this brief survey, he returned to his task. Above the hole he had already bored, he bored another slightly intersecting it, above this another, and so on, tracing a continuous row of holes, each encroaching on the next, in a wide circle.

By the time he had drilled the thirtieth hole, the weakening light filtering through told him the sun was setting. The fortieth hole was within an inch of the first one bored. Jack gave a vigorous kick on the space inclosed by the line of holes, and sent the oval piece of plank flying into the cabin.

He slipped easily through the opening and groped about the cabin. He felt his way to the companion ladder, where he bumped against a bunk. He sprawled headlong, and beneath his fingers felt a human form. He sprang back and struck a match.

Before him he saw the face of a boy, and he again approached the bunk. The lad's hands were bound and he was sleeping. Jack shook him, and the boy looked up.

"Hello," he said. "What are you doing here?"

"Rather, what are you doing here?" was Jack's reply.

"I'm Frank Chadwick, an American," was the answer. "Untie my hands and I'll tell you all about it."

Jack did as he was requested, and then Frank motioned toward the upper bunk just across from him.

"We'll perform the same operation there, and then we'll have a talk," he said.

Jack approached the bunk indicated, and perceived a second bound form. Quickly the two lads untied him, and the man slid to the floor and stretched himself.

"Thanks," he said, rubbing his hands. "I'm glad to get out of that."

"What's this all about, anyhow?" demanded Jack, in great surprise.

Frank gave an account of his adventures after meeting the little American with the red sweater in Naples. Then the man who had been tied in the bunk repeated the story he had told Frank when the lad had first entered the cabin, adding that his name was Albert Hetherington.

"But how do you come to be here?" he demanded of Jack.

Jack explained.

"Well," exclaimed Hetherington, "you have put your head into a hornet's nest, young man."

"Yes," replied Jack, "and I'm going to keep it there until I'm paid to take it out. I want two pounds four and I'm going to get it before I leave this ship."

Jack climbed up on a small table, and wrapping his hand in his handkerchief, crashed his fist through the skylight. The skylight had a fixed top, and, instead of the usual guard bars, had loose wooden shutters for use in bad weather. Jack picked away the remainder of the glass. Placing a small box on top of the table, he climbed upon it and peered out.

He could just catch a glimpse of the man at the wheel. The fellow was not taking his duties very seriously, for he was sitting on the grating filling his pipe and letting the ship steer itself. Jack considered, looked out again, then descended from the table with a distinctly purposeful air.

"I'm looking for a piece of rubber plaster," he told Frank and Hetherington.

He opened the medicine chest, and cut off several strips. Then he picked up a piece of rope that hung upon a peg on the cabin wall.

"I want to try a little experiment," he told the others. "I'll tell you about it later."

He cut off a couple of lengths of rope, and having pocketed one, and having made a small fixed loop in the end of the other, climbed up on the box again and looked out on deck.

All was quiet without. Jack heard the helmsman yawn sleepily; he had left the wheel with a rope hitched around one of the spokes, and was now leaning over the rail looking at the water.

Grasping the frame of the skylight, Jack gave a light spring and came stealthily through the opening. Then, creeping along the deck in the shelter of the small boat and the companion hood, he stole toward the sailor.

As the man threw back his head and yawned, Jack slipped his left hand around, holding the strip of plaster spread out on it, and clapped the plaster over the man's mouth, and instantly pinioned his hands by clasping him tightly round the chest.

The man struggled furiously and would have shouted, but was only able to grunt and snort, so well

had the plaster done its work. The struggle went on with little noise. Jack contrived to pass the end of the line through the loop and draw it until it was ready for a final pull. Then he hurled the man to the deck, jerked the line tight and sat on the prisoner's legs. He bound him tightly and then sat quiet a moment, listening.

Finally he arose and slid his helpless prisoner through the skylight into the cabin and then lowered himself by the way he had emerged.

Here he seized the captive, dragged him across the cabin, and thrust him through the bulkhead, followed him through and removed the plaster from the man's mouth.

"Now," he said to his prisoner, "if you know what is good for you, you will keep quiet."

Evidently the man knew. He signified his intention of keeping quiet, and Jack returned to the cabin.

"Well, that's one of them out of the way," he told his new friends.

"Yes," replied Hetherington, "but there are five or six more up there."

"Five," said Frank.

"We'll see what can be done," remarked Jack, and again climbed on the table and peered forth from the skylight.

But now there was no one to capture. The wheel jerked to and fro in its lashings. Suddenly the vessel heeled over crazily. At the same time a voice called:

"What's the matter, Pedro? You'll have the masts overboard if you don't look out."

A moment later the leader of the mutineers came staggering aft, followed by several of his men. He gazed at the wheel in surprise.

"Where has he gone?" he demanded.

"Down in the cabin, I guess," said one of the men.

"No," was the reply, "the companion is fastened up."

"He's gone overboard, that's where he's gone," said another voice.

"I guess you're right," replied the leader. "Here, Antonio, you mind the helm, and don't you go overboard, too."

Muttering sleepily, another man took his place at the wheel, and the others moved off. Jack bent down from the table and whispered to the others.

"Now is the time to get the next one. You two stand by and take care of him when I pass him along to you."

"Better be careful," said Frank. "They are all liable to jump you."

Jack did not reply. He pulled himself up and dropped to the deck.

CHAPTER V.

FREE.

From the direction of the wheel there came a loud snore. The sailor had deliberately seated himself upon the deck in a comfortable position.

Jack stole up to the sleeping seaman and softly encircled his arms with the noose. Then he passed the lashing around his ankles and tied them firmly. This aroused the sleeper, who began to mumble protests. Instantly Jack slapped the plaster over his mouth. Then he dragged the man to the skylight and tumbled him down unceremoniously, and followed him into the cabin.

Frank and Hetherington held him while Jack removed the plaster and thrust him through the hole in the bulkhead. Just as Jack once more put his head through the skylight, there was the sound of a voice and Jack drew inside.

"Something queer on this ship, I tell you," declared the leader. "First Pedro goes overboard and then Antonio follows him. Sebastian, you take the wheel."

"Not me," came the reply. "I'm not going overboard if I can help it. Take the wheel yourself."

"Neither am I," declared another voice.

A wrangle followed, with the result that the leader was forced to take the wheel. Looking out again, Jack saw that the man was peering out over the water. Softly he again dropped to the deck, and stole upon the unsuspecting leader.

A fierce struggle ensued. The Italian was a big man, and in spite of Jack's strength and size, he put up a furious battle. The two rolled against the rail, there was a sharp crack and with a loud cry the leader suddenly went overboard. Jack jumped back to the skylight and crouched down; and it was not a moment too soon.

The other three men approached.

"He's gone all right," said one, gazing at the spot where the leader had stood a moment before.

"Yes, he's gone," said another. "I guess it will be our turn next."

Suddenly a cry from the water drew their attention.

"It's Ferdinand," said one of the sailors, "and he is swimming."

"What's to be done?" demanded another. "We can't let him drown like that."

"No," replied another. "Francisco and I will get out the boat and pull him in. You stay here," turning to the third man.

"What!" came the reply. "Stay here by myself?"

"You do as I say. We have got to get Ferdinand."

Suddenly Jack was struck with an idea. He was well aware of the superstitious nature of sailors, and he planned to play upon it. He descended to the cabin and from the wall took a suit of the captain's oilskins. Then he went back on deck.

Two of the men had gone over the side in the small boat, and the remaining sailor was now engaged in hanging a lamp from the stern. Jack silently approached him.

Having secured the lamp, the sailor took a long look out over the sea and then turned toward the deck; and as his eyes fell on the tall, oil-skinned figure, he uttered a gasp of horror, and began to shuffle backward.

"The captain's ghost!" he exclaimed in an awed voice.

Suddenly the sailor's heels caught on a ringbolt and he staggered and fell on the deck with a howl of terror; but in another instant he had scrambled to his feet and rushed away forward, whence the slam of the forecastle scuttle announced his retirement to a place of safety.

More than half an hour elapsed before a hoarse hail from the sea heralded the return of the boat.

"Is all well?" came the cry. "Ferdinand is gone. We couldn't find him."

Jack stepped back into the shadow of the mainsail. Soon the heads of the two men appeared over the rail, and they swung themselves to the deck.

For one instant they stood as if petrified; then, with one accord, they stampeded forward, and once more the forecastle scuttle slammed. Jack followed, and, quietly thrusting a belaying pin through the staple of the scuttle, secured them in their retreat.

The mutiny was a thing of the past.

Then Jack made his way to the cabin, where he informed his two newly-made friends of the success of his endeavors, and the three went on deck.

"You're all right," Frank told Jack in great admiration, as the three gazed out over the water. "I had given up all hope of getting away alive. I don't see how you ever managed it."

"Nor I," said Hetherington. "I know Frank and I couldn't have done it together."

Jack laughed modestly.

"A little thinking is all that's necessary," he replied.

"Well, you are quite a thinker," said Frank; "but it strikes me you are something of a fighter besides."

"What shall we do now?" broke in Hetherington.

"I suppose I had better get home," replied Jack. "Besides, we are not far from there. You had both better come with me."

"I want to get back to Naples," declared Frank.

"And I must get to Nalut, Tripoli, at the earliest possible moment," declared Hetherington.

"Nalut!" exclaimed Jack. "Why, we can't be far from there now. It's close to my home. I have been there several times."

"You don't mean it," cried Hetherington. "Then I can get there from your place?"

"Easily, by camel. It is about a day's journey."

Hetherington turned to Frank.

"Why can't you come with me?" he asked. "I'll look after you. I expect to be back in England in a couple of weeks, and you can go with me. Then you can return to the United States."

"But I wanted to get back to Naples and try and find my father."

"You probably wouldn't be able to find him now. The chances are he has returned home himself, hoping to find you there, as he has been unable to find you in more than a week."

"I guess you are right," replied Frank. "I'll go with you."

It was late the next afternoon when the schooner once more drew near the little African town in which Jack lived, and dropped anchor.

Jack called the prisoners from below.

"I don't know why I should bother with you," he said. "I know you are mutineers and should be dealt with severely, but I am not an executioner. Pay me my two pounds four," he continued, turning to one of the men, "and we shall leave the ship. It's not my ship and neither is it yours; but you can have it as far as I am concerned."

"Yes," said Frank. "We don't need it any longer."

One of the Italians ran hurriedly below. Returning he placed two bags of gold in Jack's hand.

"Take this, *signor*," he exclaimed. "We will have no luck unless we give you this gold."

"No," replied Jack, "all I want is what is due me."

"Yes, yes; you must take it, *signor*," cried all the Italians.

Jack thrust his hand into one of the canvas bags and brought out a handful of coins, from which he selected two. The others he returned to the bag, adding to them a couple of coins from his own pocket.

"Two shillings change," he remarked.

He threw the bags down on deck and dropped himself into the small boat now lying alongside. The other two followed him.

But he had hardly taken his seat when two heavy thumps on the floor of the boat, followed by a jingling impact, announced the arrival of the two bags of gold.

"You must take the gold, *signor*. You must take it, else we shall have no luck."

Jack stood up in the boat. Frank and Hetherington pulled on the oars.

"Pull," Jack commanded, and the boat started away.

Aiming skillfully at the open gangway, Jack sent the heavy bags, one after the other, skimming along the deck.

One of the Italians grabbed them up and rushed to the gangway. But he was too late. The boat was twenty yards away, and leaping forward beneath the strokes of Frank and Hetherington.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECRET AGENT.

Upon landing the three made their way at once to Jack's small home, a rudely constructed native hut.

"Sorry I haven't a better place to offer you," said Jack, "but I guess you can put up with it for one day."

"No apology is needed," said Hetherington. "This is plenty good enough for me."

"And for me," declared Frank.

"Well, just make yourselves at home, then," said Jack. "I'll see if I can't scare up something to eat."

Their appetites appeased, Frank bethought himself of Hetherington's promise to tell him his story, and reminded him of it.

Hetherington hesitated a moment, and then said:

"I don't know as there is any reason I shouldn't tell you, particularly as I undoubtedly owe my life to you both. In the first place, I am what is known as a secret agent of the British government."

"A what?" demanded Jack.

"A secret agent; in other words, a diplomatic agent, though I am not officially recognized as such. Which means, that in the event of anything happening to me, England could not be held responsible for my actions, nor could I look to my government for aid."

"I see what you mean," said Frank, and Jack nodded his head in assent.

"You mean that what you do, although under instructions, you do at your own risk?" he questioned.

"Yes. For instance, if, in some diplomatic undertaking, I should be apprehended upon the order of a foreign government, say as a spy, or for some overt political act, my government would not countenance my action, even though I am acting under direct orders."

"It must be dangerous work," declared Frank.

"You take your life in your hands every time you are sent upon a mission," said Jack.

Hetherington smiled grimly.

"Practically that," he admitted. "It's dangerous work, no doubt; but there is a spice of excitement to it that makes it worth while."

"Besides which, someone has to do the work, I suppose," suggested Frank.

"Precisely. Every one of the great powers has its set of secret agents. The peace of Europe has been saved more than once by these men. The game goes on daily, and our safety depends entirely upon our keeping our identity secret. More than one man has disappeared, never to be heard of again."

"You don't mean that they were assassinated?" demanded Jack.

"Exactly; nine times out of ten, when a secret agent is caught, his life pays the forfeit. Sounds barbarous, doesn't it?" and Hetherington smiled.

"It certainly does," replied Frank. "I thought the days of barbarism had passed."

"Well, to tell the truth, England and France have given up such practice. Germany, Austria, and even Russia, in some cases, continue the old custom. So you may see why the life of a secret agent is not all roses."

"I should say no roses at all," declared Jack. "But go on with your story."

"Well," said Hetherington, "the situation is this, but," and the speaker paused, "in case you haven't political conditions in Europe at your finger-tips, I guess I had better explain how the great European powers are lined up.

"Germany, Austria and Italy, some years ago, formed what is now known as the Triple Alliance. This alliance sets forth that in case either country that signed the agreement is attacked by a hostile power, the other two members of the alliance are bound to support it. Although a natural enemy of Austria, Italy nevertheless was in some manner inveigled into the agreement, practically against her will. There is no doubt that in the days since the alliance was formed, she has been used as a cat'spaw by Germany. Now Italy is beginning to realize it.

"To offset the Triple Alliance and maintain the balance of power in Europe, England, France and Russia, a few years later, entered into a pact and the alignment of these three countries is known as the Triple Entente. While not bound to support each other in case of war, there never was any doubt that each would do so should the other be attacked. It was this knowledge that held the Kaiser's warlike spirit in check until a few days ago.

"Now, in spite of the fact that Italy has begun to realize she is being used as a cat'spaw by Germany, and also in spite of the natural Italian antagonism toward Austria, Germany's other ally, it will take more than this to keep Italy from joining her allies in the war. She is in honor bound to support the alliance, and she will, unless she can be made to believe that Germany, in secret conjunction with Austria, is plotting her downfall. And it is this that Italy must be made to believe."

"But is that exactly fair?" Frank wanted to know.

"All's fair in love and war," quoted Hetherington. "Besides, we have learned enough through secret channels to know that it is true. Now we must make Italy see it without suspecting that we have had a hand in it."

"Looks like quite a sizable job," remarked Jack dryly.

"And so it is," was the reply; "which is the reason I must be in Nalut as soon as possible."

"Surely you don't expect to accomplish all this by yourself?" exclaimed Frank.

"No, indeed," replied Hetherington. "But I must do my part. The plans have all been laid, and day after to-morrow is the one set upon which to act."

"But the thing I can't see," Jack broke in, "is why it is necessary to come to Africa to carry out the plans."

"Well, it's like this," said the secret agent. "Suppose it became quite plain to Italy that Germany was

aiding the Arabs in Tripoli to get up another serious insurrection against the Italian army——”

“But she’s not,” broke in Frank. “She has her hands too full elsewhere.”

“Who said she was?” demanded Hetherington. “But suppose old Francisco Dellaya, the great Italian diplomat, recognized as the foremost of all the diplomats in Europe, should come upon Abu ben Sedar, who has led more than one uprising against Italy, in Nalut, hobnobbing with a bearded man who presumably is in the Austrian or German army? Suppose he sees them about together once or twice? What do you suppose he’d think?”

“I see what you mean,” declared Frank. “But surely that would not be enough to satisfy him.”

“No; the plot goes deeper than that. But suppose, again, that he learned that Abu ben Sedar had been furnished with several thousand rifles of unmistakable German make, and that they had been delivered by a German vessel straight from Hamburg. Also a few machine guns. And suppose a hundred thousand freshly minted German and Austrian silver marks should be distributed to every hostile Arab in Tripoli? And suppose old Dellaya got wind of this? Do you see what I mean?”

Frank and Jack nodded affirmatively.

“This together with the fact that Dellaya had seen what he supposed was a German or Austrian officer pretty thick with Abu ben Sedar, would convince Dellaya that Germany and Austria were putting up some kind of a game on Italy,” continued the secret agent. “He would, without doubt, have the sheik followed, and we would see that he got plenty of evidence. Then would come a hurry call to his home government. And the next step would be that Italy, already only lukewarm toward the Triple Alliance, would withdraw its support, leaving Germany and Austria in the lurch. Do I make myself clear?”

“Perfectly,” replied Jack.

“But is the Italian diplomat in Tripoli?” asked Frank.

“No,” replied the secret agent, “but he will be day after to-morrow. Once a year he takes a cruise as the guest of Lord Hastings, apparently a wealthy English gentleman, but in reality a member of the British secret service. He has made many trips to Tripoli, and knows probably every Arab sheik within a hundred miles. All this was counted upon when we laid our plans. Oh, he will be there, all right, and he will see just what we have planned for him to see.”

“But how does it come that you were captured in Naples by Captain Harwood?” Frank demanded.

“I was just making my way to the ship on which I had engaged passage when I was set upon by three men, apparently Germans. I was overcome and carried aboard the ship, where you found me. That’s all I know about it.”

“Do you think your mission was suspected?”

“I am afraid so. I fear we have been harboring a traitor.”

“Well,” said Jack, “it’s getting late. I guess we would better turn in. We must get an early start in the morning.”

ON THE JOURNEY.

The sun had not yet risen in the east when the three friends arose. Jack prepared a hasty breakfast, after which he fared forth to see about obtaining camels for the journey. He was successful in his quest, and the edge of the sun creeping over the horizon could just be seen when they prepared to mount.

Frank climbed upon the kneeling camel with no little trepidation.

"I don't know anything about camel riding," he called to the others.

"Just hold tight when he gets up and you will be all right," replied Jack.

Frank took a firm hold in accordance with instructions, and it was well that he did so, for otherwise he would have been sent tumbling over the animal's head.

The camel rose on its hind feet first, and Frank was hurled forward on his back. Just as he succeeded in grasping the camel about the neck, the animal lifted his front feet and Frank went hurling back again. Only his tight hold saved him from being thrown.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "This is worse than a sea voyage."

"You are all right now," called Hetherington from the back of his own camel.

"You will soon get used to it," declared Jack. "Come, follow me," and he headed his camel toward the west.

All morning they rode along without interruption. Several times they passed riders going in the opposite direction, but they did not halt. At noon they stopped in a little grove of trees, where they ate of the provisions Jack had packed on the camels and quenched their thirst from a tiny and sparkling stream. Then they continued their journey.

Darkness had fallen when they made out in the distance the little town of Nalut. The camels now quickened their pace and the little cavalcade was soon within the city.

"The first thing to do," said Hetherington, "is to find a place to put up for the night."

"I know of a place I believe we can find shelter," said Jack, leading the way.

Presently they came upon a fairly large house near the center of the town. Jack went up to the door and knocked loudly. An old man, with snowy white hair, answered the knock.

"Jack," he cried in English, when he caught sight of the lad in the doorway. "What are you doing here?"

"I came with a couple of friends," Jack replied, "and we are looking for a place to spend the night. Can you accommodate us?"

"Certainly," was the reply. "Come right in."

The three entered the house and followed the old man to what appeared a small dining-room. There their host left them, saying that he would have something to eat brought them.

"He's about the only white man in the town," Jack explained. "He has lived here for many years. As you see, his house is unlike the native dwellings. He keeps up European customs as well as he can."

Soon the old man returned, followed by a native servant, bearing food. The three ate hungrily, and immediately their appetites were satisfied followed the old man upstairs, where he showed them a couple of cots. They turned in immediately and soon were fast asleep.

"Where are you to meet your companions?" Frank asked the secret agent, when they had breakfasted the next morning.

"No particular spot was designated," was the reply. "I was told to meet them in this town, that's all. I suppose I shall run into them in the street some place."

The three walked about the streets all morning, and were just about to return to the house where they had spent the night, when a white man in yachting costume approached.

Hetherington rushed up to him with outstretched hand. Frank and Jack stood back.

Hetherington and the stranger remained in conversation for some moments, and then approached the two lads.

"This is Lieutenant Edwards," introduced Hetherington. "Lieutenant, Frank Chadwick and Jack Templeton."

"Pleased to meet you, I'm sure," greeted the lieutenant, extending a hand, which both boys grasped in turn. "Hetherington has told me of what assistance you have been to him. Let me add my thanks to his."

"Where are Lord Hastings and the rest of the party?" demanded Hetherington of the lieutenant.

The lieutenant glanced at the boys quickly, a question in his eyes. Hetherington noted the look.

"Oh, they are all right," he said.

"Well," said the lieutenant. "Lord Hastings and Dellaya will be along to-morrow. The others were delayed in some unaccountable manner, so we shall have to work without them; and quickly, too," he added.

"But the arms and ammunition?" cried Hetherington in alarm.

"Oh, that part is all right. The ship will land the arms and ammunition at a point already selected in the Gulf of Sidra day after to-morrow. Also the money is ready. We must do our part in the meantime."

"But if Dellaya sees me with the sheik he will know me in a minute," protested Hetherington.

"I know it; therefore I shall have to play the part of the German officer."

"But he knows you also."

"True; but I shall be disguised. I have such a disguise as I am sure he will never penetrate. But I fear that he will know you the moment he lays eyes on you."

"There is no doubt about that. What shall I do?"

"I guess you will have to remain behind."

At this moment Jack broke into the conversation.

"Can't I take his place?" he asked. "He won't know me, that's sure."

"By Jove!" declared Hetherington. "I believe you can. What do you say, Edwards?"

The lieutenant hesitated.

Jack noted his uncertainty.

"I can give a good account of myself if it comes to a fight," he declared. "Besides, I'm English and should be allowed to do something for my country."

"Do you speak German?" asked the lieutenant.

"Yes," replied Jack; "also a few native dialects."

"I guess I can use you, then," was the response. "I certainly need someone with me. I have a disguise that will do for you, too, I believe."

"But how about me?" Frank demanded suddenly. "Don't I get a part in this thing? It seems to me I should be allowed to take a hand."

"Well, I won't need you in this first trick," declared the lieutenant, "but if I do need you, you can take my word that I shall call on you."

And with this Frank was forced to be content.

Frank and Jack accompanied the two Englishmen to a place where the lieutenant had stowed a small suitcase. From this the Englishman drew out two suits of clothes, which he and Jack donned hurriedly.

Wearing heavy black beards and spectacles, shoes, hats and clothes of unmistakable German appearance, there was no question that the two would pass for Teutons anywhere.

"Now to find Abu ben Sedar. And in the meantime," he continued, turning to Frank and Hetherington, "you two make your way to Lord Hastings' yacht and wait there until I arrive. It would not do for us to be seen together."

He gave them the directions and the two departed.

"Now for Abu ben Sedar," said the lieutenant. "We must learn where he can be found."

Upon inquiry they learned that the Sheik was encamped with many of his followers a few miles from the outskirts of the town.

"Well," said the lieutenant, "we'll have to hunt him up. The sooner we find him the better. Now, listen," turning to Jack, "you say nothing unless I ask a question, and, whatever I say, agree with me. Do you understand?"

Jack nodded his head in the affirmative.

"Good. Now how are we to find the place where the Sheik is encamped, I wonder?"

"I have been here before," answered Jack. "I know the place well."

"Come, then; let us go," said the lieutenant.

The two turned their faces toward the desert and set off at a brisk pace.

SETTING THE TRAP.

Several hours later Jack and Lieutenant Edwards were taking coffee with the Sheik on a priceless rug before his tent in the desert. The lieutenant was too familiar with Arab customs to come to the object of his visit at once, so it was late in the afternoon when he finally brought up the subject.

"Sheik, what is the present attitude of your people toward the Italian aggressors?" he asked at length.

Abu ben Sedar was wary.

"Why do you ask that?" he demanded.

"Why," explained the lieutenant, "I know that you have led more than one uprising, and I know the Arab nature too well to think they will kiss the hand that strikes them down. The spirit of the desert will rise again. Even now I have heard rumors——"

"'Tis as you say," exclaimed the Sheik excitedly, springing to his feet. "We shall never submit to Italian rule. They have treated us like dogs. But we are biding our time. We need rifles, ammunition, money."

"And that is why I have sought you out," declared the lieutenant.

"You mean you have come to help us shake off the yoke of the oppressor?"

"Exactly. I am authorized to offer you arms for fifteen thousand men and silver enough to keep them all in the field for several months; in return for which, when victorious, you are to sign over eight hundred square miles of coast territory to the German government.

"But," the Sheik protested, "I own no such land, nor do I know anyone who does. Even if the Italians were driven out I could not justly claim it."

"But, Sheik," said the lieutenant gravely, "when the Italians are driven out, you, the acknowledged leader of all the dissatisfied Arabs in the vicinity—the man who would be Sultan or Bey if successful—will have as good a title to the land as another, and the German government will accept it. Am I not right?" he asked, turning to Jack.

"You are," Jack agreed.

The explanation was plausible, and the Sheik was flattered.

"They have heard of me in Germany, then?" he asked.

"Indeed they have," said Jack, who from previous visits to Nalut knew something of the Sheik's ancestry and fortunes. "They know that your genealogy runs back in an unbroken line far beyond the days of Carthage, and you are looked upon as the man of the hour in Tripoli."

Greatly pleased to hear that his name was so well known in the land beyond the sea, the Sheik lost whatever suspicions he might have had and accepted the attractive proposition thus offered him.

"When will the arms be ready, and where will they be landed?" he asked.

"They will be landed in the Gulf of Sidra day after to-morrow," was the lieutenant's reply.

"Good!" exclaimed the Sheik. "I shall have them removed to a secret place in the desert, not to be used until we are fully prepared to strike. Now, about the money?"

"The silver will be turned over to you in Nalut to-morrow morning, if you will meet me there. Is that satisfactory?"

"Perfectly," returned the Sheik, and he named a place and hour for the meeting the next day.

The Arab told off two of his men as an escort, and Jack and Lieutenant Edwards returned to the village, where they made their way to the house in which Jack had spent the previous night. There they turned in, satisfied that their end of the work had been satisfactorily accomplished.

While they were at breakfast in the morning, Hetherington burst into the room.

"Dellaya and Lord Hastings are in the village," he exclaimed. "Is everything all right?"

"Everything is serene," declared the lieutenant. "Is the money here?"

"Yes; it has been taken to the house of a man named Effidi. You are to take the Sheik there and turn it over to him. We will see that Dellaya is a witness of the transaction."

"Good," said the lieutenant, and he and Jack left the house to keep their appointment with Abu ben Sedar.

The Sheik was awaiting them, and the three made their way to the home of Effidi, where the money was formally turned over to the Arab.

Just as the transfer was being completed, the Sheik paused suddenly to listen. His keen ear had detected a sound in the next room. He approached the wall and peered through a crack.

"Dellaya," he exclaimed in some alarm.

"What!" ejaculated Lieutenant Edwards, in well-feigned surprise.

"Dellaya," repeated the Arab, "my good friend. If all Italians were like him, the Arabs would never resent the presence of Italian troops in Tripoli. But they are not, so we must make haste."

Swiftly the three finished their business and Jack and the lieutenant left the house, leaving the Sheik in possession of the silver.

"Are you sure the arms will be landed to-morrow?" asked the Sheik, as they left.

"Sure," replied the lieutenant. "They will be ready for you."

"Good," said the Arab. "I shall be there to get them."

Hardly had Jack and the lieutenant disappeared when the great Italian diplomat, followed by Lord Hastings, made his way excitedly from the house.

"Did you catch the significance of what we have just overheard?" demanded Dellaya, of Lord Hastings, as they hurried away.

"I did," replied Lord Hastings briefly. "It is fortunate we were here."

"It is, indeed," was the reply. "Italy has been the cat's paw of the German emperor too long. Strive as she will, Italy cannot stand by her partners in the Triple Alliance in the face of such treachery. But I

must make sure. This ammunition they spoke of—I must see it landed with my own eyes. I must find this rendezvous. Will you help me, Lord Hastings?”

“I shall be glad to,” was the reply. “My yacht is at your service.”

The two hurried on their way.

Returning to the house in which they had spent the night, Jack and the lieutenant removed their disguises, and the lieutenant made ready to take his departure.

“Well,” he said to Jack, “I want to thank you for your aid, and I guess it is good-by, now.”

“Why,” demanded Jack, “can’t you take me with you? I haven’t done much, but I might be of more use later on. I would like to go to England with you, so that I may offer my services to my country.”

The lieutenant hesitated.

“I guess it can be done,” he replied finally. “You are certainly entitled to go if you wish. Come along, then.”

Several hours later the two stood on the deck of Lord Hastings’ yacht *Sylph*. Lord Hastings and Dellaya were already there, and the lad was introduced as a young Englishman who wished to return to his home land. Frank already had been introduced as an American who was desirous of getting home. Lord Hastings declared that he was glad to be able to help them.

All that night and early the next morning the yacht cruised about, Dellaya always on the lookout for the sign of a ship bearing the arms and ammunition for the Arabs. It was almost noon before they sighted it, Dellaya still ignorant of the fact that he had been brought there purposely.

Small boats were rapidly landing arms from the ship, unmistakably a German vessel and flying a German flag, as the yacht bore down on it. Upon Dellaya’s request, the yacht sailed close enough for the Italian to see that the ship’s crew were apparently Germans.

Then the great Italian diplomat signified that he had seen enough. He turned to Lord Hastings.

“Would it be too great an inconvenience for you to cut short your cruise and take me back to Naples?” he asked.

“Certainly not,” was the reply. “But what is it you plan to do, *signor*?”

“I must report this strange proceeding to the Italian Foreign Office,” declared the Italian excitedly, “too long has Italy been a tool of Germany and Austria.”

“A tool!” exclaimed Lord Hastings in surprise.

“Yes; we have been suspicious, and now our suspicions have been confirmed. Beset by three countries as she is, Germany still has time to plot trouble for Italy!

“But I have seen enough to thwart this outrage. No longer will Italy be Germany’s cat’s paw. Probably we should have gone to the Kaiser’s aid if necessary. But now—no! So far as Italy is concerned, the Triple Alliance is dead!”

One week later, having just arrived in London, Frank and Jack learned of the success of the apparently trifling adventure in which they had taken a hand.

Despite repeated demands of the Kaiser that Italy live up to her obligations under the alliance, the Italian government had refused to support the German cause and take up arms against the Allies!

CHAPTER IX.

A DESPERATE FLIGHT.

"I believe that man is following us!"

It was Jack who spoke. He and Frank had now been in the English metropolis two days, and to-day were walking along the Strand, watching with the greatest interest the preparations for war.

Upon all sides troops were being moved through the streets, on their way to the front. They marched along singing and cheering, while from the walks great crowds cheered them as they passed. The boys had just resumed their walk after watching one body of troops pass, when Jack made the remark that begins this chapter.

"Followed!" exclaimed Frank in surprise. "Why should anyone follow us?"

"I am sure I don't know," was Jack's reply; "but just the same I am sure that man is following us."

"Well," said Frank, "we'll try and see if we can't give him the slip. Come on!"

The lads quickened their pace and turned quickly into the first side street. As they rounded the next corner they glanced back and saw that the man Jack believed was on their trail hurrying after them.

"Quick!" said Frank, catching Jack by the arm, "into this store!"

The lads dodged into an open doorway, and a moment later saw their pursuer hurry by. The lads immediately slipped from the store and retreated in the direction from which they had come.

"Well, I guess we got rid of him, all right," declared Jack.

"Have you ever seen him before?" asked Frank.

"His face seemed familiar, but I cannot place him," was Jack's reply. "Hold on, though," he exclaimed suddenly, "I know now who he is!"

"Who?" demanded Frank.

"He was one of the sailors aboard Lord Hastings' yacht. I remember that long, sharp nose. Now what do you suppose he is following us for?"

"You've got me. However, I guess he is not following us any longer!"

But Frank was wrong.

The man who had been following the two boys had not been thrown off the trail by their ruse. He was too old a hand at the game to be shaken off so easily; but he had recognized the fact that the boys knew they were being shadowed. Now he kept farther in the background, well out of sight. As a result the lads, upon returning to the American hotel, where they had taken rooms, were not aware that their pursuer had followed them to its doors.

After dinner the boys sat down in the lobby of the hotel, awaiting the arrival of Hetherington, who had promised to meet them there at 8 o'clock. A taxi driver entered, approached the desk, and a moment later a page started through the lobby, calling:

"Mr. Templeton! Mr. Templeton!"

"Here," said Jack, rising.

The page handed Jack a letter.

"It's from Hetherington," Jack told Frank, after a hasty perusal. "Says he is unable to meet us here, but for us to come to his place in the taxi he has sent for us."

"All right," replied Frank. "But I must go upstairs a moment first," and he started hurriedly for the elevator.

"I'll wait in the taxi," called Jack, and he followed the chauffeur to the street, where the taxi stood in the shadow of the hotel.

The chauffeur opened the door and the lad climbed in. As he did so, two strong hands reached out from the darkness of the cab and took him by the throat, while a third hand was clapped over his mouth to prevent his making an outcry. At the same moment the door was slammed shut, and the taxi rolled swiftly away.

Jack struggled desperately, but in vain. The sudden attack had been well timed and, struggle as he would, Jack could not shake off the hold on his throat, but soon sank back unconscious.

Then the hand upon his throat relaxed and a voice exclaimed in German:

"He's as strong as an ox. It's a good thing both of them didn't come."

"Well, we have got him, all right," came a second voice, "and this is the one the chief wants, I am sure."

When Jack regained consciousness the taxi was still rushing swiftly along, and the lad found that his hands were securely bound behind his back.

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded of the darkness of the cab.

There was no reply, and Jack repeated:

"I say, what's the meaning of this?"

"You will know soon enough," replied a voice in a harsh tone. "In the meantime, if you don't keep quiet, we shall gag you!"

Under this threat, Jack held his peace.

For almost an hour the taxi bowled along swiftly, then finally came to a stop. One of Jack's captors alighted, and the other pushed Jack from the cab. They dragged him up a short gravel path to a rather pretentious looking house and into the door.

In the house the lad was taken to the third floor, where he was led into a nicely furnished room. Then his hands were untied, and his captors backed out of the room, locking the door behind them.

"I wonder what on earth this is all about," Jack asked himself when he was left alone. "I'll bet they have me mixed up with someone else. Well, I'll have to wait and see!"

For an hour Jack sat silently awaiting the arrival of someone; but no one came.

"Guess I might as well lie down and get a little rest," he told himself finally; "I'm likely to need it."

He lay down on a couch at one end of the room and was soon asleep.

Two hours later he opened his eyes again. A drop lamp was lighted upon the table, which also contained a tray with a most appetizing supper of broiled squab, salad, ices and coffee. The boy arose, and for the first time explored the room.

The door was of oak, two inches thick, and was bolted upon the outside. Deciding that no personal violence was intended for the present, Jack thought he might as well fortify himself with a good meal.

As to his whereabouts he hadn't the slightest idea. He had scarcely finished the squab, when the door was unlocked and a burly man with a blonde beard and the general appearance of a savant came in.

Carefully securing the door behind him, the visitor drew a chair up to the table and comfortably seated himself.

"I trust the supper is to your liking, Mr. Templeton? You have everything you wish?"

"Yes," replied Jack, as he pushed back his chair; "and now, would an explanation of why I was brought here be in order?"

"Why, yes, I guess so," was the reply.

"I'll be glad to hear it," said Jack.

"Well, I have been led to believe that, through the activity of England, the life of the Triple Alliance was snuffed out. I think that admission will do no harm; and while, of course, I might have snared a greater bird than you—a man higher up—I decided that you would not be so quickly missed."

"But what have I to do with the death of the Triple Alliance?" demanded Jack.

The German, for such Jack knew him to be, shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"You see, we have discovered the part you played in Tripoli," he said. "Knowing enough to be allowed to take part in such a coup, you must know a great deal more. I know that the Triple Alliance was put to death through English aid; and I know that you know it. Also I know that you know how it was done, and the names of all connected with the coup. That is what I expect you to tell me."

"Well," said Jack quietly, "I won't!"

"Come now," was the reply. "I know you know these things."

"Admit for the sake of argument, then," said Jack, "that I have certain information. How do you intend to extract it—against my will?"

"It does appear difficult to you, doesn't it?" was the rejoinder. "But we have learned to manage all that with little trouble."

"You'll not manage me!" declared the lad.

The visitor smiled.

"Are you familiar with the weed that produces what is called the Sleeping Sickness?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Jack, becoming interested, for he had seen many animals unconscious for hours after eating the weed.

"Very well," continued the visitor. "Now, I will tell you that we have extracted the juice of the weed, and that the liquid can easily be mixed with any sort of food or drink. Do you follow me?"

Jack nodded his head.

"Whoever eats food or drinks anything containing a quantity of this shortly becomes delirious, and while in that condition will talk of the things that have been most impressed upon his mind. In the food you have just eaten a sufficient amount of this tincture has been placed to put you in such a condition."

Jack was conscious of a cold chill running through his back at the possibilities so coolly suggested, and his jaw set with a great determination.

"But suppose I should not talk?" he asked.

"There is not one chance in a million of failure," was the reply; "but, if it does fail, I shall probably consider it necessary to do something worse."

Again the cold chill ran through Jack's body. He opened his mouth to speak, but before he could do so the visitor rose from his seat, remarking:

"Perhaps you will tell me what I desire to know without all this unpleasantness, eh?"

"No," replied Jack.

"Very good, then. I have talked enough," and he approached Jack. "It is time to act!"

FRANK TO THE RESCUE.

Jack jumped to his feet, prepared to fight. But before he could strike a blow he reeled and fell to the floor. The German picked him up and laid him on the couch. Then, unlocking the door, he called softly. There was the sound of footsteps ascending the stairs, and a moment later two other men entered the room. One carried a physician's case. He opened it and administered a drug to the unconscious boy.

Soon Jack's lips moved slightly, a few muttered words became audible and the three men leaned nearer to catch them. The voice became stronger:

"I want my pay! Two pounds four! Oh, you would, would you! Then take that! I'll go through the skylight! Well, I've got one of them, anyhow! Now for the next! Safe at last! I don't want the gold! I want two pounds four!"

For an hour the Germans listened to monotonous repetitions of the same thing—then the effect of the drug wore off and the lips became silent. Again the drug was administered, but the effect did not vary by so much as a word.

During the experiment three shadows had crept silently upstairs. For just a moment they listened, and then the heavy oak door was pushed open, and, with Frank in the lead, the three entered the room.

Frank leaped forward, and with a heavy blow sent the man who was bending over Jack reeling. The latter drew a revolver and fired point blank at the lad.

But Frank had seen the move, and ducked, closing in as he did so, and the bullet sped harmlessly over his head, imbedding itself in the door. Frank grabbed the barrel of the revolver before the man could fire again, and twisted—striking out with his free hand as he did so.

Struck upon the point of the jaw, the German reeled back again, leaving his weapon in Frank's hand. The lad followed up his advantage and struck his opponent another stinging blow. The man fell to the floor.

In the meantime, the other rescuers, who turned out to be Hetherington and Lord Hastings, had taken care of the other Germans. Lord Hastings, leaping across the room at Frank's heels, had placed one *hors du combat* with a single blow, and Hetherington, after a brief struggle, had succeeded in overcoming his adversary.

Frank bent over Jack and shook him, but the latter did not open his eyes. Again and again Frank shook him, with the same result. Lord Hastings approached the couch, reached over and lifted Jack's eyelids with his finger.

"The sleeping sickness!" he ejaculated. "I recognize the symptoms. He must have a physician at once. We must put him in the car and get him to my place quick."

The unconscious lad was hastily carried to a waiting automobile, and was soon laid on a comfortable bed in Lord Hastings' home.

"Is he going to die?" asked Frank of Lord Hastings.

"Not necessarily. The sleeping sickness is not always fatal, but his condition is dangerous."

The physician arrived a few moments later, and after a careful examination, announced that with perfect quiet Jack would live. A little delay, he said, would probably have proven fatal.

For two days Jack hovered between life and death, but upon the third day the physician pronounced him out of danger. Then, for the first time, Frank, who had removed his belongings from the hotel to Lord Hastings' home to be near, was allowed to see his friend.

"Well, old man," he said, "you have had a narrow escape."

"So the doctor told me," replied Jack.

"Yes," declared Frank, "and you have proved yourself quite a hero."

"Hero!" exclaimed Jack. "I haven't done anything."

"You haven't, eh! Why, anyone who would go through what you did, when you could have prevented it by a few words, is a hero, all right."

"Oh, that was nothing. I was sure they wouldn't learn anything through me. Besides, you wouldn't have had me tell my country's secrets, would you?"

"There are a good many who would have done so rather than to go through what you did."

"Would you have told?"

"Well," said Frank, "I don't know. I don't believe I would."

"Of course you wouldn't. But now, tell me how you happened to arrive just in the nick of time. I know I owe my life to you."

"When I came downstairs and went to the street to join you in the taxi," Frank explained, "there wasn't any taxi in sight. I was sure you wouldn't have gone on without me. Recalling the fact that we had been followed that afternoon, I became suspicious. I put two and two together, and events proved that I added them up right.

"I got Hetherington on the telephone. He said he had sent you no letter, and that he was just leaving to meet us. He hurried to the hotel, and after I explained the situation, we rushed to Lord Hastings'.

"It took us four hours to find the place where you had been taken. I certainly could never have found it by myself. Lord Hastings had every policeman in London interrogated, I guess, and we finally received word that one had seen two men, apparently carrying another, enter the house where we found you. Lord Hastings immediately recognized the house described as the home of a well-known and prominent Austrian.

"We rushed to the house, and it took us about half an hour to find a way to get in, so heavily were the windows and doors barred. Also we knew we had to be very quiet, for, if our presence had become known, your captors would undoubtedly have killed you before making their escape.

"We finally effected an entrance through the front door, Lord Hastings succeeding in picking the

lock after some difficulty. Then we hurried upstairs. We found the room you were in by the sounds of the voices of your captors. Lord Hastings realized immediately what the Germans were trying to do, and we broke in the door. They put up a fight, but we soon had them safe. That is all there is to the story."

"Where are they now?" demanded Jack.

"Oh, they are safe enough. They are being held as prisoners of war, although it was first planned to have them shot as spies."

The two boys were silent for some time, and finally Frank said:

"Jack, I have an idea and I want to know how it strikes you!"

"All right. Let's hear it."

"What is the matter with us enlisting and seeing a little real fighting?"

"Why, I have been figuring on that all the time. That is why I came to England. But you are an American. I don't see why you should want to fight."

"Maybe I am, but my ancestors were English. Besides, I want to see something of this war, and I can't see it in London. I want to be where the fighting is."

"Well, I'm glad. I guess Lord Hastings can arrange it so we can be together."

"I guess so, too. We'll speak to him as soon as he comes in."

CHAPTER XI.

OFF TO THE WAR.

"So you want to go to war, eh?"

It was Lord Hastings who spoke. Frank and Jack had lost no time in putting their plans before him when he returned home the evening on which the two lads had talked over their future.

"Yes!" replied both lads, in the same breath.

Lord Hastings stroked his mustache.

"Well," he said, "if you have set your minds on going, I know there is no use of my trying to stop you. Now, I have a plan that I believe will meet with your approval."

The boys listened eagerly as Lord Hastings continued:

"As you know, the British home fleet is in the North Sea, bottling the Germans up in Kiel and Helgoland. There is likely to be a battle there almost any time. My yacht, the *Sylph*, has been converted into a scout cruiser, and has been heavily armed.

"Although the *Sylph* is listed as being able to make a speed of only twenty knots, nevertheless it is swifter than any of our war vessels. This unknown speed has been useful more than once. My naval rank is that of captain, and I have been ordered to the North Sea with the *Sylph*!"

"What!" exclaimed the two lads, and Frank continued:

"Why cannot you take us with you?"

"Just what I was about to propose," declared Lord Hastings. "Would you like to go with me, or would you prefer to join the army?"

"The sea for me!" exclaimed Jack.

"For me, too!" declared Frank.

"Good!" replied Lord Hastings. "Then that part is settled."

"But what will be our duties?" asked Jack.

"Well, while you will be only unofficial members of the crew, in view of the service you have done for England, I believe my influence is great enough to have you rated as midshipmen."

"But we know nothing of naval warfare," declared Frank.

"The chances are that we won't have to do a great deal of fighting," explained Lord Hastings. "But I guess you will both be able to give a good account of yourselves if we do."

"We shall do the best we can," declared Frank.

"You won't find us shirking our duties," Jack agreed.

"I'm sure of that," replied Lord Hastings, rising. "I must go now, and I shall try and get your appointments to-night. I shall let you know what success I have in the morning. Good-night."

Lord Hastings left the room, and Frank and Jack immediately fell into a discussion of the times that were to come. So interested did they become in their talk that it was well after midnight when they finally went to bed.

They were up bright and early the next morning, however, so eager were they to learn the result of Lord Hastings' mission, and were already there when that gentleman entered the breakfast room with a smile on his face.

"Well," demanded Frank, so anxious that he was unable to wait for Lord Hastings to speak, "is it all right?"

"Did you fix it?" asked Jack.

Lord Hastings nodded.

"Yes; it's all right," he replied. He drew from his pocket two official and important looking papers. "Here are your appointments as midshipmen in his majesty's navy. You have been assigned to the *Sylph*, under my command."

"Hurrah!" cried Frank.

"Hurrah!" shouted Jack.

Lord Hastings smiled quietly at their enthusiasm.

"I am glad you are pleased," he said.

"You bet we are pleased," said Jack. "We can never thank you enough."

"We certainly can't," declared Frank. "But when do we go?"

"Now, don't get excited," laughed Lord Hastings. "There is plenty of time. We shall go on board the *Sylph* to-night and sail about midnight. Now come with me, and we'll see about getting your uniforms."

Their uniforms obtained and their other needs having been supplied, the boys spent the rest of the day strolling about the city. So great was their impatience to be off that the hours dragged by slowly and time hung heavily on their hands as they wandered about, waiting for six o'clock, when they were to meet Lord Hastings at his home.

As with everything, however, the time came and passed, and Frank and Jack at last stood again upon the deck of the *Sylph*. It was almost midnight when the little scout cruiser finally slipped her cable and steamed proudly down the Thames.

"Well," said Jack, "we are off at last. I wonder where we shall be next month at this time?"

Frank shrugged his shoulders.

"Who knows?" he replied.

For several hours the two lads stood upon the deck, gazing over the rail into the dark waters of the river; but at length they turned in.

The *Sylph* was manned with a crew of 100 men, besides her officers. A small cruiser, she nevertheless had been an extremely large-sized yacht. All told she mounted ten eight-inch guns and several smaller pieces.

Used frequently as she had been by Lord Hastings on diplomatic and political missions, the *Sylph*

had always been prepared to resist an attack, so that her present armament was only twice what it had been.

While the *Sylph* would stand little chance against one of the great German dreadnoughts or battle cruisers, Lord Hastings had little doubt that she could give a good account of herself in an encounter with some of the enemy's smaller vessels. If he encountered one of the enemy's bigger vessels, it was Lord Hastings' plan to run, and he was positive that he could not be overhauled; for the *Sylph* had the heels of practically anything afloat.

Officers and crew were trained to the minute. Picked from among the flower of Britain's sailors, drilled so that they went about their work like well-oiled cogs in a great machine, they were all eager to get into action.

Although rated as midshipmen, Frank and Jack were not assigned to fixed stations. They had been given a cabin just off the one occupied by Lord Hastings. The *Sylph*, ostensibly a pleasure yacht, had been fitted up with roomy and beautiful cabins, and this space, although the yacht now was a war cruiser, necessarily had to be utilized.

Under Lord Hastings, Lieutenant Edwards was the second in command. The next two ranking officers were Second Lieutenant Taylor and Third Lieutenant Harvey.

Bright sunlight streamed into the cabin occupied by the two boys when they awoke the morning following their departure from London. They jumped up, dressed hurriedly, and went on deck. There was no land in sight, nor was there even a sail in the distance; nothing but water as far as the eye could see.

The little cruiser steamed swiftly along, rising and falling gently with the swell of the sea. For a long time the boys stood gazing out over the water, and they were still there when Lord Hastings approached.

"Good morning," he greeted them. "How do you think you will like life on the ocean wave?"

"It's glorious," replied both lads in a single voice. "Where are we?"

"We are headed straight for the North Sea," was the reply.

"Is there any danger of our meeting a German warship?"

"Very little. Of course, there may be a cruiser prowling about, but I doubt it. I did hear, however, that there was a German cruiser in these waters several days ago. Nothing has been heard of her since, in spite of a keen search. She has probably put into some neutral port. In that event she must either leave in twenty-four hours or disarm until the end of the war."

"Are we to join the fleet immediately?"

"No, not immediately. We shall do some scouting for several days off the Scandinavian coast, trying to pick up some of the Germans who, under neutral colors, have been laying mines in the North Sea."

"But isn't there some danger of our striking a mine?"

"Not around here. Farther along, of course, we shall have to be extremely careful."

For two days the *Sylph* continued on her way without incident.

Frank and Jack quickly fell into the routine life aboard the cruiser, and performed such duties as were from time to time assigned to them in such manner as to draw forth the praise of Lord Hastings and his officers.

It was on the third evening after leaving London that Frank and Jack, who were standing on deck, were startled by a cry from the lookout:

"Cruiser off the port bow, sir!"

The word was passed and Lord Hastings quickly appeared on deck.

"A German, as sure as I am a foot high!" he declared, after a long and careful scrutiny through his glass.

"She's a German, sir," agreed Lieutenant Edwards, "and she is headed directly for us."

"We'll go a little closer, and try to make out her identity," was Lord Hastings' order. "Slow down to fifteen knots!"

Soon the ship, at first but a speck in the distance, was close enough for Lord Hastings to make out her colors.

"American!" he said; then turning to Lieutenant Edwards, added:

"Try her on the wireless!"

"No reply," came the answer from the wireless room a few moments later.

Still the ships continued to draw nearer to each other.

Suddenly the American flag at the masthead of the stranger fluttered down, and a moment later the German colors were run up in its stead.

At the same moment a loud boom sounded from across the water, and there was a great splash in the water behind the *Sylph*.

The wireless operator approached Lord Hastings:

"A message from the German, sir!" he said.

Lord Hastings took the slip of paper extended to him, and read aloud:

"Surrender, or we shall blow you out of the water!"

A BRUSH WITH THE ENEMY.

Lord Hastings turned to the operator with a smile.

"Tell him to blow away!" he said, and the operator departed, grinning broadly.

The first shades of darkness were now beginning to encircle the little vessel.

"The enemy has the range of us," said Lord Hastings to Lieutenant Edwards, as a second shell whistled over the bow of the vessel, kicking up a great splash in the water.

"Yes, sir," was the reply; "our guns are ineffective at this distance."

Under Lord Hastings' command, the *Sylph* came about, and headed back in the way she had come.

"What would you say she is making?" asked Lord Hastings of Lieutenant Edwards, indicating the approaching German cruiser.

"About twenty-one knots, sir."

"Good. Set our speed at twenty-four, then."

"Very good, sir."

The *Sylph* seemed to leap forward. Then Lord Hastings took the time to explain his plans.

"We don't want to run entirely away from her," he explained. "We want to keep just enough ahead of her so she will continue the chase. Darkness will be upon us in an hour. I should like to capture that cruiser single-handed, and some method may present itself. But in the meantime we must keep out of range of her big guns."

The *Sylph* gradually drew away from her pursuer. When the distance between the two vessels was such that Lord Hastings deemed accurate shooting by the German impossible, the speed of the *Sylph* was reduced to twenty-one knots.

These relative positions the two vessels maintained until darkness fell; then the glare of a searchlight aboard the German fell upon the *Sylph* and lighted her up like day. So the chase continued for another hour.

Suddenly the wireless operator came on deck, and rushed breathlessly up to Lord Hastings.

"I have just picked up the British cruiser *Lancaster*," he cried. "I told her we were being chased by a German cruiser, and she is coming to our aid. She gave her position as twenty miles west of us, sir."

"Good," replied Lord Hastings. "Keep in touch with the *Lancaster*."

The operator departed.

"How is she headed?" demanded Lord Hastings of Lieutenant Edwards.

"Due west, sir," was the reply.

"Make it west by south," ordered Lord Hastings.

"Very good, sir!"

Gradually the *Sylph* bore off toward the south, the German cruiser still in pursuit.

For more than an hour the chase continued, the *Sylph* still keeping the same distance ahead of the German. Then from the northwest came the distant flash of another searchlight.

"Ship off the starboard bow, sir!" came the cry of the lookout.

"Slow to fifteen knots!" came Lord Hastings' order, and there was a perceptible diminishing in the speed of the *Sylph*.

Still the German cruiser came on, quickly reducing the distance between the two vessels. Then, suddenly, the light that illumined the *Sylph* disappeared; the searchlight on the German had been turned in another direction.

"She has sighted the *Lancaster*, sir," said Lieutenant Edwards.

"So she has," replied Lord Hastings. "Bring the *Sylph* about, and make your course north by east, Lieutenant Edwards."

"Very good, sir," was the lieutenant's reply, and the *Sylph* came about quickly.

Hardly had the little vessel laid herself out on her new course, when Lord Hastings' voice rang out:

"Full speed ahead!"

The *Sylph* jumped forward like some live thing, and headed in the direction of the German cruiser, still bearing somewhat to the south.

Frank and Jack watched all these maneuvers with the greatest of interest. When the word was passed that the vessel approaching was a German cruiser, the boys had been greatly excited; and, when the *Sylph* had turned and fled from the enemy, their disappointment knew no bounds.

"Great Scott!" Frank exclaimed. "We are running away!"

"I don't believe Lord Hastings is the man to run very far," Jack replied. "Besides, you can see as well as I can that the *Sylph* is no match for the German. She would shoot us out of the water before she approached within range of our guns."

"Perhaps so," returned Frank, "but just the same I would rather fight than run away from that cruiser, big as she is."

"I feel the same way. But 'discretion is the better part of valor,' you know. Besides, I believe Lord Hastings has some scheme in his mind."

"Well, I hope so," declared Frank.

The boys had spied the distant light of the approaching *Lancaster* practically at the same moment as had the lookout; and, when the *Sylph* once more came about and headed toward the German cruiser, Jack exclaimed:

"What did I tell you? I said Lord Hastings wasn't the man to run far, no matter how great the odds against him."

"You are right," was Frank's reply. "It looks as though we were to see a little action."

"Yes, and it's likely to be a pretty sizable fight, or I miss my guess," returned Jack.

For fear of giving notice of their approach to the enemy, who now apparently had forgotten the

existence of the *Sylph* in the approach of the *Lancaster*, the call to quarters was not sounded on the *Sylph*. Upon orders of Lord Hastings, Frank and Jack went quietly about the ship, summoning the men to their posts.

There was not a light upon the *Sylph* as the little vessel bore down upon the enemy. The searchlight of the *Lancaster* now enveloped the German, and the searchlight of the latter now played upon the swiftly oncoming British cruiser.

On the *Sylph* everything was ready for the struggle. The perfectly drilled crew had cleared for action in no time. Lord Hastings and Lieutenant Edwards made a round of inspection, and spoke inspiring words to the members of the crew.

"Remember the words of Lord Nelson," cried the former, "England expects every man to do his duty!"

A cheer was quickly silenced when Lord Hastings raised his hand for quiet.

"Our chance of coming out of this engagement alive," Lord Hastings said to the gun crews, "is that you make every shot count. A vital spot must be hit at the first fire. The enemy's great guns would tear us to pieces. If we can take them by surprise, we have more than an even chance of success."

Lord Hastings returned to his place on deck.

Nearer and still nearer the *Sylph* crept toward her foe; and now the speed was reduced to fifteen knots.

"Another ten minutes and we shall be near enough to strike," declared Lord Hastings to the group of officers about him. He turned to Jack and Frank. "Take your posts," he said, "and keep me informed if we are struck and what damage is done by the enemy's fire."

Frank and Jack descended to the lower deck—now converted into the gun deck. Both lads were trembling with eagerness and excitement.

"How do you feel, Jack," asked Frank, "scared?"

"No, not exactly," was the reply. "I feel rather funny, though."

"Same here," said Frank, "but I guess we'll get over that as soon as things break loose."

"Yes; and they're about due to break," declared Jack.

Members of the gun crews joked each other good-naturedly, as they waited for the command to fire.

And still there was a death-like silence on the *Sylph*.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Frank at last. "This is the longest ten minutes I ever saw!"

"Don't you worry," replied Jack, "they'll be over——"

Then suddenly it came. Even from where they stood, the boys could hear the clear, quiet voice of Lord Hastings:

"Lieutenant Edwards, you may fire at will!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BATTLE!

There was an instant of awful silence; then came the command:

"Fire!"

There was a horrible noise, louder by far than the loudest clap of thunder; the *Sylph* quivered, then seemed to leap back. The big guns on the starboard side of the little vessel had poured forth their volley.

So close had the *Sylph* approached to the enemy without being discovered that a miss was impossible; and the suddenness of this unexpected attack took the Germans completely off their guard. There came a voice from above:

"A hit! A hit!"

The *Sylph* now shook and trembled continuously, as broadside after broadside was poured into the enemy, first from one side and then from the other, as the little vessel maneuvered, presenting first one side and then the other to the enemy.

Although taken practically unprepared, the Germans had no mind to give up without a fight. One of the shells from the *Sylph* had passed through the cabin of the commander, leaving death and ruin in its wake; a second tore a great hole through the smokestack, and she had been pierced in other vulnerable spots.

The marksmanship of the British gunners was superb!

But now the Germans had brought their big guns to bear on the little vessel. There was a gigantic boom, followed immediately by the sound of a great crash. The shell had struck one of the guns of the *Sylph*, blowing it to pieces.

There was a shower of iron, and men fell on all sides as it rained upon the deck. At Gun No. 2 the gunner crumpled up and fell to the deck just as he was about to fire.

"Report this to Lord Hastings!" cried Jack to Frank, and the latter rushed upon deck.

Jack leaped to the gun and touched it off with his own hand. His action was rewarded by a great shout from on deck, followed by a terrific explosion.

Another German shell struck the gun deck of the *Sylph*, and again several men went to the deck. But as they fell others jumped to take their places, Jack among them.

For another few minutes the battle raged without cessation. Jack continued to work like a Trojan; Frank, returning from above, where he had reported to Lord Hastings, saw his friend running, shouting, fighting with the others, stripped to the waist.

With a shout, Frank rushed to his side, arriving just in time to touch off a gun as the gunner fell beside it.

Then, suddenly, there came from above the command:

"Cease firing!"

As if by magic the night became still. After the great noise and confusion of the battle the sudden stillness was so intense that the boys' ears hurt. Then they made their way to the deck.

And what a sight met their eyes!

Before them the sea was covered with a mass of wreckage. The stately German cruiser of a few minutes before was like so much floating débris.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Jack. "Did we do all that?"

"I guess we did," replied Frank.

"Mr. Chadwick! Mr. Templeton!" came the voice of Lord Hastings. "You will man two of the boats at once and pick up as many as possible of those poor fellows in the sea!"

The lads rushed to obey this order, and soon were busily engaged in rescuing the German sailors clinging to the débris and swimming about in the water.

For almost an hour they rowed about, picking up the unfortunate Germans.

Although a mass of wreckage, the German cruiser had not yet sunk, but it was plainly apparent that it was settling rapidly. On the bridge Jack made out the form of a man in uniform. It was undoubtedly the commander.

"By George," declared Jack, "we must get him off!"

"It's no use," spoke up one of the German officers who had been picked up. "He refused to leave the ship. We tried to prevail upon him to jump, but he said he would stick to his post."

"Even so," replied Jack, "we must make an effort to save him."

"It's useless," repeated the German.

The little boat was rowed closer in spite of the German's words, and Jack called to the German commander:

"Jump, sir, and we will save you."

The German looked at the lad, but made no reply, and Jack repeated:

"Jump. We will get you all right."

Slowly the German commander drew a revolver, and, pointing it at the boat, exclaimed:

"Keep away, or I shall fire!"

As Jack did not immediately order his men to move away, the German officer in the boat exclaimed:

"You would better do as he says. Besides, the ship will sink in a moment, and the suction will draw us under if we do not move from here."

At the same moment Frank, returning to the *Sylph* with his boat filled with survivors, called:

"Get back quick, Jack, or you will be drawn under!"

Jack looked once more at the German commander, who still stood with leveled revolver, and then turned to his men:

"Give way!" he commanded, and the little boat headed once more for the *Sylph*.

The small boat withdrew from the danger zone none too soon.

When still a few yards from the *Sylph*, Jack turned his face toward the sinking cruiser. As he did so, the sinking craft gave a convulsive shudder, then the sea closed over it. The last thing that Jack saw was the commander, standing calmly on the bridge, awaiting the end. He went to his death with bared head, standing at attention. Jack will remember the sight till his dying day.

"A brave man!" was all he said, lifting his cap from his head.

Back on the *Sylph*, Frank and Jack learned that the casualties in the battle had been comparatively slight. Ten men had been killed and twenty-two wounded. Two of the latter were not expected to live. The German shells had done considerable damage to the *Sylph*, particularly upon the gun deck. Lord Hastings declared, however, that this could be patched up with very little difficulty.

It was during a talk with Lord Hastings, while the commander of the *Sylph* and the two boys watched the approach of the British cruiser *Lancaster*, that Jack learned just what an important part he had played in the engagement.

"It was a single shot that put the German out of business," declared Lord Hastings. "It was just after the first fire from the German hit us, killing some of the gun crew."

Jack looked surprised, but said nothing.

"A second later," continued Lord Hastings, "there was a single shot from the *Sylph*. The shell penetrated to the magazine on the cruiser, and it exploded. Although the Germans fought for some time thereafter, that was the shot that decided the battle; it was the shot that sunk the ship."

He turned to Jack. "You were in the gun room at the time," he said; "do you know who fired that shot?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jack, in some confusion.

"Who was it, then?"

"I fired it, sir!"

"What!" exclaimed Lord Hastings and Frank in the same breath.

"Yes, sir, I fired it; but it was just luck that I hit anything."

"A shot like that can hardly be called luck," replied Lord Hastings.

"Well, it was luck as far as I am concerned," said Jack. "The gun had already been sighted. I just touched it off when Mitchel fell to the deck."

"The hand of Providence has surely been with us this night," declared Lord Hastings.

A sailor approached with a message.

"A message from the wireless room, sir," he said.

Lord Hastings took the paper he extended. He read aloud:

"Your report received. Congratulations on your gallant victory. We are proud of you all, and are sorry we could not be in at the death. Stand by, I am coming on board. Will relieve you of your prisoners.

(Signed) "CAPT. T. T. MAYFAIR,
"Commanding H. M. S. *Lancaster*."

Lieutenant Edwards approached at this juncture and saluted.

"A boat from the *Lancaster* is coming alongside, sir," he reported.

SAVED FROM THE SEA.

A few moments later a man, whose uniform proclaimed him a captain in the British navy, clambered over the rail to the deck of the *Sylph*. Lord Hastings advanced to meet him.

"A great piece of work, sir!" exclaimed Captain Mayfair, as he grasped Lord Hastings' hand. "Allow me to congratulate you again!"

The two men disappeared in the direction of Lord Hastings' cabin.

The wounded on the *Sylph* by this time had been cared for and the dead prepared for burial. Jack and Frank had lent what assistance they could in this work, and now had returned upon deck.

"Well, that was a pretty lively little scrap," said the latter, as they leaned against the rail and looked out over the water.

"I should say it was," replied Jack. "I was scared, too, for a few minutes."

"Maybe you were, but you didn't show it. The way you went about your work on the gun deck, with men dropping on all sides, didn't look much like you were afraid."

"Well, I was, just the same."

"And to think that you fired the shot that decided the battle!"

"That was nothing but an accident, as I told Lord Hastings."

"Perhaps so; but it was a fortunate accident for us."

Further conversation was interrupted by the approach of Lord Hastings and Captain Mayfair. Lord Hastings introduced the two lads to the British commander, and the latter, laying his hand on Jack's shoulder, exclaimed:

"So this is the lad who won the battle! It was a great piece of work, and England will not forget your action!"

Jack blushed in his confusion.

"I have told Lord Hastings, sir, that it was only an accident," he replied.

"Nevertheless, your actions at such a time showed bravery and quickness of wit," returned Captain Mayfair. Then, turning to Lord Hastings: "But I must go now. I shall send boats to relieve you of your prisoners."

He shook hands all around, disappeared over the side and was rowed back to the *Lancaster*. A short time later the German prisoners captured by the *Sylph* were lowered into small boats, sent by the *Lancaster*, and, when the last had been disposed of, the *Sylph* continued on her journey toward the east.

Late in the afternoon of the following day, Frank, who stood upon the bridge, made out a distant speck upon the horizon. Save for this one little dot on the water, there was nothing in sight but the sea.

Frank reported his discovery to Lord Hastings, who ordered the *Sylph's* head turned in that direction. He finally picked up the object with his glass.

"Looks like a bit of driftwood," he declared, after a long scrutiny. "I guess there is no need of going further," and he turned with an order to alter the *Sylph's* course on his lips.

But at that moment Frank, who also had been gazing through a glass, cried:

"There is someone on it, sir!"

Lord Hastings stayed his command, and again leveled his glass.

"So there is," he said finally, and ordered the *Sylph* forward with even greater speed. Presently the vessel drew close enough for the naked eye to discern a figure lying upon what appeared to be a small raft.

"Mr. Chadwick, take the launch and bring that man aboard," ordered Lord Hastings.

Frank leaped to obey, and under his direction the launch was soon alongside the raft. As it drew close, the figure on the raft stirred, and then sat up.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Frank. "It's a girl!"

As suddenly as she had sat up, the girl dropped back again. Frank stood up in the launch, and, as the little boat drew up against the raft, he leaned over and picked up the girl and drew her into the launch. Then he ordered his men to return to the *Sylph*.

Aboard the little scout cruiser the girl was taken below, and finally was revived by the use of stimulants. Then, without uttering a word, she fell back again, and soon her deep, regular breathing proclaimed that she was asleep.

Frank returned on deck, where Jack was waiting for him.

"I wonder who she is, and what she was doing out there?" asked Frank.

"She is probably a survivor of some wreck," replied Jack. "Did she say anything?"

"No; she did not recover consciousness until a moment ago. Then she immediately fell asleep. She is plainly exhausted after the peril she has undergone."

"Well, I guess we shall find out all about her when she wakes up," said Jack.

Lord Hastings, Lieutenant Edwards, Second Lieutenant Taylor, Frank and Jack sat at supper when word was brought that the girl was awake and desired to speak to the commander of the vessel.

"Escort her here," commanded Lord Hastings, and he ordered a place set for her at the table.

A few moments later the girl appeared in the doorway. Frank, Jack and the officers rose, and Lord Hastings advanced to meet her, with extended hand.

"We are glad to have been of assistance to you," he said, "and welcome you to supper, Miss——"

He paused.

"Beulow," said the girl; "Alice Beulow."

"Miss Beulow," repeated Lord Hastings, "won't you be seated?"

After an introduction all around, the girl took the seat indicated, between Frank and Second

Lieutenant Taylor.

Frank gave her one swift glance as she sat down. Apparently about seventeen years of age, her face was unmistakably Teutonic, but she spoke English clearly and without an accent. She was tall and slender, and, Frank noted, very pretty.

"You have Mr. Chadwick to thank for our timely arrival," Lord Hastings told her. "But for his keen eyes we should probably have passed without seeing you."

The girl smiled brightly at Frank, and he blushed.

"I know I can never repay you," she said, "and thanks are unnecessary for such a deed. I hope some day to show my appreciation, as will my father, when he learns how his daughter's life has been saved."

"I am sure I am glad to have been of service to you, Miss Beulow," replied Frank. "But now won't you tell us how you came to be in such a serious predicament?"

"It's not a long story," said the girl, "although it seems ages that I have passed through. In the first place," turning from one to another with a smile, "I suppose you know that I am German?"

Lord Hastings nodded.

"I surmised as much," he replied, "although I was unable to account for your excellent English."

"Well, you see, while my father is a German, my mother is an American. I have been going to school in Massachusetts. When school was over this summer, mother and I went to California, and after returning east, went to visit my aunt in Copenhagen. Mother decided to stay several weeks longer, but I was anxious to see father, and so sailed without waiting for her.

"Regular traffic across the North Sea has been suspended, but I found, upon inquiry, a German vessel that was ready to make a dash for Kiel. I was anxious to get home, so I took passage, although I had to do an awful lot of talking before the captain would consent to taking me.

"We were hardly out of sight of land when a British cruiser came after us. The captain would not surrender, and fled. The British ship gave chase. In the darkness we succeeded in eluding our pursuer and in the morning had drawn out of sight.

"Just as the captain was congratulating himself upon his successful flight, there was a sudden terrific explosion, and we seemed to shoot high in the air."

"A hidden mine, I suppose," interrupted Lord Hastings.

"Yes," replied the girl. "I heard the captain make that remark as I seemed to sail high in the air. A moment later I found myself in the water struggling. All around me I heard cries and shouts. My hand came in contact with something and I grasped it. It appeared to be a raft, and, after a hard struggle, I pulled myself upon it, almost exhausted.

"Then I think I must have fainted, for, when again I looked about me, I could see nothing but water. I had no food and no water to drink, and when I realized this I broke down and cried."

"And no wonder!" exclaimed Frank.

"All that day and night, and late into the following night I watched for some sign of a vessel, but I saw none. After that I remember nothing until I awoke upon this ship."

"You certainly have had a strenuous time," declared Lord Hastings, "almost three days alone in the middle of the sea without food or drink is enough to shatter the nerves of the most hardy. I can only wonder that you bear up so bravely now."

"Miss Beulow is certainly a remarkable young lady," agreed Lieutenant Taylor, glancing at her admiringly. "I hope that we shall not soon lose her company," and he smiled at her.

The girl ignored this piece of gallantry, and turned to Frank, and the two were soon engaged in a little conversation of their own.

"What am I to do with you, Miss Beulow?" asked Lord Hastings at length. "I had not planned to put into port for days."

"That is not necessary," replied the girl. "I would not put you to such inconvenience, although I suppose I should look upon you as an enemy."

"I hope you may never do that," said Lord Hastings gallantly.

"I am sure I never shall," replied the girl. "I suppose the proper thing is for me to remain here until you put into some port. Father probably is with the army, and will not know of my disappearance, and mother will think I have arrived home safely. Yes, I guess that is the best thing to do."

"Whatever you say. Miss Beulow," replied Lord Hastings.

"When you land you may give me my liberty," continued the young girl. "In the meantime, I am a prisoner of war; and, in that case, I must give my parole, mustn't I?" she asked, with a bright smile.

Lord Hastings humored her.

"If you will," he agreed.

"Well, then, I give my word that I shall make no attempt to escape," and with that she arose, took the arm Frank offered her, and the two went on deck.

A PLOT OVERHEARD.

"Great Scott, Jack! Look!"

It was Frank who spoke. The two boys were standing in the shadow in the bow of the *Sylph*. Jack looked in the direction his companion pointed. A solitary figure was skulking along the deck.

"I see a man," replied Jack. "What about it?"

"Didn't you recognize him?"

"No; who is he?"

"The same man who followed us in the streets of London!"

"By George! You don't mean it. Why haven't we seen him before?"

"He is wearing a thick mustache. I don't suppose I would have recognized him now if I hadn't caught a side glimpse of his face."

"Are you sure he is the man?"

"There is no question about it."

"But what do you suppose he is doing here, skulking about the deck?"

"I don't know, but he is up to no good, I'll warrant."

"You are right. Let's follow him and see where he goes."

"Good! Come on!"

Stealthily the lads followed in the steps of the sailor, keeping well in the shadow and far enough behind to prevent discovery.

Unaware that he was being followed, the sailor made his way straight to the cabin of Second Lieutenant Taylor. There he gave a sharp, peculiar knock, and the door was immediately opened. The man disappeared inside.

"Something up," whispered Frank to Jack. "Guess we had better find out what is going on in there."

The second lieutenant's cabin was in the after part of the vessel, and a window overlooked the deck. The window was lowered a trifle, permitting a gleam of light to stream across the deck.

The two boys approached and cautiously peered into the cabin. They saw Lieutenant Taylor and the sailor seated at a small table, on which were a bottle and glasses, and they could plainly overhear the conversation that passed between them.

"I don't like this eavesdropping business, but it is up to us to learn what is going on," whispered Jack.

"Right you are," replied Frank. "This looks suspicious to me. What business do you suppose Lieutenant Taylor can have with a man we are bound to believe is a German spy?"

"It's too much for me," said Jack; "but if we listen we may overhear something worth while."

The two boys became silent, and, with their eyes to the small open space at the top of the window, listened breathlessly.

"How is everything going?" they heard the sailor ask Lieutenant Taylor.

"As well as could be expected," was the reply. "I haven't been able to do anything yet, however, for Lord Hastings has received no definite information or instructions."

"But he will? Are you sure of that?"

"Perfectly. There are only a few men acquainted with Hastings' connection with the British Admiralty. A captain of a scout ship, eh! Why, I know that if he chose he could, with the instructions he now holds, take command of the entire British fleet in the North Sea."

"Is that so? Then you are positive we made no mistake when we selected the *Sylph* as the best place to learn England's naval plans?"

"Absolutely positive. Not a move will be made of which Hastings has not had previous information. In spite of the wireless, this vessel is the real connecting link between the British Home Office and the North Sea fleet. I have it on good authority that, until further notice, Hastings will receive all messages from both directions. The reason for this, I understand, is that the government puts the utmost faith in his ability and loyalty."

"Good," replied the sailor. "Now what are your plans?"

"Well, a whole lot will depend upon circumstances; but the first thing I want you to do is to put yourself into the confidence of the wireless operator. In some manner I must have a copy of every message received and sent. Of course, all messages will be in code, but I have the key to that. You are an operator, are you not?"

"Yes."

"All right. I must be kept posted, so that at the proper moment I can act. At that moment, your duty will be to transmit a message I shall give you. Before doing so, however, you will have to dispose of the operator."

"I'll attend to him," broke in the sailor.

"Good. If there is no slip up in our plans, it will mean the destruction of the British fleet. Our work completed, we shall make our escape at night in the launch."

"And our reward?" asked the sailor, as he rose to his feet.

"Oh, yes, our reward," repeated Lieutenant Taylor, with a harsh laugh. "We are doing this for a reward, aren't we? Well, promises will be kept. The Kaiser will reward us handsomely."

"There is no reason to believe that we are suspected?" asked the sailor, as he moved toward the door.

"Not the slightest; and if we are careful, we can put this thing through without arousing suspicion. Good night. I want to turn in early as I must be about at daylight. I want to show the young lady we picked up to-day about the vessel. I understand her father is a high officer in the German army, and with the success of our venture—well, who knows?"

"You take my advice and let the girl alone," growled the sailor. "A woman has spoiled more than one well-laid scheme."

"Keep your advice to yourself, Hardy," replied the lieutenant angrily. "Now, good night."

Jack and Frank straightened up from their cramped position, slipped quickly down the deck and disappeared before the sailor emerged from the lieutenant's cabin.

"Well, what do you think of that?" demanded Jack, as the two boys sat down in their own cabin.

"I don't know what to think," replied Frank. "Great Scott! Suppose no one had learned of their plans! What would have happened then?"

"I don't know what might have happened," returned Jack. "It certainly is a good thing you spotted that sailor, Hardy. We might not have had another chance of overhearing their plans."

"I suppose the thing to do now is to inform Lord Hastings at once."

"I suppose so. Or no, I believe it would do just as well to wait until morning. He has retired and there is no use arousing him. The plotters can do nothing to-night."

"I guess you are right. By the way, what do you think of Taylor's remarks about Miss Beulow?"

"I believe you are more interested in remarks concerning Miss Beulow than I am," replied Jack, with a smile.

Frank blushed.

"Well, maybe so," he said. "But she is a nice girl, and I don't believe she would have much use for a traitor, even though he is plotting to deliver England into the hands of her own country. Do you?"

"I don't know anything about it," was the reply. "You can ask her in the morning if you like. In the meantime, let's get some sleep."

CHAPTER XVI.

A TRAP IS SET.

It was late the following morning when Frank and Jack succeeded in gaining a private hearing with Lord Hastings.

"Now what is it you have on your mind?" he asked, when they were finally seated in his cabin.

"There are traitors on board, sir," said Frank quietly.

Lord Hastings bounded to his feet.

"What is that you say?" he exclaimed. "Traitors? It is impossible. You should be more careful of your language."

"It is true, sir," said Jack. "We overheard them plotting last night."

Lord Hastings slowly resumed his seat.

"I know you must have good reason for your words," he replied; "but I can scarcely credit them. Who are these traitors?"

"Well," said Frank, "one of them is the man who followed Jack and me in London. He is a sailor on board, but, owing to a false mustache, I did not recognize him until last night."

"And the other?" queried Lord Hastings.

"The other," said Frank, "you will find it very hard to believe is plotting against England. He is an officer on board, sir."

"His name?" demanded Lord Hastings.

"Second Lieutenant Taylor, sir!"

"What!" exclaimed Lord Hastings, jumping to his feet in great excitement. "Lieutenant Taylor?"

"Yes, sir," said Jack. "We overheard the two of them plotting last night."

Lord Hastings paced back and forth for several moments. Then he sat down again.

"Tell me what you heard," he commanded at length.

Frank related, almost word for word, the conversation the boys had overheard between Lieutenant Taylor and the sailor, Hardy, the night before.

For a long time after Frank had finished Lord Hastings sat wrapped in thought.

"It seems incredible," he muttered at length; "but I am forced to believe that your words are true." Then suddenly to Jack: "Mr. Templeton!"

"Sir!" and the midshipman's hand came to a salute.

"Summon Lieutenant Edwards and Lieutenant Taylor. Then have the word passed for Hardy."

"Yes, sir," and Jack moved toward the door.

"May I make so bold as to offer a suggestion, sir?" Frank asked, before Jack could leave the cabin.

"You may," was the reply, and Lord Hastings motioned Jack to resume his seat.

"I would suggest, then, sir," said Frank, "that, for the time being, matters be allowed to stand as they are. Now that we know their plans, they can do no damage. In fact, by a little judicious juggling of the wireless we might even be able to turn the presence of the plotters here to our advantage."

"In what way?" demanded Lord Hastings.

"Why, sir," explained Frank, "suppose they are furnished with wrong information? Not knowing that they are discovered, they will continue with their plans. Lieutenant Taylor said that the success of their plan would mean the destruction of the British North Sea fleet. Evidently they intend, through the 'fake' message he spoke of, to lead the fleet into a trap when they believe the time is ripe."

"My idea exactly," interrupted Lord Hastings; "but go on."

"Well, they must be allowed to gain a certain amount of authentic information, so as not to arouse their suspicions. But, at the proper time, we must see that they get such false information as will lead them to believe it is time for them to act. In some manner, probably by wireless, Lieutenant Taylor plans to communicate with the German fleet at Helgoland. That is why our operator must be disposed of. They must be allowed to do this."

"Why?" asked Lord Hastings.

"So that false plans of the British fleet having been sent to the Germans—false plans that we must prepare carefully—we shall trap the German fleet, or a portion of it, instead of being trapped ourselves. In this manner we may be able to strike the first naval blow of the war."

"You mean that we may succeed in drawing the German fleet into the open?"

"Yes, sir. Of course Admiral Jellicoe must be informed of how matters stand and how they progress, so that he may act in conjunction with us."

For fully half an hour Lord Hastings sat twirling his thumbs, turning this scheme over in his mind. Neither Frank nor Jack interrupted his meditations, both awaiting his decision anxiously.

"The only difficulty I can see in your plan," said Lord Hastings finally, "is how we shall get word to Admiral Jellicoe without the plotters overhearing. You say Hardy is an operator?"

"Yes," replied Frank, "but whenever we are ready to send a communication to Admiral Jellicoe that we do not wish overheard, or to any other place, it will be very simple for Lieutenant Taylor, and Hardy also, to be ordered to some duty at the far end of the vessel at that moment."

"So it will," said Lord Hastings, slapping his knee. "Your plan is a splendid one; and, if it works out, as I believe it will, you will have rendered England a tremendous service—one that shall never be forgotten."

"Then you will act upon my suggestion, sir?" exclaimed Frank with great delight.

"I shall; and I want to say that I am proud to have two such youngsters with me. Why, you both have been of greater value to me than I ever believed it possible for anyone to be."

"Thank you, sir," said both lads in a single voice.

"You may go now," Lord Hastings continued, "while I remain and work out the details of the plan. And remember, not a word of this to a soul. Send Lieutenant Edwards to me!"

The boys saluted and left the commander's cabin.

Emerging upon deck, they saw Lieutenant Edwards and Miss Beulow strolling about. They approached the couple.

"Lord Hastings requests that you report to him at once," said Frank, coming to a salute.

The lieutenant departed, and the two boys and the young German girl continued their promenade.

"Well, well, how is our little enemy this morning?" came a voice suddenly.

Turning, they beheld the smiling countenance of Lieutenant Taylor.

"Very well, thank you," replied Miss Beulow coldly, then ignoring the lieutenant, turned to the two boys and resumed her conversation.

"Come, come," continued the lieutenant, "don't be so standoffish. I like you, even if you are a German."

The girl made no answer to this remark, and the lieutenant, after gazing resentfully at her a moment, took himself off.

"Do you know," the girl confided to the two boys, "I do not like your Lieutenant Taylor. He seems out of place among the rest of you, and it seems to me I have seen him some place before, though I cannot remember where."

This remark pleased Frank hugely, although, for some reason he was unable to explain why, even to himself. Aloud he only said:

"I guess it's just his way, Miss Beulow."

"Perhaps," was the reply; "but I don't like his way."

FRANK MAKES AN ENEMY.

"You little whipper snapper! What do you mean by making remarks about me?"

A hand was laid on Frank's shoulder and he was jerked roughly around, to find the angry face of Lieutenant Taylor confronting him.

Frank shook himself loose.

"I have been making no remarks about you," he said quietly.

"Yes, you have," was the angry reply. "Trying to shine up to the little German girl, are you?" and the lieutenant laughed sneeringly.

"Look here," said Frank, his face turning red, "you leave Miss Beulow out of this. If you have anything to say to me, say it and get out of my way."

"You dare to talk like that to your superior officer?"

"Yes, I dare; and I'll say a whole lot more if you don't get away from me."

"You will, eh? Do you know what I have a mind to do?"

"No; and I don't care."

"Well, you will care. I have a mind to give you a good trimming," and the lieutenant advanced threateningly.

"I wouldn't try it if I were you," said Frank quietly. "You might get more than you bargained for."

"What! Do you think you are any match for me?"

"I don't think anything about it."

"I guess not. But let me tell you something: You keep away from Miss Beulow, or I'll hand you the worst thrashing you ever heard of."

"You attend to your business, and I'll attend to mine," was Frank's reply. "I'll walk with whom I choose," and he turned and started away.

"Oh, you will, will you," shouted the now enraged lieutenant. "Well, I'll show you!"

He sprang forward, and with his open palm struck Frank a stinging blow on the side of the face.

Frank in turn leaped forward, and the lieutenant stepped back and placed himself in an attitude of defense.

"You'll have to pay for that blow," exclaimed Frank, "I don't care if you are my superior officer."

"Don't let that stand in the way," said the lieutenant with a sneer. "I won't hide behind that."

Frank sprang forward to deliver a blow at his persecutor, when his arm was seized suddenly from behind. In vain he struggled to free himself. He was lifted from his feet as though he had been a child, and a voice exclaimed:

"Here! here! what are you fellows fighting about?"

The newcomer was Jack.

"Let me alone!" shouted Frank, now thoroughly aroused. "He struck me!"

"And what if I did," sneered the lieutenant, "what are you doing to do about it?"

"I'll show you what I am going to do!" cried Frank. "Let me go, Jack!"

"Not much I won't. What chance have you with this big bully? If he wants a row let him pitch into me."

"This is my affair," cried Frank, still struggling to free himself. "Let me go."

"Well," said Jack, "if you must fight, all right. But not here. Lord Hastings or Lieutenant Edwards is liable to see you and you would both be put under arrest." He turned to Lieutenant Taylor. "Are you willing to fight?" he asked.

"Any place and any time," was the reply.

"All right. I'll take charge of this fight and see that it is pulled off ship-shape. Both of you be forward on the gun deck in half an hour."

The lieutenant bowed ironically and departed.

"What's the meaning of this, anyhow?" demanded Jack, when the two lads were alone.

Frank explained his encounter with the lieutenant.

"And you are determined to fight him?" asked Jack.

"Yes," replied Frank. "No man can hit me and get away without my hitting back."

"But he is a great deal larger and stronger than you are; and he is probably more proficient in the use of his fists."

"He may be and he may not," replied Frank. "I have taken boxing lessons and am not a novice."

"Well," said Jack, "it's your funeral. But I would rather take him on myself."

"You may have a chance at some other date," said Frank, and the two made their way to the spot designated for the fight.

Word that there was going to be a fistic battle spread quickly among the crew, and there was a stampede forward on the gun deck. The British sailor loves nothing better than a fist fight, and the news that the encounter was to be between officers added to the enthusiasm.

Since coming aboard Frank and Jack had come to be great favorites with the men, while Lieutenant Taylor, because of his arrogant attitude, was cordially disliked.

Less than twenty minutes later, Lieutenant Taylor, still with a sneer on his face, arrived.

"Now, listen! I am going to run this show," declared Jack. "And what I say goes. Is that right, men?"

Cries of "Right you are," and "You bet," came from all sides.

"This thing has got to be pulled off without noise," Jack continued; "so I must ask you to refrain from applauding. Is that satisfactory?"

"O. K. Jack," came the reply from some. "You're the boy!" and "Run it to suit yourself" from others.

"All right, then," said Jack.

With a piece of chalk he drew a square on the deck, twenty feet each way.

"Fighting must be done in this ring," he declared, "Marquis of Queensbury rules, and no hitting in the clinches. Ten three-minute rounds, with a minute's rest between rounds. This is going to be a square fight, because I am going to referee it. The first man to break one of these rules will have me to contend with, and he will have a big job on his hands."

A subdued laugh ran along the line of sailor spectators.

"Good for you, Jack," came the cries. "You're the boy! Tell 'em what's what!"

"Now for seconds," continued Jack. "Thomas, you will go to Chadwick's corner. I don't like to impose upon anyone, so I shall call for volunteers. Who will second the lieutenant?"

There was a moment's silence, then an old sailor in the rear of the crowd pushed his way forward.

"I don't think much of the job," he said, "but somebody has got to do it. I guess I'm the victim."

"All right," said Jack. "Now get your men to their corners."

As the two combatants divested themselves of their coats and vests, and turned up their shirt sleeves to the elbow, it seemed to the spectators that the battle was bound to be one-sided.

Lieutenant Taylor, tall and broad, topped his opponent by several inches. His hands were big and his arms muscular. Beside him Frank looked frail indeed.

However, Frank's light weight gave him some advantage over the lieutenant, for the latter's size greatly impeded his activity, while Frank was as quick on his feet as a cat.

At length the combatants stood ready in their corners. Jack advanced to the center of the ring, and called the two to him. Standing between them, he repeated his instructions; then, not asking them to shake hands, he skipped nimbly from between them, and shouted:

"Time!"

THE FIGHT.

The lieutenant came forward with a leap, and aimed a smashing blow at Frank's head. Retreating swiftly, the lad jerked back his head with a quick move, and the blow fell short by an eyelash. It was a pretty move, and the crowd of spectators acknowledged it with subdued exclamations of delight.

The lieutenant was thrown off his balance by the force of his blow, but Frank did not take advantage of the opening, contenting himself with remaining on guard. He knew that if one of those sledgehammer blows should land, it would probably end the contest once and for all.

"Dumb luck!" exclaimed the crestfallen lieutenant, as he pressed forward again, "but I'll get you next time!"

Frank smiled quietly. This seemed to enrage the lieutenant, and he made a sudden rush forward, casting science to the winds. He aimed a vicious blow at Frank, but the lad side-stepped neatly, and as the lieutenant, carried forward by the force of the blow, passed him, there was a sharp "spat" as Frank's right fist found its mark behind the lieutenant's ear.

The blow was a light one and did no damage save to make Lieutenant Taylor's wrath greater. Turning, he charged again, and this time Frank did not retreat. He warded off a series of terrific blows with a perfect guard, but so swiftly did they rain in on him that he had no opportunity to counter. Again the lieutenant bored in. Suddenly Frank stepped inside the other's guard, left open because of his wild swings, and delivered a stinging blow to the point of the chin. The lieutenant staggered back, and, as he did so, time was called for the first round.

"Pretty work, my boy," exclaimed Frank's second, as the lad returned to his corner. "You had him going that time. But he'll cool off between rounds, so you want to be careful. Better stay on the defensive for a few rounds and tire him a bit. One of those wild swings is liable to land, and, if it did, it would be good night for you."

"Thanks," replied Frank. "That is good advice, and I shall heed it."

The two advanced to the center of the ring for the second round.

"Good work, get him this time, boy; watch out for his swings," came the advice from the crowd.

But this time the lieutenant was more careful. He had learned that this opponent, whom he had held so lightly, was no novice, and that he had power behind his blows. Therefore he gave up his whirlwind attack, and for two minutes the combatants stood face to face and sparred. Gradually the lieutenant moved forward and Frank retreated slowly. He had adopted a waiting policy. He was trying to tire his opponent out. The round ended without a severe blow being struck.

The third and fourth rounds were a repetition of the second. But the lieutenant, tiring of this, began the fifth with a rush. As before, Frank retreated before him, and, after backing twice around the ring, the lieutenant suddenly launched a terrific blow at him.

In leaping back, Frank tripped, and, in trying to regain his balance, left his guard open. Quick to take advantage of this misfortune, Lieutenant Taylor sprang forward and aimed another vicious blow. At this moment Frank regained his balance, but he was unable to avoid the blow, which caught him with stunning force on the jaw.

The lad reeled, staggered back, and fell to the floor.

"One—two—three—four—five," counted Jack.

At the count of six, Frank raised himself to his knees, and at nine staggered to his feet. By a great effort he avoided the lieutenant's blow and staggered into a clinch. A moment later time was called.

Frank's second was in the ring in an instant and dragged the lad quickly to his corner, where he did all in his power to revive him before time was again called.

"He thinks he's got you now," he whispered. "If you can stall through this round, you will be all right. Clinch, and hang on tight."

In the opposite corner Lieutenant Taylor sat with a sneering smile on his face.

"I'll end it this round," he told himself.

When time was called for the sixth round Frank rushed desperately into a clinch. Each moment his head became clearer, and he grew stronger. He clinched time after time and succeeded in going through the round without punishment.

Through the seventh and eighth round Frank continued to fight off his opponent, not attempting to strike a blow himself. The opening of the ninth round found the lad himself again.

"He has had it all his own way too long," he told himself. "It's time for me to get busy."

Once more the lieutenant came forward with a rush. But this time, instead of stepping backward, Frank, warding off the lieutenant's right, stepped inside the other's guard, and delivered a sharp, short-arm jab to his opponent's jaw. The lieutenant hesitated a moment, and the lad, following up his advantage, sent his left to his opponent's stomach.

Then he stepped back and the lieutenant came in again. Feinting with his left, Frank sent his right fist crashing into the lieutenant's sore jaw, and the latter gave ground.

Frank followed him closely, delivering a series of right- and left-handed hooks at close range. The lieutenant, apparently bewildered at this whirlwind attack, after having had it all his own way so long, continued to retreat around the ring.

Then, suddenly, he lowered his head, and rushed like an enraged bull straight at the lad. Frank stepped quickly to one side, and struck out straight from the shoulder. The blow landed flush upon the lieutenant's chin, and he fell sprawling clear across the ring.

"Hooray, hooray!" came the cries of the sailors. "You got him that time!"

But, as Jack counted four, time was called again, and the lieutenant was saved.

"Get him this time, Frank!" cried the spectators, as the two advanced to the center of the ring for the last round. The lieutenant was very shaky, but his second had worked over him hard, and he was

in a position to go on with the fight.

Frank gave him no time to rest. He bored in rapidly, keeping his guard steady the while, that no chance blow might break through, and staggered his opponent time after time with jabs, hooks and long-range blows.

The lieutenant gave back steadily before him and Frank followed up his advantage swiftly.

Now the lieutenant seemed to recover himself, and stepped forward in a final desperate effort to end the battle; and for a moment the two stood toe to toe and exchanged blows. Frank emerged from this struggle at close quarters second best, his face streaming with blood.

But the lieutenant's blows had lost their force, and though the lad's face was a sight, he was not badly hurt.

Suddenly Frank stepped forward, and, brushing aside the other's guard, struck him a hard left-handed blow over the heart. The lieutenant reeled, and before he could recover his balance Frank crossed his right to the lieutenant's face.

There was a resounding "smack," followed by a heavy fall, as Lieutenant Taylor, struck flush upon the point of the chin, was lifted from his feet, and measured his length upon the floor.

"—Eight—nine—ten—out!" counted Jack; and the sailors surged in and lifted Frank to their shoulders.

A moment later Lieutenant Taylor stirred, then arose slowly to his feet. Even as he did so, the sounds of hilarity on the gun deck were stilled by a harsh voice:

"Lieutenant Taylor! Mr. Chadwick! To your quarters immediately! You may consider yourselves under arrest. Such disgraceful proceedings will not be tolerated on the *Sylph* while I am in command!"

Turning, Jack and Frank beheld the stern countenance of Lord Hastings.

THE GAME IS OPENED.

The crowd of sailors disappeared as if by magic, and Frank, Jack and Lieutenant Taylor found themselves alone with Lord Hastings. The latter said no further word, and, without attempting to speak, Frank and his vanquished adversary made their way from the gun deck to their cabins. Jack followed a moment later, after waiting in vain for some other word from Lord Hastings.

Frank greeted his friend's arrival with a sickly smile.

"Looks like I was in for it, doesn't it?" he said.

"It does," was the reply. "Now, if you had taken my advice——"

"Don't preach," Frank broke in. "Anyhow, there is no use crying over spilt milk. I shall have to take my medicine. What do you suppose Lord Hastings will do with me?"

"I haven't the slightest idea. But say," and Jack grew enthusiastic, "that was some scrap you put up. I didn't know you were a fighter. Why didn't you tell me?"

"I only did my best," replied Frank modestly. "I thought he had me two or three times."

"I was afraid so, too. But, if he had beaten you, I would have given him a good licking myself."

"What? How about the advice you gave me?"

"Well, that's different," said Jack, in some confusion.

"I see it is. Now, under the same circumstances, you would have done just as I did, wouldn't you?"

Jack smiled somewhat sheepishly.

"I guess I should," was his reply.

Further conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a sailor, who announced that Lord Hastings desired their presence in his cabin immediately.

"Well, here's where I learn my fate," said Frank, as he went on deck, followed by Jack.

Lord Hastings was writing when the boys entered his cabin. He looked up, motioned them to a seat with a nod, and resumed his work. A moment later Lieutenant Taylor came in, and was also motioned to a seat. Finally, Lord Hastings wheeled about in his chair and spoke.

"You," he said, indicating Frank and the lieutenant, "have broken one of the most stringent rules of the naval manual. What have you to say in justification of your actions?"

"Nothing, sir," replied the lieutenant.

Frank remained silent.

"The least punishment I should mete out," continued Lord Hastings, "is to confine you both to your quarters indefinitely. But we are somewhat short-handed now. If you will give me your words that there will be no repetition of this disgraceful scene, I shall suspend punishment."

"For my part, I promise gladly," said Frank.

Lord Hastings turned toward Lieutenant Taylor.

"And you?" he questioned.

"The little whelp insulted me," exclaimed the lieutenant. "I shall make no promises, unless he is kept out of my way."

"Very well, sir," replied Lord Hastings. "Remain in your cabin until you receive further orders. You may go!"

"But, your lordship——" protested the lieutenant.

"Not a word, sir!" exclaimed Lord Hastings. "Return to your cabin immediately."

The lieutenant saluted and left the cabin. Hardly had he taken his departure when there was a sudden change in Lord Hastings' manner. He rose to his feet, advanced across the cabin and took Frank by the hand.

"That was a great fight!" he exclaimed with enthusiasm. "It did me good to see you polish off that traitor. I would have liked to be in your place!"

Frank was taken by surprise.

"But—but——" he stammered.

"I know, I know," cried Lord Hastings, raising a protesting hand. "It's against the rules and regulations and should merit punishment. But there are extenuating circumstances. It has worked out beautifully."

"What, sir?" demanded Jack, who had remained silent up to this time.

"Why, Taylor is disposed of for the time being. He will not dare to leave his quarters, and in the meantime we can go about our plans without fear of interruption. We can get rid of Hardy without arousing his suspicions."

"Then I am not to be punished, sir?" asked Frank.

"Not this time," was the reply. "But don't let it happen again."

"I won't, sir," Frank promised.

"By the way," said Lord Hastings, as the lads turned to leave the cabin. "It may interest you to know that to-morrow we shall join the fleet off Helgoland. I have already been in communication with Admiral Jellicoe, and he approves of our plan. It must be carried out to-day."

"Good!" exclaimed Frank and Jack.

"Yes," continued Lord Hastings. He extended a slip of paper to Frank. "Give this to the wireless operator," and he added, with a smile: "Then make sure there is no one near the wireless room—except Hardy. He must overhear this message, you know."

The boys saluted and left the cabin. Frank glanced at the message.

"What does it say?" demanded Jack eagerly.

Frank read aloud:

"Safe to send half of fleet to Baltic to-morrow night. Order submarine and several destroyers close into Helgoland at same time—this to make imminent attack apparent, so

enemy may not learn of other move and attack in force.—HASTINGS.”

The message placed in the hands of the operator, the boys returned to their own cabin. As they made their way along the deck they saw Hardy loitering near the wireless room.

“He’ll hear it, all right,” said Jack, with a grin.

“How do you construe that message?” asked Frank.

“Well,” replied Jack, “let’s see if we can’t figure it out. Say the Germans, having been furnished with the text of the message—fake though it is—believe half the British fleet has started for the Baltic. They will figure that their own strong fleet can easily destroy the remaining half of our fleet. Therefore, when they believe it has been divided, they will attack. Lured from beneath the protection of the heavy shore guns, we shall make short work of them.

“I figure that the submarine and destroyers will approach nearer the port to flash word of the German advance. Besides, their appearance will further strengthen the belief of the Germans that half of the fleet has sailed—particularly in view of the false message, for it would be the natural thing to do if half the fleet really were going away, as it would keep the Germans from attacking.”

“I see what you mean,” declared Frank. “And I guess that is the way Lord Hastings has figured it out.”

“I’m sure of it,” was the reply. “But come on deck, and let’s see if we can see what use Hardy will make of the information he has obtained.”

Moving stealthily along the deck, the lads saw the sailor making his way toward Lieutenant Taylor’s cabin. There he slipped a piece of paper through the window. Then he loitered near.

There came a slight tapping on the window, and the sailor again approached it. The boys heard the lieutenant’s voice.

“It is time to act,” he said. “It has come sooner than I expected. Return in half an hour, and I will have prepared the message you must send the Germans.”

Hardy slunk away.

“We must report this to Lord Hastings at once,” exclaimed Frank. “Come!”

The lads rushed to the commander’s cabin, where they told him what they had overheard.

“Good!” said Lord Hastings. “Now, listen to me carefully. We are in easy communication with the British fleet, and also with the Germans, by wireless. Watch Taylor’s cabin, and, as soon as he passes the message to Hardy, you order the wireless operator to report to me at once. Then hide.

“I give this order for two reasons: First, I do not want the operator hurt, and second, Hardy must be allowed to send the message to the Germans without molestation.”

The lads saluted and left the cabin. They took their stand close to the wireless cabin, but still commanded a view of Lieutenant Taylor’s quarters. Here they waited.

Their patience was at length rewarded. Hardy again approached the lieutenant’s cabin, and received a slip of paper through the window.

“Now to get the operator away,” exclaimed Frank, and moved toward the wireless room.

The operator left the room at their orders, and the two boys disappeared just as the sailor approached the wireless station. The lads saw him enter the cabin. Then they went to make their report to Lord Hastings.

“Good!” exclaimed the latter. “Mr. Templeton, inform Lieutenant Taylor that I have countermanded the order confining him to his cabin. Order him to return to his duties!”

CHAPTER XX.

A CONFESSION.

All day the *Sylph* continued on her course without interruption. Frank spent several hours strolling about the deck with Miss Beulow, and he experienced no further trouble with Lieutenant Taylor, although the latter passed them twice, each time gazing at the boy threateningly.

While at supper the wireless operator entered the cabin and approached Lord Hastings.

"I have picked up the cruiser *Alto*, sir," he said. "She will pass us in the morning on her way to Copenhagen. Also I have a message from the Admiralty ordering us to join the fleet at once."

The operator departed and Lord Hastings turned to Miss Beulow.

"Miss Beulow," he said, "I have decided to transfer you to the cruiser to-morrow, so you may return to your mother in Copenhagen. We are likely to go into action at any time, and this is no place for you."

The girl nodded in assent, although she declared that she was not afraid of being in battle.

As she strolled about the deck alone, some hours later, she was accosted by Lieutenant Taylor.

"I am sorry I seem to be objectionable to you," said the lieutenant; "but now I would ask that you give me a few moments in private. I have something important to say."

The girl hesitated a moment.

"Very well," she said at length, and the lieutenant led the way to a secluded spot aft.

"Miss Beulow," began the lieutenant, "although you are half American, your sympathies are with the German cause, are they not?"

"How can you ask that question, when you are aware that my father is a German?" responded the girl.

"I just wanted to make sure. I am right, am I not?"

"You most certainly are," replied the girl emphatically.

"All right. Now you seem to dislike me. Would you look upon me with more favor if I were to espouse the German cause?"

The girl looked at him in great surprise.

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"Would you think less harshly of me if I were to strike a blow for Germany?"

The girl stared at him, but said nothing.

"What would you say if I were to tell you it is in my power to destroy the British fleet off Helgoland?"

The girl took a step backward.

"It is impossible!" she gasped.

"No!" cried the lieutenant, now carried away. "It is not impossible. It is true! And, what is more, I shall do it!"

"You to say this to me! You, an Englishman!" exclaimed the girl.

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders.

"What is Great Britain to me?" he said. "I am an American."

"But you are an officer in the English navy."

"True; but for a purpose. I hold a commission as captain in the German regular army."

"I can hardly credit it," exclaimed Miss Beulow.

"Nevertheless it is true. Now, when I have succeeded in my strategy——"

"Strategy!" cried the girl. "It is treachery!"

"Call it what you will," replied the lieutenant. "When I have succeeded in delivering the British fleet into the hands of the Germans, will you then look with more favor upon me?"

The girl recoiled from him.

"No!" she cried. "No! I wish never to see you again."

"Do not decide hastily," said the lieutenant. He drew from his pocket a slip of paper. "Here is the message I sent to the German admiral at Helgoland, the message that means the destruction of half the British fleet."

Wonderingly the girl took the slip of paper from him and read. It was the message prepared by Lord Hastings, to which was added the postscript that this was the message sent the commander of the British fleet. It bore no signature, although addressed to the German admiral.

"I shall keep this," said Miss Beulow, and she folded it up and placed it in a small purse she carried. Then she started to move away, but the lieutenant detained her.

"Wait," he commanded. "You have not answered my question satisfactorily as yet."

"And I never will!" cried the girl. "I wish nothing to do with traitors."

She shook off his detaining hand and fled down the deck.

"What shall I do?" she asked herself. "I cannot betray my country's plans—and yet Lord Hastings should be told of this treachery."

She paced up and down the deck for almost an hour; then she sought an interview with the commander of the *Sylph*.

"Lord Hastings," she said, "suppose a person knew something that, if he told, would defeat the plans of the country he calls his own—and suppose also that in gaining such information he learned that treachery would encompass the defeat of his enemy—should he tell or not?"

"It all depends," replied Lord Hastings, "upon the person's conscience. Some would say yes, and some no. I cannot tell what I should do under the circumstances. But why do you ask?"

The girl was silent for a long time.

"I have such information," she declared at length; "and I do not know what to do."

Lord Hastings rose hastily from his seat, approached and laid his hand upon her arm.

"Say no more," he said. "I know that which you have on your mind."

"What?" cried the girl in great surprise. "It is impossible that you should know."

"Nevertheless I do know," replied Lord Hastings. "Let that suffice."

"But how can that be?" exclaimed the girl. "No, it is not possible that you know."

"Say no more about it," said Lord Hastings gently. "It is not your duty to tell me anything that would work to the disadvantage of your country."

Miss Beulow bowed her head and left the cabin without another word.

Lord Hastings hastily summoned Frank, and to him related what had just occurred.

"It is plain," he said, "that Taylor has told his plans to Miss Beulow. If she should repeat to him what I have just said to her, it would put him on his guard.

"He must not see her, then," said Frank.

"That is my idea exactly. Which is the reason I have summoned you. It is your duty to see that they are not allowed to converse together."

"Very good, sir," replied Frank.

"I must contrive to have Taylor taken off my hands," mused Lord Hastings. "I do not want to arrest him, or let him suspect that he has been discovered, for he may be of more use to us farther on."

"Why not send him on board the cruiser with Miss Beulow to-morrow, then, giving him dispatches for Copenhagen or some other point?"

"A good idea," exclaimed Lord Hastings. "All the instructions that I need give the commander of the cruiser is to see that Taylor and the girl are kept apart."

"Exactly, sir," replied Frank.

"I shall put the plan into execution. In the meantime, you keep your eye on the traitor, and see that he has no chance to communicate with the girl."

Frank saluted and left the cabin.

AN ACCUSATION.

It was nearing noon the following day before those on the *Sylph* sighted the oncoming British cruiser *Alto*, although they had been in almost constant wireless communication. When the cruiser was but a short distance away, Lord Hastings summoned Frank, Lieutenant Taylor and Alice Beulow.

"Lieutenant Taylor," said Lord Hastings, "you and Mr. Chadwick will take the launch and escort Miss Beulow aboard the cruiser. Give this," he continued, handing the lieutenant a paper, "to Captain Johnson personally."

Frank and Lieutenant Taylor saluted and departed to make the launch ready, while both the *Sylph* and the cruiser hove to, so that the girl might be transferred from one vessel to the other.

After saying good-by all around, and thanking Lord Hastings for his kindness, Miss Beulow took her place in the launch. Frank and Lieutenant Taylor followed and they were soon on their way toward the cruiser.

As the three had made their way to the launch. Lord Hastings whispered to Frank:

"Lieutenant Taylor will go aboard with Miss Beulow. Immediately he leaves the launch you will return. The message he carries to Captain Johnson will explain the situation to the latter."

"I am awfully sorry to see you leaving," said Frank to Miss Beulow, as the launch approached the cruiser.

"And I am sorry to go," she replied. "However, I suppose it is necessary. I hope that I shall see you again."

"I hope so, too," exclaimed Frank.

"You must look me up when the war is over, if you can," the girl continued, and, taking a card from her purse she wrote an address upon it and gave it to the lad.

Frank put the card carefully away.

"I certainly shall," he said.

Lieutenant Taylor had not spoken a word up to this time, but Frank had caught several threatening looks upon his face.

"Just a word of warning," he said to Miss Beulow, as she at last said good-by and made ready to leave the launch. "Beware of Taylor."

The girl smiled brightly at him, and with another word of farewell was gone. Lieutenant Taylor, in accordance with his instructions, followed her aboard the cruiser.

Hardly had the lieutenant set foot on the deck of the cruiser, when Frank ordered his men to put back to the *Sylph*. As the little launch got under way, Frank heard a shout, and, looking over his shoulder, saw Lieutenant Taylor angrily beckoning him to come back.

"Wait for me," cried the lieutenant.

Frank paid no heed to this command and the launch continued on its way. Aboard the *Sylph* once more, Frank immediately made his way to Lord Hastings to report. Almost at the same moment the wireless operator rushed up and passed the commander a slip of paper.

Lord Hastings read the message and then turned to Lieutenant Edwards.

"Full speed ahead!" he commanded. "We are ordered to feel the way for the advance of the British fleet against the Germans to-night. It means we shall go into action."

"Hurrah!" shouted Frank, unable to restrain his enthusiasm.

"Hurrah!" cried Jack, who approached just in time to catch Lord Hastings' words.

A few moments more and the *Sylph* was again dashing madly through the water. But hardly was the vessel under way when the wireless operator, his face flushed and his manner manifesting the greatest excitement, rushed up to Lord Hastings.

"Sir!" he cried to the commander of the vessel, "Miss Beulow has been accused by Lieutenant Taylor and arrested on the *Alto* as a German spy!"

"What!" shouted Lord Hastings.

"Arrested!" cried Frank.

"Yes, sir," replied the operator. "I just this moment received the message."

"Come with me," commanded Lord Hastings, and the three made a rush for the wireless room.

Just as they neared the room, the form of a man emerged hastily from the door, and, noting their approach, ran hurriedly along the deck. Paying no heed to the disappearing man, the three ran into the room. Here Lord Hastings dashed off a message, which he handed to the operator.

"Send this!" he commanded.

The message read:

"Release the girl. Arrest Lieutenant Taylor. He is the spy. Explanation follows."

The operator took his place beside his instrument, but, after one touch of the key, sprang to his feet.

"It is dead!" he cried. "Somebody has tampered with it in my absence!"

"What!" exclaimed Lord Hastings excitedly, then added more coolly. "What is the matter with it?"

"I can't tell yet, sir. I shall have to look it over."

"Then do so at once!"

Frank and Lord Hastings remained quiet while the operator sought to determine the cause of the trouble.

Finally the operator stood up and faced them.

"It's no use, sir," he said. "The whole apparatus is out of commission. It can't be repaired in less than twenty-four hours."

"Impossible!" cried Lord Hastings. "It must be repaired. That message must be sent!"

"I am sorry, sir," replied the operator, "but it is utterly impossible to repair the damage in less than the time I have mentioned."

Lord Hastings was silent for some moments.

"Very well," he said at length. "Do the best you can."

He turned on his heel, and made his way to his cabin. Frank followed him.

"But what will happen to Miss Beulow, sir?" he asked.

"I am afraid," was the reply, "that she is in great danger of being shot!"

"Shot!" Frank stood aghast at the word.

"Yes," was the reply, "as she has been arrested, she will probably be tried by an impromptu court-martial at once. If convicted, she will be sentenced to die."

"But we can save her," cried Frank. "The *Sylph* is fast; she can overtake the cruiser. Shall I give the order at once, sir?"

"I am sorry," replied Lord Hastings slowly, "but it cannot be done."

"Cannot be done? Why?"

"We have been ordered into action. We must obey. One life cannot be allowed to stand in the way."

"But—but——" Frank stammered.

Lord Hastings did not reply, but instead arose and summoned Lieutenant Edwards.

"Arrest the sailor Hardy immediately and have him confined in irons!" he commanded.

Lieutenant Edwards saluted and withdrew. Then Lord Hastings turned to Frank.

"I am sorry, my boy," he said kindly, "but there is nothing we can do. However, the case may not be as bad as we fear. The fact that I instructed Captain Johnson to keep Taylor away from the girl may arouse some suspicion in his mind and delay a court-martial."

"But there is nothing sure about it!" cried Frank. "To think of a girl dying like that, when we are able to save her!"

Lord Hastings did not reply, but turned and went on deck. Frank followed him, still imploring that the *Sylph* be put about and return to the cruiser.

Looking over the water Frank could see that, for some reason, the cruiser was stationary. She had not continued on her course.

"See," he said to Lord Hastings, pointing, "we could reach her in almost no time. It would not delay us long. Will you not put about, sir?"

"We have hardly time now to reach the fleet," was the reply.

"But——" Frank began.

Lord Hastings raised a hand.

"Further talk is useless," he said. "I have said it is impossible!"

Frank's eyes roved about the ship. Suddenly they fell upon the little launch.

"I am going, anyhow!" he cried, and ran toward the launch.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN DIRE PERIL.

When Lieutenant Taylor saw the *Sylph's* launch turn and head for the little vessel without waiting for him, an expression of great surprise came over his face, followed by one of anxiety. He raised a shout, and, when he saw that Frank paid no heed to him, although he knew his shout had been heard, his suspicions were aroused.

Quickly he drew from his pocket the message Lord Hastings had ordered him to give to Captain Johnson, and tore it in little pieces. These he dropped into the water, and then made his way toward the captain, who stood awaiting his approach.

The captain greeted him pleasantly.

"You have a message for me, sir?" he asked.

"I have, sir; and it is a most disagreeable one."

"Disagreeable? Has some disaster occurred?"

"No, sir. It is even worse, if possible."

"Explain yourself."

"Very well, sir. I am commanded to charge the young lady who has just come aboard with being a German spy!"

"A spy! Lord Hastings has not informed me of this, and I have been in communication with him."

"Very true, sir, but with good reason. There are others aboard the *Sylph* whom he did not wish to overhear such a communication. She was seen to steal a message relating to the movements of the fleet from the wireless room. Also she is a German. Lord Hastings requests that she be tried at once!"

"Very good, sir," replied Captain Johnson.

He called his first officer.

"Have Miss Beulow summoned here at once," he commanded.

A moment later, the young girl, smiling, stood before them.

"Miss Beulow," said the captain, "I have an unpleasant duty to perform. You are accused of being a German spy!"

The girl staggered back.

"Who makes this absurd charge?" she demanded, after she had to some degree regained her composure.

Lieutenant Taylor stepped forward.

"I do, at Lord Hastings' command," he replied.

The girl stared at him with the greatest contempt. Then she turned to the captain.

"I am innocent of this charge," she said; "but this man," and she pointed an accusing finger at the lieutenant, "I know to be a spy. He is accusing me to save himself."

Lieutenant Taylor smiled sneeringly.

"A very natural reply," he said. "Captain, she was seen to put the message I spoke of in her purse. Perhaps she still has it there. Will you see for yourself?"

"Your purse, if you please," said Captain Johnson, extending his hand, and speaking in a harsh voice, for he had no reason to doubt the truth of Lieutenant Taylor's words.

The girl's face turned white. For the first time she realized the full seriousness of her situation. For a moment she held her purse even closer to her.

"But, captain," she began, "I——"

"Your purse, if you please," interrupted the captain.

Slowly the girl extended it to him. Quickly he opened it, and a moment later withdrew a little piece of paper, which he opened and read. It was the message containing the supposed plans of the British fleet.

After a hasty perusal, the captain turned to Lieutenant Berkeley, his first officer.

"Arrest her," he said.

"But, captain," exclaimed the girl in terror, "a message to Lord Hastings will confirm the truth of my story."

"I shall communicate with Lord Hastings at once," was the reply, "but I am convinced that no answer he can make will exonerate you."

"The case is perfectly plain," agreed Lieutenant Taylor.

"Have this young woman confined to her cabin," commanded Captain Johnson to Lieutenant Berkeley, "and have a court-martial summoned to sit at 8 o'clock in the morning. That is all. Take her away. Now you, sir," he continued, turning to Lieutenant Taylor, "I suppose are to stay here to make the charge?"

"Exactly, sir," replied the lieutenant; "such was Lord Hastings' command."

"Very well. Lieutenant Berkeley will provide you with quarters."

The captain made his way to the wireless room, where he had the operator pick up the *Sylph*. First he sent a message, simply saying that Miss Beulow had been arrested on the charge of being a spy, the accusation having been preferred by Lieutenant Taylor. Then he asked further details. But there came no reply. In vain did the operator again try to pick up the *Sylph*. At length he gave up the attempt.

"It is very plain," said the captain to himself. "It is just as Lieutenant Taylor told me. Evidently they do not answer because they fear someone will overhear the message."

But at that moment the wireless came to life, and the captain waited.

"From the *Sylph*?" he questioned.

"No," was the reply, "from Admiral Jellicoe. Instead of continuing to Copenhagen, we are ordered to cruise about in these waters, that in case a German vessel succeeds in running the blockade, we may

be able to intercept her."

"All right," was the reply, and the commander made his way to his own cabin.

For Alice Beulow, confined to her cabin, and in full realization of her perilous situation, the day passed slowly. Food was brought to her, but she was not allowed to go on deck.

All night she paced up and down in her cabin, and the first gleams of sunlight, streaming through the window, found her pale and hollow-eyed. Sleep had been impossible.

But eight o'clock came at last, and she was conducted to Captain Johnson's cabin, where around a long table sat the men who were to try her on the charge of being a spy—the court-martial—composed of Captain Johnson, First Lieutenant Berkeley, Second Lieutenant Palmer, Third Lieutenant Emery and Fourth Lieutenant Arthur. Lieutenant Taylor was also present.

Captain Johnson arose as Miss Beulow entered the cabin.

"Miss Beulow," he said sternly, "you are accused of being a German spy. Are you innocent or guilty?"

"I am innocent," replied the girl quietly.

Captain Johnson motioned her to a seat, then turned to Lieutenant Taylor.

"You may state your case, sir," he said.

Lieutenant Taylor arose and bowed to the members of the court-martial. Then he faced the young girl, a slight sneer on his face.

Now, lying was not the least of the lieutenant's accomplishments, and he told a plausible story to the officers who sat as judges. He told of how Lord Hastings had learned, through great good fortune, that there were German spies on board the *Sylph*, and how, after being saved from a watery grave, Miss Beulow had repaid her saviours by joining in the conspiracy against them.

He related how Lord Hastings had set a trap for the plotters, and how Miss Beulow had been caught red-handed stealing a message from the wireless room. She had not been arrested then, he explained, because the identity of the other conspirators had not been learned, and it was feared that her arrest would make them more wary.

It was indeed a plausible story, and the judges were plainly impressed with it. Not a doubt of the lieutenant's honesty and veracity had entered the mind of a single member of the court-martial.

At length the lieutenant finished and resumed his seat; and the accused girl arose to face her judges, whom, she was now certain, would also be her executioners.

"Do you wish to make a statement?" she was asked.

"I do," was her reply, as she stood trembling and on the verge of tears, and she continued: "I solemnly swear I am innocent of this grave charge. It is true my father is a German, but that does not prove I am a spy. I accuse that man there," and she pointed a trembling finger at Lieutenant Taylor, "of conspiring to destroy the British fleet!"

Lieutenant Taylor sprang to his feet angrily.

"Absurd!" he cried, and sat down again.

"Is it not true?" continued the young girl, facing him steadily, "that you are not an Englishman? Is it not true that you are an American?"

"And what of that?" exclaimed the lieutenant. "I am nevertheless an officer in the British navy."

The girl turned from him and faced her judges again.

"Gentlemen," she said, "that man came to me two nights ago and declared to me that he was a captain in the German army, and that he was plotting the destruction of the English fleet off Helgoland. He thought that because I am a German, and because I had ignored him, that he could gain my sympathy by disclosing his reason for being with the English. He told me his plans. He, not I, is the traitor!"

Captain Johnson rose to his feet.

"How," he asked, "do you account for the paper I found in your possession?"

"Lieutenant Taylor showed it to me," replied the girl. "He said it was the message that meant the destruction of the British fleet. He gave it to me and I kept it. That is all."

"I deny it!" exclaimed Lieutenant Taylor, springing to his feet.

Captain Johnson waved him aside.

"Have you anything else to say, Miss Beulow?" he asked.

"Nothing," replied the girl, "except that I am innocent."

"You may return to your cabin, Miss Beulow," said Captain Johnson. "You shall know our verdict as soon as we have reached it."

Haltingly the girl was escorted back to her cabin. Here, at length, she gave way to her feelings and burst into tears. When, finally, she was again summoned before the court-martial, she had regained her composure, and, dry-eyed, and standing firmly erect, she once more calmly faced her judges, to learn from them whether she was to live or die.

The captain and all other members of the court-martial arose from their seats.

"Miss Beulow," said Captain Johnson, in a gruff voice, "we have found you, after due deliberation, to be guilty of the charge against you."

Alice Beulow staggered back, and the captain stopped speaking. The British commander cleared his voice of a huskiness that had crept into it, pulled himself together, and continued firmly:

"And the sentence of this court-martial is that you be shot to-morrow morning at eight o'clock!"

"THE BOY ADMIRAL."

As Frank announced his intention of going alone to save Alice Beulow from the death of a spy, he sprang across the deck in the direction of the little launch.

Lord Hastings jumped quickly after him, and Jack, who had stood silently nearby, during the conversation, also gave chase. Except for these three, the deck in this part of the vessel was unoccupied.

As Frank reached the rail, Jack grabbed him by the arm.

"Don't be a fool!" he cried.

"Mr. Chadwick!" cried Lord Hastings, hurrying up, "return to your quarters immediately!"

Frank shook off Jack's detaining hand.

"Let me alone!" he shouted. "Do you think I am going to stand idle while an innocent girl is put to death!"

Again Jack took his friend by the arm.

"Stop! Think what you are about!" he commanded.

"I know what I'm about!" cried Frank angrily. "Let me go!"

"Not by a long shot!" exclaimed Jack, "If I have to hold you I will!"

"Mr. Chadwick!" commanded Lord Hastings, "I am commander of this vessel, and I order you to go to your quarters at once!"

"And I refuse!" cried the lad.

"What! You disobey your commander!" exclaimed Jack.

"Yes," replied Frank, "when it means the death of an innocent girl. And I am surprised to see you stand by idly!"

"I haven't lost my senses," said Jack.

"No," was Frank's answer, "but you seem to have lost your nerve!"

Jack released his hold on his friend and stepped back.

"What!" he exclaimed, "do you mean I am a coward?"

"I don't know what I mean!" cried the now furious lad, "but it looks like it!"

"Enough of this!" spoke Lord Hastings. "Mr. Chadwick! For the last time I order you to return to your quarters!"

"I won't do it!" cried Frank, and drew closer to the rail.

Lord Hastings drew a revolver.

"Do you know that I would be perfectly justified in shooting you?" he demanded.

"Shoot, then!" cried Frank. "I am going anyhow!"

Lord Hastings drew back in surprise.

"Do you know what you are doing?" he asked. "Do you know that quitting your ship in the face of action is worse than cowardice? That it is desertion?"

Frank was taken aback.

"I—I—" he stammered.

Lord Hastings saw that he had made a point, and pressed it.

"Mr. Chadwick!" he exclaimed. "Frank! You are trying to desert!"

Frank took a step forward.

"Desert!" he muttered huskily. "No, I won't desert!"

He turned on his heel, and, without another word, rushed headlong to his cabin, where he threw himself down on his bed.

As Frank made his way to his cabin, Jack wiped beads of perspiration from his brow, as he muttered to Lord Hastings:

"I was afraid he would not come to his senses. I was afraid I should have to use force, and Frank is not one to give up without a fight. I am just as greatly alarmed at Miss Beulow's predicament as he is, but I know my duty."

"And I am glad you do," replied Lord Hastings. "Fond as I am of the boy, I should not have allowed him to go. I should even have shot him had it been necessary. Discipline must be maintained at all hazards. I will countenance no disobedience!"

Jack drew back in surprise. This was a new side of Lord Hastings. Heretofore he had always been the best-natured fellow imaginable. But he was plainly very angry now.

Jack saluted and turned to move away. Lord Hastings halted him.

"Tell Mr. Chadwick to report to me in half an hour," he commanded.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Jack, as he made his way to his cabin. "He can get awfully mad. I can hardly believe it!"

Frank arose from his bed as Jack entered the cabin, and approached his friend with outstretched hand.

"I guess I made an awful fool of myself," he exclaimed; "and I called you a coward. I want to apologize. You know I didn't mean it, don't you?"

"Of course," replied Jack, grasping his friend's hand. "You were angry; that was all. Say no more about it. By the way, Lord Hastings wants to see you in half an hour."

"Why?" exclaimed Frank, in no little alarm. "Was he mad?"

"Was he mad! I should say he was! I don't know what he wants, though."

"Well," said Frank, "I guess I am big enough to take my medicine without crying. But I wish something might be done for Miss Beulow."

"And I," replied Jack. "But cheer up. It may not be as bad as we think. Besides, I suppose we shall go into action to-night. After the battle, we can manage to get hold of the *Alto* in some manner, and

matters can be explained then.”

“If it’s not too late,” exclaimed Frank fearfully.

“It just can’t be too late,” replied Jack.

Half an hour later Frank stood before Lord Hastings.

“The first thing I want to impress upon you,” said Lord Hastings, “is the necessity of obedience and discipline. Those qualifications are essential.”

“I am sorry I acted as I did, sir,” replied Frank, “but I was greatly wrought up. I apologize, sir!”

Lord Hastings’ manner underwent a sudden change.

“I know you were, my boy,” he said, “and I forgive you. I don’t know but that I should have done the same when I was no older than you are. But I have learned with age.”

“Thank you, sir,” replied the lad.

“I promise you,” said Lord Hastings, “that immediately the battle is over I shall look into Miss Beulow’s case. I am sure no harm will come to her before that time. Now, I have a little surprise for you!”

“A surprise, sir?”

“Yes; I am going aboard Admiral Jellicoe’s flagship when we join the fleet this evening. How would you and Jack like to go with me? We shall dine with the admiral.”

“Do you mean it, sir?” asked Frank.

“Of course. We shall probably outline our plans for the coming battle, and I am sure you would like to be there.”

“I am sure Jack and I shall both be pleased, sir.”

“All right; you may go now.”

Frank hurried back to his cabin, where he informed Jack of Lord Hastings’ plan.

“Great!” exclaimed the latter. “I have heard a great deal about Admiral Jellicoe. And, if I mistake not, the whole world will have heard of him before this war is over.”

It was mid-afternoon when the first vessel of the great English fleet was raised off Helgoland; and it was well after nightfall when the *Sylph*, after making her way through the great armada, came to anchor near the flagship, of Vice-Admiral Jellicoe.

Soon one of the *Sylph*’s small boats was lowered and manned, and Lord Hastings, Frank and Jack jumped into it. Aboard the flagship, the meeting of Admiral Jellicoe and Lord Hastings did not wait on ceremony.

They were too old friends for such formalities. As Lord Hastings reached the deck of the flagship, Admiral Jellicoe rushed forward to meet him. The greeting was affectionate, and, after some few words, Lord Hastings motioned to Frank and Jack to approach.

“I wish to present to your excellency,” said Lord Hastings, in introducing the two lads to the British naval commander, “two of the bravest and most resourceful young men it has ever been my fortune to encounter. They both are midshipmen aboard my vessel.”

Both lads bowed.

“I am pleased to meet you, sirs,” acknowledged Admiral Jellicoe, and led the way to his cabin, Lord Hastings, Jack, Frank and officers following.

And this was the boys’ introduction to Vice-Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, Great Britain’s “Boy Admiral,” the youngest Briton holding such an important command—the man to whom, soon after war with Germany was declared, Winston Churchill, first lord of the Admiralty, sent this laconic message:

“Capture or destroy the German fleet!”

THE BATTLE AT SEA.

It was shortly before dawn the following morning—August 28th, to be exact—that two British submarines, taking care to keep clear of the mines which had been planted outside the harbor of Helgoland, crept in close to the island. A little farther out, screened by the darkness which is always greatest just before dawn, the light cruiser, *Fearless*, took her position to await results.

Alongside the *Fearless*, but hidden from view by the larger vessel, lay the *Sylph*—to which our two boys had returned late that night—ready at an instant's notice to act as scout or carry dispatches. All aboard were on the alert, and, as Frank and Jack leaned over the rail, awaiting anxiously the first glimmer of daylight, their excitement was intense.

Slowly the gray dawn approached and the first light disclosed the two submarines well inland, but apparently in distress. One of them seemed to have been disabled, and the other was standing by as though to give aid.

Both boys watched eagerly for the development of the strategy, details of which were known to every officer on the *Sylph*. They had not long to wait, for the German lookouts had been quick to note the seemingly crippled condition of the submarine.

It was also evident from the movement of the German torpedo craft that they, too, had discovered the *Fearless*, for these swift destroyers were speedily put in motion, some heading for the submarines, while others started toward the *Fearless*.

Perceiving that the ruse was working, the *Fearless* put on full speed and turned to the northwest. The *Sylph* followed her example, and the two boats sped away with the Germans in full chase.

Meanwhile, the Germans were getting their first surprise. Having filled their tanks, the submarines quickly disappeared beneath the waves.

Looking backward, the boys could see what had happened.

"I hope they don't suspect what we are doing," said Frank.

"I should think they would," replied Jack. "I should think anybody could see it was a ruse."

"That is because you know all about it," laughed his companion. "If you did not, you would do just exactly what the Germans are doing."

The words had scarcely left his lips when there was a flash from the pursuing torpedo boats, quickly followed by others, and the shells began to fly over and about the *Fearless*.

Then it was that the *Fearless* replied, and that her fire was effective was quickly discovered. But, while it could be seen that the pursuers were repeatedly hit, they were not disabled, and seemed determined to capture the little cruiser.

And now came a surprise. Out of the gray mist of morning there appeared a flotilla of British destroyers—nearly two dozen in all—accompanied by the new light armored cruiser *Arethusa*.

From the portholes of each vessel were flashes thick and fast, and the shells and solid shot began to scream through the air. Almost before they knew it, and certainly before they had time to realize how matters stood, the German torpedo flotilla was hotly engaged by the fresh arrivals.

It was very evident that the British reinforcements were greatly superior in every way, and the Germans were getting the worst of it when, from out the harbor, came swiftly several light German cruisers, rushing to the support of their small craft.

Almost sooner than it can be told the two fleets were close enough together to use every available gun; and for the next few minutes pandemonium reigned.

The gun-laying of all the British ships was splendid, and soon the Germans began to show by their rent funnels, splintered upper works and damaged hulls the punishment they were receiving. Almost together, two shells from 10-inch guns struck the *Arethusa*. One plowed its way through the upper decks, doing great damage, while the other found its way into the engine-room. There was a terrific explosion, and the steam poured from the portholes and mingled with the smoke of battle.

But the *Arethusa* never deviated from her course nor ceased her terrible fire.

A minute later a solid shot entered the bow of the *Sylph*, tore its way diagonally across the gun deck, and put one of the 6-inch rifles out of commission. Another struck the bridge, smashed the funnel, and killed the man at the wheel.

Unmindful of the shot and shell flying about, Jack sprang from his station in the wheel house and grabbed the wheel in time to prevent the *Sylph* from colliding with the *Laertes*, one of the swiftest of the torpedo boats, which had also been severely damaged, but was making a fierce running fight.

After some ten minutes of running and fighting, the *Fearless*, which was leading the flotilla, turned sharply to the west, followed by the remainder of the smaller craft. As the flotilla came around, two of the enemy's cruisers could be seen in a half-sinking condition, and two of the destroyers were missing, having been sunk.

Up to this instant the battle had been fought at very close range, and the dozen or more German cruisers seemed to be rapidly overhauling the mosquito fleet; but, with the sudden turning of the little squadron to the west, there came the single boom of a great gun from out the northwest, heralding the approach of the British battleships—magnificent vessels of the First Battle Squadron.

As the great British guns opened upon the enemy, the Germans turned to flee; but it was too late. They had been lured too far into the open. British strategy had proved too much for the Teutonic mind. Badly battered by the terrific and accurate fire of the British, the Germans turned, and, as fast as their numerous wounds would allow, ran for Helgoland.

Above the sharp banging of the smaller guns, came the great booms from the giant British battleships.

Suddenly one of the enemy's cruisers, the *Köln*, burst into a brilliant sheet of flame. A shell had exploded in her boiler-room. There was a terrible explosion, and the vessel seemed to leap into the air

like a live thing of fire, only to disappear beneath the water with a great hiss a moment later.

A great British cheer rang out across the water; and the Germans, if possible, fled faster than before. Evidently the Germans had expected assistance from the remainder of the fleet, which had been so long bottled up in Helgoland; but no help came.

In spite of the fact that the German vessels under the protection of the great guns of the fort were undoubtedly ready for instant action, the order for them to sally forth to the assistance of their comrades came not.

Gradually the German ships drew off, pursued for a great distance by the victorious British fleet, leaving four vessels at the bottom of the North Sea, two others burning, and, with practically every vessel that had been engaged in the action suffering serious damage. British marksmanship had been too much for them, and they retired to the protection of the great guns of Helgoland, till they presently should once more summon sufficient courage to face the British.

The loss of the Germans was enormous—that of the English comparatively light, only thirty-two lives lost, and less than sixty men wounded.

Several of the British ships had been struck by German shells, but all were able to steam away, although for a short time the *Arethusa* received some aid from the *Sylph*. The *Liberty* also had been seriously damaged.

While the smaller guns of the *Sylph* had prevented her from working any great damage on the heavily armored German vessels, the little scout cruiser had, nevertheless, been right in the hottest of the fight. One of her men was killed and three were wounded.

"A gallant fight!" declared Lord Hastings to his officers, as the *Sylph* drew off after the battle. "England may well be proud of her sailors!"

"It was glorious!" replied Frank. "But I am sorry we did not have a more important part to play."

"And so am I," declared Jack.

"Don't let that worry you," replied Lord Hastings. "You will see all the fighting you want, and more too before the war is over, or I miss my guess."

"Well," said Jack, "to-day's action has proved one thing, at least."

"And that?" questioned Lord Hastings.

"That" repeated Jack, "is that Britannia, as ever, rules the wave!"

AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

Aboard H. M. S. battle cruiser *Alto* subdued excitement prevailed. It was six o'clock the morning after the first British naval victory off Helgoland, and still, for some unaccountable reason, the commander of the *Alto* had received no information of the battle.

Alice Beulow, pale from loss of sleep and tired to the point of exhaustion, paced to and fro in her little cabin. Several times she fell upon her knees beside her bed and prayed, for, by the mandate of the court-martial, she had less than two hours to live.

Now the forward lookout on the *Alto* made out the first sign of a swiftly approaching vessel. Rapidly it came on. Under instructions from Captain Johnson, the wireless operator was attempting to "pick up" the oncoming craft, but, after several futile attempts, finally gave it up. The stranger vouchsafed no reply.

The cruiser's bell tolled the half hour.

"Half past seven!"

The words escaped the kneeling girl. She arose and, going to a little mirror, straightened her hair. She was beyond tears, and was preparing to meet her death bravely. She had given up all hope of rescue.

Came a knock at the door.

"Come!" she called, and Lieutenant Berkeley entered.

"Are you ready, Miss Beulow," he questioned.

"Yes," replied the girl calmly, and followed him on deck.

To the farthest point aft on the cruiser the lieutenant led the way, Alice following with a firm step. As she reached the selected spot and stopped, there came a cry from the lookout:

"Boat coming toward the *Alto*, sir!"

All eyes were turned in the direction indicated. Still some distance away, it was discovered that the vessel seen approaching earlier in the morning had come to anchor, and that a small boat had been lowered, and was rapidly approaching the *Alto*.

The firing squad had been selected the night before, and now stood ready. At this moment the first officer came up and took the rifles from the hands of the six men.

"Three rifles will be loaded with blank cartridges," he informed the men, "so that it will be impossible to say which man's bullet kills the prisoner."

The sailors all breathed easier. It was something for each man to know that there was a possibility that he would not be the one to snuff out the life of the young girl.

"Lieutenant Taylor!"

It was Captain Johnson who spoke.

"Sir?"

Lieutenant Taylor, who stood nearby, approached the commander of the *Alto*.

"You will relieve Lieutenant Berkeley and take command of the firing squad."

The lieutenant's face turned a trifle pale, but he saluted the commander, then turned on his heel and took Lieutenant Berkeley's place at the head of the death squad.

"You will give the command to fire at eight o'clock precisely," Captain Johnson instructed him.

"Yes, sir," was the lieutenant's reply.

Alice Beulow turned upon the traitor a scornful smile, but she uttered no sound. She recognized the folly of a plea for life at this late hour.

With her back to the ship's rail she waved aside the man who approached with a bandage for her eyes.

"I am innocent," she said quietly, "and am not afraid to die!"

The man stepped back, abashed. Lieutenant Taylor now was trembling perceptibly.

"I wish that I could undo this," he muttered to himself, "but it is her life or mine."

He pulled himself together, and faced the firing squad.

At this moment there came a shout from the sea. Captain Johnson looked over the side of the *Alto*. The small launch was now almost alongside, and the commander could see the form of a young man in the uniform of a midshipman directing the approach of the craft.

The latter shouted something unintelligible as the launch scraped alongside the cruiser.

A moment later Lieutenant Taylor, whose thoughts had been so wrapped up in the black deed he was about to commit that he had not noticed the approach of the launch, gave the command:

"Ready!"

Unflinchingly Alice Beulow, with a slight smile on her lips, faced the firing squad.

The hands of each man trembled, and the face of each was pale.

Then, suddenly, before Lieutenant Taylor could give the next command, Frank Chadwick bounded over the side of the *Alto*, nor did he hesitate for a moment. In spite of all attempts to stop him, he rushed toward the spot where Alice Beulow was facing death.

Captain Johnson barred the lad's progress. But Frank was not to be stopped. He dashed ahead with such speed that the captain was thrust violently aside.

Suddenly the commander clapped his hand to where a moment before his sword had hung by his side. But, even as he did so, the blade leaped, as though alive, from his scabbard, and an instant later Frank brandished it aloft!

Then the lad sprang upon Lieutenant Taylor, who even at that second had raised his hand to give his second command to the firing squad:

"Take aim!"

But before he could give the command to fire, Frank was upon him. Startled, the lieutenant leaped

back, forgetting the girl, the firing squad, everything but that his nemesis had run him to earth.

He succeeded in drawing his sword just in time to parry a slashing blow which Frank aimed at him with the commander's sword; but a second later the lad had closed with him, and the lieutenant's sword was practically useless.

The appearance of the apparition from over the side of the *Alto*, and its sudden dash into the center of the firing squad, had taken the cruiser's officers by surprise. But now Captain Johnson pulled himself together, and his voice and Lieutenant Taylor's rang out at the same time with an order to the firing squad:

"Shoot him!"

But one man was in a position to obey the command without fear of accidentally shooting the lieutenant.

Quickly he brought his rifle to bear, and his finger tightened upon the trigger. There was a sharp crack. But Frank did not fall. The cartridge in the rifle had been a blank.

Now the struggling combatants scuffled and twisted so rapidly that it was impossible for any of the sailors to shoot Frank without imminent risk of hitting Lieutenant Taylor, while the latter, realizing for the first time just how near death he was, put forth his utmost strength to free himself, but in vain.

Suddenly the lad released his hold and threw both his arms around the lieutenant, the sword still grasped in his right hand. Then his left hand gripped the naked blade, and, with a quick snap, broke it off a foot from the hilt.

Once more releasing the lieutenant from his close embrace, he took a backward step, following instantly by a quick lunge forward again, which sent his shortened sword straight and true into the traitor lieutenant's breast.

Lieutenant Taylor slid gently to the deck, gave a single convulsive sob and lay still.

Without one look at the girl whose life he had saved at the imminent risk of his own, Frank stepped up to Captain Johnson, saluted, and exclaimed:

"Sir! there lies the traitor. I arrived just in time to prevent you from committing a terrible crime. Miss Beulow is innocent."

"Who are you, sir?" demanded Captain Johnson, waving back the sailors who had again leveled their rifles at the lad. "Why should I not have you shot at once?"

"I am Midshipman Chadwick, sir, of His Majesty's scout cruiser *Sylph*. I am here at Lord Hastings' command to save an innocent girl! This was the only way I could do it!"

"And where is Lord Hastings?" asked the commander.

"Aboard the *Sylph* yonder, sir."

"Then why did he not come, instead of sending you? Or why did he not order the execution stayed by wireless?"

"Our wireless is out of commission; and Lord Hastings is ill with a fever, sir!"

Captain Johnson was silent for some moments.

"I must of necessity place you and Miss Beulow under arrest," he said at length, "but the execution is stayed until I have inquired further into the matter."

"Thank you, sir," replied Frank. "It is all I have fought for!"

BY ORDER OF THE KING.

Alice Beulow had been the first to see Frank as he jumped over the rail of the *Alto*. As he rushed toward her captors she had sent up a fervent prayer of thanks. Various emotions were depicted in her face as the lad struggled with the traitor who had almost succeeded in lying her life away.

When the sailor had brought his rifle to bear on the lad, and the girl saw him pull the trigger, her strong will had finally given way, and she fell fainting to the deck. She was revived at length and carried to her cabin, still under arrest.

Frank also had been arrested by command of Captain Johnson, and confined. Half an hour later, however, the commander ordered him brought to his cabin, and had the lad relate the full story of Lieutenant Taylor's treachery and the details of the first British naval victory off Helgoland.

"I am inclined to believe your story," said the captain, when Frank had concluded. "I am now going aboard the *Sylph* to pay my respects to Lord Hastings, and you and Miss Beulow shall accompany me. You will consider yourself under arrest, however, until I have seen Lord Hastings."

Half an hour later the three were ushered into Lord Hastings' cabin aboard the *Sylph*, where the little scout cruiser's commander lay propped up in bed.

A few words sufficed to clear up the situation so far as Captain Johnson was concerned, and then the latter took Frank by the hand.

"You are a gallant lad," he said, "and I am proud to know you. My prophecy is that you will not long remain a midshipman."

Frank thanked the commander of the *Alto*, and, at a nod from Lord Hastings, which indicated that the latter desired to be alone with Captain Johnson, Frank and Alice Beulow made their way to the deck.

Outside the captain's cabin they ran into Jack, who had been eagerly waiting to learn what all the trouble was about. Alice soon explained the situation to him, and then Jack did a dance of enthusiasm about the deck.

"So you killed the traitor, eh?" he said at last, coming to a stop in his contortions. "Good for you! I should like to have done it myself. You are a brave chum, old man, and I am glad to have you for one."

"No more glad than I am to have you for a chum," replied Frank. "I have done nothing you wouldn't have done had you been in my place. It was simply luck, that's all."

"It was a brave action," put in Alice Beulow, "and for the second time I owe you my life. The debt, I fear, can never be repaid."

"It was nothing any other fellow would not have done," protested Frank modestly.

"But tell me how you happened to arrive so opportunely," demanded Alice.

"Well," said Frank, "after the battle, our first thought was of you. We had heard, just before our wireless apparatus was put out of commission, of your arrest, but, until after the battle, we could do nothing.

"Since noon yesterday we have been scouring the sea for the *Alto*, and we were beginning to fear that we should not locate you in time. The loss of our wireless came near proving fatal. It was early this morning when we finally made out what we felt sure was the *Alto*."

"He doesn't tell you, Miss Beulow," Jack broke in, "how he stood watch all that time without a wink of sleep; and that but for the keenness of his eye we should probably have missed you."

"Well," said Frank, "I could do nothing less. But that's all there is to the story. Now, Miss Beulow, will you tell us your experiences aboard the *Alto*?"

The girl complied, and the boys listened with the greatest of interest.

"The cowardly traitor!" exclaimed Jack, when she concluded. "I should like to have got my hands on him!"

"He will bother no one else," said Frank simply.

A moment later Captain Johnson emerged from Lord Hastings' cabin. Before leaving the *Sylph* he again approached Frank and shook hands with him.

"If I can ever be of service to you," he said, on taking his departure, "command me. I shall never forget that your bravery alone saved me from putting an innocent girl to death!"

Frank thanked the gallant commander, and the latter disappeared over the side with a backward wave of his hand.

Soon the *Sylph* was under way again, speeding swiftly toward the far distant western horizon. For a long time, Alice Beulow, Frank and Jack leaned over the rail of the little cruiser, gazing at the swiftly passing greenish water. Then the three were summoned to Lord Hastings' cabin.

The commander of the *Sylph*, still propped up in bed, greeted Frank with a smile, and, beckoning the lad to him, gave his hand a hearty clasp, in spite of his apparent feebleness.

"Captain Johnson has told me of your gallant action aboard the *Alto*," he said; "and I add my praise to his. It was a brave deed."

Frank passed the compliment off modestly, and Lord Hastings continued:

"I shall see that your conduct does not go unrewarded. But what I summoned you all here to say is that we are returning to London."

"To London!" exclaimed Jack, in surprise.

"Yes. There the *Sylph* will undergo the necessary repairs, which probably will take a week. At the end of that time I hope to have recovered to such an extent that we shall be able to put to sea immediately. I feel much stronger the last few hours."

"And then back to Helgoland," said Frank.

"No," replied Lord Hastings, "I think not. I believe that our next cruise will be in the Mediterranean."

"The Mediterranean!" exclaimed Jack. "Why not the North Sea? Don't you think there will be more fighting there, sir?"

"Not immediately," was the reply. "After the blow we have just inflicted upon the German fleet I believe it will be some time before the enemy will venture forth again."

"Then there is no likelihood of Admiral Jellicoe's forcing a battle by going in after the Germans?" queried Frank.

"I fear that would be suicide. The guns of a fortress, you know, are of much heavier caliber than it is possible to mount upon a war vessel. Besides, the harbor is mined, and there would, I am afraid, be but slight hope of success for British arms in such a venture."

"And yet," said Frank, with a smile, "there was a certain American admiral in the Civil War who said something about paying no heed to the torpedoes when he steamed into Mobile Bay."

"Yes," admitted Lord Hastings, "and there was another American admiral who also disregarded the mines at Manila. But don't you fret," he continued, "you will find that Admiral Jellicoe is of the same caliber, should he deem such a venturesome exploit essential."

"I am sure of it," agreed Jack. "From what little I saw of him the other night, I am willing to bet that he is not the man to shirk a necessary task because of danger."

"I agree with you," said Frank.

"I didn't call you here to discuss warfare," said Lord Hastings, after some further conversation along this line, "but rather to find out what we shall do with Miss Beulow."

"I am perfectly willing to abide by whatever decision you may reach," said the girl, with a smile. "I am sure you will not find me hard to please."

"What would you suggest, sir?" asked Frank.

"Well," said Lord Hastings, "as you boys know, I am a married man. I am sure that my wife would be glad to have Miss Beulow make her home with her until such time as she can get into Germany with safety."

"But I can impose no further upon your generosity," protested the girl. "You have been too good to me now."

"Tut, tut," chided Lord Hastings, "it will be no imposition. Besides I am sure it is only a question of a few weeks until some arrangement will be made whereby German subjects in England and British subjects in Germany will be furnished means of returning to their native lands. Now, what do you say to my plan, Miss Beulow?"

"I am sure she will accept," said Frank eagerly.

For several moments the girl did not speak.

"Yes," she said at length; "I shall accept; and I thank you, Lord Hastings, for your kindness."

This matter having been settled, Lord Hastings announced that he thought a good nap would do him good, and the young folks went on deck to enjoy the sunshine. Later in the day Lord Hastings was also able to be on deck, and, while the *Sylph* slipped rapidly along through the water, entertained the others with accounts of his travels.

Toward sunset Frank made out what appeared to be land.

"What land is it?" he inquired of Lord Hastings.

The *Sylph's* commander took his glasses and carefully observed the land through the hazy atmosphere.

"It must be the coast of Denmark," he replied, after a moment's hesitation, "although I did not realize that we were that far north. We must have sailed considerably off our course."

Night came on and still the *Sylph* continued her homeward journey without interruption, although a watch for evidence of any German vessel was being carefully kept.

It was while at supper that the peaceful calm on board was rudely broken.

From on deck came the sound of scuffling feet, followed by shouts and at length a shot. Then came the sound of running feet, a moment of silence, followed again by a volley of pistol shots.

Lord Hastings arose slowly to his feet and made his way on deck, closely followed by Frank and Jack.

"What's the trouble?" demanded Lord Hastings, approaching a group of sailors, who stood at the rail, firing into the water.

One of the men stepped forward.

"It's that traitor. Hardy, sir," he replied.

"Hardy!" exclaimed Lord Hastings. "What about him?"

"He has escaped, sir."

"What!"

"Yes, sir."

"But I ordered him put in irons and carefully guarded."

"And he was, sir. I can vouch for that."

"Then how did he escape?"

"I don't know, sir; but he freed himself of his shackles in some manner. There he goes now, sir, in the motor. You can just make him out."

"How is it that you did not recapture him before he could get away?" demanded his lordship.

"Well, he came upon us all of a sudden like, sir. He knocked two men down before we knew what had happened. Then he put the boat over the side and jumped in. I took a shot at him, as he jumped, but missed. He must have started the engine the moment he struck the boat, for he was moving in a jiffy. We all ran to the rail, and fired several shots at him, but it doesn't look like we hit him."

Here Jack broke into the conversation.

"Why can't I take the other boat and go after him?" he demanded. "I am sure I can overhaul him before he has gone very far. And, when I do—well, I'll bring him back, all right."

Lord Hastings hesitated for one moment.

"All right," he finally said. "Take five men with you, and hustle."

"I am going, too," Frank broke in.

"Not much," said Jack. "You have had all the glory. It's time for me to get into this game."

In almost less time than it takes to tell it, the second launch had been lowered and, with Jack at the steering wheel, was off in the darkness after the traitor. The powerful searchlight on the little boat lighted up the sea for a long distance ahead, and at least a mile away Jack could make out the craft in which Hardy was heading for the Danish coast.

"Well," said Jack to himself, "it's up to me to catch him, and I won't come back till I do."

Lord Hastings had told him that the *Sylph* would remain where she was until he returned.

Under Jack's orders the launch was leaping ahead at full speed, and after an hour it became apparent that the pursuers were gaining slightly.

"At this rate," said Jack to himself, "we won't overhaul him before daylight. But we shall keep after him as fast as we can."

And keep after him they did; but their efforts to catch the traitor were doomed to disappointment, the two launches were so nearly matched.

The night now grew blacker, as it always does just before dawn, and now the headlight on the pursuing launch, besides showing Jack the escaping fugitive, also showed him the outline of the coast less than half a mile ahead of the fugitive.

With the first sight of the coast Jack uttered an exclamation of dismay, although he did not slacken the speed of the launch, which continued to creep closer and closer to the fugitive.

As the first, faint streak of dawn appeared in the sky, Hardy ran his boat close to shore and, standing erect, jumped headlong into the water. A moment later and he reappeared and struck out for land.

Now that his quarry was safe ashore, Jack approached more cautiously, for he was not minded to run his little craft upon a rock. But when the pursuers were finally able to land Hardy had disappeared in the distance.

Jack turned to his men.

"You will stay here until I return," he informed them. "I may be gone a long time—there is no telling. Wait for me an hour after nightfall, and if I have not then returned you will go back to the *Sylph*. Do not come ashore, for this is neutral ground," and the lad hurried in the direction in which the fugitive had disappeared.

"If I can catch him before we are discovered," he told himself, "he'll come back all right. If not, well, I don't know. If discovered I suppose we shall both be disarmed and interned," for Jack was not unfamiliar with neutrality laws, and he realized that if discovered he would probably not be allowed to leave the country until the war had ended.

But if Jack had expected to overhaul the fugitive and take him back to the *Sylph* without trouble, he was doomed to disappointment. As he hurried on through the little woods there was the sudden sound of a shot, and a bullet whistled over his head.

The lad sprang behind a tree and quickly drew his revolver.

A moment later there was a second shot, and Jack saw a flash from behind a tree scarcely a hundred feet away. He aimed quickly at an arm which extended from behind the tree and fired. A howl of pain rewarded him; but Jack was too wary to step from behind his shelter, although he looked cautiously in the direction of his enemy.

As he surmised, it was the traitor Hardy who had shot at him. The fugitive now lay sprawled on the ground, and even from where Jack stood he could hear the man's moans. The bullet had struck him in the elbow—on the "crazy bone."

Jack stepped quickly from behind his tree and rapidly crossed the distance that separated him from his wounded enemy. As he came close, Hardy suddenly sprang to his feet and, unable to bring his revolver to bear quickly enough, struck a savage blow at the lad.

Jack dodged the blow and promptly sent his fist between the other's eyes, knocking him to the ground in a sprawling heap.

"I guess that will teach you I am not to be fooled with," he said angrily.

The lad stooped over and lifted his unconscious enemy to his own shoulders.

"Now to get back to the launch before I am discovered," he said, and, turning, he started off rapidly in the direction from which he had come.

But he was not to carry his task to a successful termination so easily; for hardly had he gone fifty feet, when he was brought to an abrupt pause by the sound of a harsh command:

"Halt!"

Turning, the lad dropped his burden to the ground and, after a moment's hesitation, threw his hands above his head.

"This is what I call tough," he muttered.

For, not fifty yards behind him, and approaching at a run, came an officer with leveled revolver, and behind him a squad of soldiers.

NEUTRAL HOSPITALITY.

The officer came up to the lad quickly, and held out his hand for the boy's revolver, which Jack gave him without a word.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded in broken English.

Jack smiled slightly.

"Well, as you have got me, I don't mind telling," he replied. "I am a midshipman on the British scout cruiser *Sylph*. This man is a traitor, who would have delivered the British fleet into the hands of the Germans. Fortunately, his treachery was discovered in time. Last night, however, he succeeded in making his escape, and I was sent after him. I had just persuaded him that he had better return when you arrived. That's all there is to it."

The Danish officer permitted the semblance of a smile to cross his face.

"Your methods of persuasion are to be commended," he said dryly, "but, while they may be permissible in times of war, there is no war in Denmark. Denmark is absolutely neutral. I suppose you are aware of that?"

Jack signified that he was.

"Then," said the officer, "you must realize that you have carried this thing too far."

"Well," answered Jack, "I figured that if you didn't catch me it would be all right. But I was afraid you or someone just like you might show up. But, if I could have got away with this man, I would have been all right, wouldn't I?"

Again the Danish officer smiled slightly.

"You are frank, at any rate," he said. "I am sorry, but it is my duty to take you to Esbjerg and turn you over to my superiors. My sympathies in the case have nothing to do with the matter. I may say, however, that I am sorry you have fallen into my hands. Had I known what was going on I would have become temporarily deaf."

"Thanks," said Jack dryly. "But are you sure it is too late to become deaf now?"

"Perfectly sure," said the officer, smiling. "You see, my men might not be afflicted at the same time. I am sorry, but I must ask you to come with me peaceably, or I shall be compelled to use force."

"Oh, I'll come peaceably enough," said Jack. "But what will be done with me?"

"You'll not be harmed, be sure of that; but the chances are that you will not be allowed to leave the country until after the war. And it seems to me that you should be glad of that."

"Well, I'm not," said Jack warmly.

"No," said the officer, "I don't suppose you are."

He turned to the wounded Hardy and stirred his prostrate form with his foot.

"Ugh!" he ejaculated. "I have no use for a traitor, be he English or German."

He turned to his men.

"Pick him up and bring him along," he commanded.

Two of the soldiers did as ordered, and the party started off, the Danish officer and Jack in the lead.

"What's the name of this place you are taking me to?" demanded Jack, as they walked along.

"Esbjerg," was the reply.

"What is it, a town or a conundrum?"

The officer drew himself up stiffly. Jack was contrite in a second.

"I beg your pardon," he hastened to say. "I didn't mean to offend you."

The officer became his good-natured self again in a moment.

"Say no more about it," he said. "I thought you were making fun of me."

"Oh, no," said Jack, "I wouldn't try to do that."

They continued their way, Jack and the Danish officer on the best of terms. At length a few scattering houses came into view, and Jack saw that they were approaching a little town.

Straight through the streets of the town they went, what few pedestrians that were abroad at this early hour eying them askance. But no word was spoken.

Finally Jack's captor stopped at the entrance of a building somewhat larger than the rest, and turned to his men.

"Take him," indicating the wounded Hardy, "to the hospital, and see that his wounds are attended to and that he is well guarded." To Jack he added: "Come with me."

Together they ascended the steps and passed through the door of the building. Into a large and handsomely appointed room the officer led his captive. At a large desk at one end of the apartment sat a large, ruddy-faced man in uniform, his straps, to Jack's educated eye, proclaiming his rank as that of general.

The general arose to his feet as the officer and Jack approached him.

"And what have we here?" he demanded, in a loud, booming voice.

"I captured this young English officer in the act of carrying an enemy from Danish soil," replied the officer, saluting. "It was a violation of our neutrality, so I placed him under arrest."

"Good," said the general; "and the other man?"

"He is in the hospital, sir."

"Hospital? Do you mean to say that they were fighting on Danish soil?"

"As to that I couldn't say, sir," replied the officer. "I heard shots, but I did not see them fired."

The general turned abruptly to Jack.

"Your name?" he demanded.

"Midshipman Jack Templeton, sir, of His Majesty's navy," replied the lad, with a bow.

"Explain your presence in Denmark," came the next command.

Jack explained, and, after he had concluded his recital, the Danish general was silent for some

moments.

"Uh-m-m-m," he said finally, and his voice was not so harsh. "How old are you?"

"Seventeen, sir," said Jack.

"You are indeed young to have seen so much service," mused the general. "But this is a serious case. I am afraid I shall have to order you interned."

"Is there no way out of that, sir?" asked Jack, now greatly alarmed.

"I am afraid not; but, have no fear, you shall be well treated while you are our guest."

"Guest," repeated Jack bitterly, "say rather your prisoner."

"Not if you will give me your parole not to attempt to escape," said the general kindly.

"I can't do that, sir," replied Jack, taken somewhat aback by the old general's kindness.

"Then I fear that I must order you confined."

The general turned to the officer who had captured Jack; but before he could open his mouth to speak, the abrupt entrance of another figure into the room caused him to turn with his order left unspoken.

As the newcomer advanced into the room, both Danish officers saluted, and then bowed low. Instinctively Jack felt that he was in the presence of royalty, and he also bent his knee in homage.

Nor was he wrong, for the good-natured, kindly-faced smiling man, who now approached them, was none other than Christian X, King of Denmark. In his eye there was a twinkle, and there was a humorous quirk to his mouth, only partly hidden by his mustache.

Nodding to the two officers, the king walked directly up to Jack, who, being the subject of a king himself, fell upon his knee. The king extended a hand and lifted the boy to his feet.

"I have overheard your conversation, sirs," he said quietly, and, turning once more to Jack, "and I am indeed proud to have the pleasure of meeting so valiant an English youth."

"I thank your majesty," said Jack in great confusion, and could say no more.

"It is indeed unfortunate that you should have fallen into our hands," continued the king, "for it must be as you have been told. Denmark is strictly neutral, and neutral she shall remain while I am king. You, I regret to say, must stay with us. But you shall be well treated. I myself shall see to that."

Jack bowed again as the king finished.

"No doubt you are hungry," the king continued, "for you could not have eaten during your long chase. My own breakfast is now ready, and I hope I may have the pleasure of your company?"

The king's last words were an interrogation and, overcome by this hospitality, Jack could do naught but nod his head in assent.

"Come, then," said the king, and he turned toward the door.

Jack followed him from the room.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DASH FOR FREEDOM.

Despite the fact that he was sadly lacking in a knowledge of court etiquette, Jack acquitted himself creditably in breakfasting with royalty. He recounted his adventures preceding the time he joined the British navy and gave the king an account of his early life. He spoke of Frank several times, and finally the king was moved to ask:

"And your friend—this American youth—is he as great a fighter as you are?"

"Well, Frank is a fighter," was Jack's reply. "I don't know as I come in that class," modestly, "but Frank is a mighty good friend to have around in time of need."

"No better than you, I'll warrant," the king made answer, as he arose from the table. "But come, I have many affairs to attend to, which is the reason I came here from Copenhagen yesterday, so I shall have to turn you over to someone for safekeeping. It would not do to have you get away; and besides, I have promised myself more of your company."

Jack followed the king back into the room where the general still sat at his desk, and was turned over to the latter by the king with this parting injunction:

"See that he has everything he wants, and see also that he is well guarded until I have decided what final disposition to make of him."

"And the other prisoner?" questioned the general.

"Well, I haven't much sympathy for the other," said the king, "but he, too, must be treated well."

The general bowed his head in assent, and the king left the room.

"I hardly know what to do with you," mused the general, tapping on his desk with a lead pencil.

He was silent for some moments, meditating. Finally he struck a bell and a moment later an orderly entered the room and came to a salute.

"Summon Lieutenant Erickson," commanded the general.

A few minutes later a young, pleasant-looking Danish officer entered the room.

The general introduced the two young men to each other, and then said to the lieutenant:

"Lieutenant, I turn Mr. Templeton over to you. You will treat him as a guest rather than as a prisoner. But you will be responsible for him. See that he does not escape." To Jack he added: "You see, we are trying to make it as pleasant as possible for you. I hope that you will not make it necessary for us to use more forcible means to induce you to accept our hospitality."

Jack bowed, but made no reply. He did not intend to commit himself one way or the other, but he had made up his mind to make a dash for liberty if the slightest chance offered. He had another thought in his head also: He did not intend to go back to the *Sylph* without the object of his chase—the traitor Hardy.

With Lieutenant Erickson, Jack wandered about the streets of the city all morning viewing the sights of interest. It was after 12 o'clock when they stopped into a little restaurant to get something to eat. Several other officers were in the café when the two entered, and Lieutenant Erickson introduced the lad to all of them.

Finally, when all the Danish officers were in the midst of a discussion of the great European war, the chance for which Jack had been impatiently waiting came. And the boy was not slow to take advantage of it.

The table at which the party was seated was near the door. The heads of all the officers were now close together, and so engrossed were they in their discussion that they paid no heed to Jack, as he quietly rose from the table and slipped toward the door.

But, just as Jack put his foot over the threshold, Lieutenant Erickson noticed his absence and sprang to his feet with a shout. The others followed his example and made a concerted rush for the door, through which Jack was at that moment disappearing.

Dashing out the door the lad ran madly down the street, and turned the first corner just before the officers emerged from the restaurant. For a moment they stood in the doorway puzzled, not knowing in which way the fugitive had fled.

But for a moment only. They hailed a passing pedestrian, and from him learned which way the lad had gone. All immediately dashed away in pursuit.

Now Jack was considerable of a sprinter, so when the officers rounded the corner the lad was nowhere in sight. For perhaps fifteen minutes Jack ran as fast as his legs could carry him, turning corner after corner, until at last he was forced to slow down to regain his breath. However, he now felt that he had given his pursuers the slip, so he continued to walk along more slowly.

But the lad's utter ignorance of the city landed him in more trouble, for, in winding about through the various streets, as he had, he suddenly came right back to the starting point. Here, owing to the confusion occasioned by his dash for liberty, a crowd had gathered, the restaurant proprietor among them.

The latter recognized Jack the minute he came into sight, and yelled in a loud voice:

"There he is! There he is!"

Jack immediately took to his heels again, with the crowd in full chase. And, as he rounded the next corner, he came upon the party of officers, who, unable to find him, were returning to the starting point to take up the search anew.

Jack now was caught between two fires, so to speak. For a moment he halted, as his pursuers bore down on him from two directions with shouts and yells. But his inaction lasted only a moment. His roving eyes fell upon a little alleyway across the street, and into this he dashed at full speed, his pursuers hot on his trail.

Out of the alleyway and down the next street the lad ran, those behind being left farther in the rear at almost every stride. Then, espying another narrow alleyway, and thinking to give his pursuers the

slip entirely, the lad dashed into it.

Had he made his way into this narrow alleyway unseen, it is likely he would have eluded his pursuers for good and all; but he didn't. One man rounded the corner just in time to see the lad turn, and he made after him with a shout.

Jack still had quite a lead, however, and was not disheartened; but, as he rounded a little curve in his retreat, his heart almost stopped beating, and he came to a sudden pause. For the passageway was a blind one. The lad had run up against a solid wall.

And, at the same minute the lad stopped in his flight, the first pursuer came into view again. As Jack was just about to turn and give himself up—for he knew he could not hope to fight off his pursuers—a window suddenly opened above his head, and a woman's head was poked out.

Jack glanced up. With outstretched hands he could easily grasp the window sill. He considered a fraction of a second, then reached up, grasped the sill, and pulled himself up into the open window.

The woman, startled at the sudden apparition, drew back, and attempted to close the window; but Jack threw one leg over the sill. The window came down on it with great force; but it did not close.

The woman grabbed the lad by the foot and attempted to force him out, but he was not to be thrust into the hands of his pursuers thus easily, and after several attempts the woman desisted and ran screaming through the house.

Immediately Jack pushed up the window and dropped lightly into the room. The window he closed and locked almost with a single move in the very faces of his trailers. Then he turned and dashed across the room, making for the front door.

But by the time he reached it he found this means of exit barred, for some of the pursuers, the moment they had seen him spring into the window, had rushed around to the front entrance.

Realizing that there was no hope of escape in that direction, the lad turned and dashed up the stairs to the second floor. There, in a back room, as his gaze roved about, he beheld a trap door in the ceiling. Pulling a chair to the middle of the room, he mounted it, laid his hands against the trap door and pushed.

The door fell off on the outside, and a moment later Jack was on the roof. The trap door he put back in its place, and sat on it a moment to regain his breath.

As he sat there looking around for some means of escape there came a fierce thumping on the door upon which he sat. Jack smiled to himself slightly.

"They can only come up one at a time," he muttered. "I guess I can take care of them."

He arose. There came another resounding smash, and the trap door flew off, splintered by a fierce blow.

Jack dropped to his knees beside the opening.

JACK TRIES A RUSE.

A head was poked cautiously through the opening, and a second later a uniformed arm appeared. Jack leaned forward, put his hand on the man's head, and gave a violent push. The head disappeared on the inside; there was the sound of a heavy fall below, followed by a sound of great confusion and muttered imprecations.

"Wonder what they'll try next?" muttered Jack to himself.

He had not long to wait. A second time a head was poked cautiously through the opening, and a second time Jack's hand shot forth and there was the sound of a heavy fall below. A third time this was tried, but, when the third man had been hurled back, no fourth head appeared in the opening.

"Well," mused Jack, "I guess they have had enough of that. Suppose they have something else up their sleeves now. I shall have to be watchful."

At that moment the lad heard a footstep behind him, and turned quickly, just in time to grapple with a man who sprang upon him. While Jack had been busy watching the trap door, a ladder had been placed against the side of the house, and the pursuers were climbing up.

With a quick wrench Jack hurled the man from him, dashed toward the ladder and arrived just in time to deal the man who was just about to set foot upon the roof a heavy blow. A quick glance showed him several more forms swarming up the ladder.

With a quick kick he swept the ladder aside, hurling all upon it to the ground with stunning force; then turned again just in time to meet the assault of the one man already on the roof.

This assailant struck out vigorously, but, in spite of Jack's youth, the man was no match for him when it came to close quarters. Jack picked the man up in his arms bodily and ran to the trap door just as another head appeared in the opening.

Standing over the opening Jack lifted up his human burden and let him drop. He struck squarely upon the head of the other, and both went to the floor below with a loud thud. Jack glanced quickly around, to see if there were any other ladders being placed against the side of the house.

He could see none, so he mounted guard over the trap door. But not another form appeared through this opening either. Jack stood there for several moments, but no further attempts were made to reach him. Making sure that there was no one below, the lad walked quickly around the roof.

One man stood guard on each side of the house and a big crowd was packed in front.

"Something up," Jack muttered to himself. "They evidently are convinced they cannot reach me this way and are going to try something else. I guess it's up to me to get out of here very suddenly. But how?"

That was the question, and the boy gave it some reflection. Then, as he made another tour of the roof, a plan came to him. It was a desperate chance, but he could think of no other way of escape.

Making sure that the crowd was all in front, the boy ran quickly to the back of the house. There was a guard directly below him, but, as luck would have it, the man at that very moment was engaged in the task of lighting a pipe.

Jack acted without a pause. Swiftly and silently he lowered himself from the roof, hanging by his hands directly over the guard's head. Then, giving himself a little swing outward, he dropped.

It was a long drop, but the lad had gauged the distance correctly, and the force of the fall was broken by the man below, upon whose shoulders the lad dropped like a human thunderbolt.

The man went to the ground without so much as a groan, Jack on top of him. Although somewhat shaken up by his fall, Jack did not lose his presence of mind for a single moment, and his hand clutched the guard's throat, throttling any outcry.

Now Jack's further resourcefulness became apparent. Glancing quickly about to make sure that no one was in sight—the walls of the house obstructing the view of those on the sides and in front—the lad lifted the guard bodily in his arms and carried him to a little shed in the rear.

Quickly he stripped the officer—for such his victim proved to be—of his uniform, and hastily donned it himself. Hurriedly he bound and gagged his captive, and then walked from the shed and took the guard's place in the rear of the house.

And he arrived there not a moment too soon, for at that instant a band of soldiers appeared, bearing many ladders. These they leaned against the side of the house in different places, and one man mounted each, cautiously, for fear of being hurled back by the fugitive they believed to be on the roof.

Jack walked round to the front of the house, and, keeping his head lowered, mingled with the crowd. At that moment there came a shout from the roof:

"He's not here!"

Then there came another cry:

"The trap door! He must have gone back through the trap door!"

"No," came another voice, "he has not come down this way."

"About time for me to make myself scarce," Jack told himself.

He sauntered slowly away and was soon out of sight of the house.

It was now well along in the afternoon. Jack looked at his watch. It was almost 4 o'clock.

"If I can find the hospital," he told himself, "I may manage to work this thing out yet. I've got to take a chance, and that's all there is about it. The worst of it is that I cannot afford to ask for directions. A Danish officer surely should know where the hospital is located. Well, here goes."

He continued slowly down the street, keeping a sharp lookout for anything that looked like it might be a hospital. He walked with lowered head, for, while his uniform gave him a certain amount of safety, he wished to run no unnecessary risk of detection.

For almost an hour he strolled about the town, and at last his efforts were rewarded. He stopped before a large and imposing building.

"This looks like a hospital to me," he said. "It is hardly likely they have more than one in a town of this size, and Hardy probably was taken here. Guess I better look around a bit, however, before I go in, though. I might spot another one some place. It's too bad I can't read Danish. It might be easier if I could."

Jack walked on, and a few blocks farther down, the street passed a body of Danish cavalry moving at a rapid trot in the direction from which he had come. Jack smiled grimly to himself.

"Going to help search for the fugitive, I guess. Well, I hope they don't find him, or the guard, either, for it might make it a little awkward for me."

He gazed after the cavalry as it disappeared around a corner.

"A likely looking crowd," he said in some admiration. "I'll bet they could give a good account of themselves when it came to a fight. Hope I don't have to line up against any of them."

He turned and retraced his steps toward the building in which he felt sure he would find Hardy. He mounted the long flight of stone steps with a firm tread and entered the door. A quick glance showed him that he had not been mistaken. The place was a hospital and no mistake.

"Now to find out where my friend Hardy is," the lad muttered.

He walked slowly about the halls, looking for the office. His search was at length rewarded. Glancing in an open door, he saw several clerks at work, and at one end of the room, separated from the others by a railing, an important-looking man, unmistakably a physician.

"The superintendent, I suppose, or whatever he is called in this country," muttered Jack. "I guess I had better talk in German. English wouldn't do at all. But, suppose they won't let me have Hardy without a written order? Oh, well, I'll have to take a chance on that. Here we go."

Jack drew a deep breath, straightened himself up, and with a firm step entered the room.

THE RUSE SUCCESSFUL.

Jack approached the man he took to be the superintendent. The latter looked up.

"Well, sir?" he demanded in German.

"I'm in luck," said Jack to himself, but aloud he made reply:

"I am ordered to take the English prisoner, who was brought here this morning, before the king."

"Your order," said the superintendent, extending a hand.

"This is a hurry case," said Jack quietly, "and His Majesty did not take time to write an order."

"Well, you won't get him without it," said the superintendent.

"But I must have him at once," said Jack firmly. "Either you shall deliver him to me, or I shall have to use force. My orders are to bring him before the king immediately. Shall I call my men?" and the lad took a step toward the door.

The physician looked at the lad keenly, and Jack returned his gaze unflinchingly. Finally the physician arose.

"Come, then," he said; "but I would have you inform His Majesty that in the future I must insist upon a written order."

Jack bowed coldly, and followed the physician from the room. Up two flights of stairs they went, and from there into a private room, fitted up luxuriously.

"You see," the superintendent explained, "the prisoner has the best that we can offer. I hope that you will see fit to inform His Majesty that his orders are being obeyed."

"I shall be glad to do so," replied Jack.

He followed the physician to the bedside of the traitor. Hardy was sleeping, but the physician aroused him by shaking his arm.

"Your presence before the king is desired immediately," he said.

Jack kept his face averted, for he feared that Hardy would recognize him in spite of his uniform.

"What does the king want?" questioned the traitor of the physician.

"I do not know, but this officer," indicating Jack, "has been sent to conduct you to him."

"All right I shall be ready immediately," said Hardy.

He arose from the bed and slipped into his clothes, the physician assisting him, for his wounded arm was wrapped in a sling and gave him some difficulty. Then, without a word, he followed Jack from the room.

Now, as Jack had sought the hospital he had noted some of the localities he had passed while being led along by his own captor, so that he had a pretty fair idea of the direction in which he wanted to go. The one thing that he feared was that Hardy would recognize him before they got out of the city.

He kept his hand on the revolver he had taken from the Danish officer, whose clothes he had appropriated, for he was determined that Hardy would either be taken back to the *Sylph* alive or stay in Denmark dead.

"He is too dangerous to be allowed to escape scot free," the lad told himself. "Besides, Lord Hastings' last words were to bring him back dead or alive. I don't think much of the job, but I'll do it if necessary."

As they walked along the street, Hardy tried to strike up a conversation. Jack walked slightly ahead of him, to prevent him from getting a good look at his face.

"What does the king want with me, do you suppose?" Hardy asked.

"I don't know," replied Jack gruffly.

"How about the other prisoner? Where is he?"

"Oh, he's safe enough," was Jack's answer.

"You are not very communicative, are you?" demanded Hardy, stopping suddenly.

"Not very," replied Jack, stopping also. "But come along. The king desires your presence immediately."

"Seems to me I have heard your voice before," said Hardy, resuming his walk. "You are not the officer who took me to the hospital, are you?"

"No," said Jack.

"Then where have we met before?"

"Your imagination is running away with you," said Jack.

"No, I know your voice. Hold on, while I get a look at you," and he took Jack by the arm.

The boy freed his arm with a wrench.

"None of that," he said, in his natural voice. "You come with me, or I'll put a hole through you."

Hardy stopped suddenly.

"I know you now!" he gasped.

"Yes, and you'll know me a whole lot better if you don't do as I tell you," said Jack quietly. "Come on, now, move."

Instead of obeying this command. Hardy suddenly let out a loud cry for help.

Instantly Jack whipped his revolver out.

"One more like that," he said sternly, "and I'll shoot you where you stand."

"You wouldn't have the nerve," was the sneering response.

"Don't try me," said Jack quietly. "You are too dangerous to be running around loose. I would shoot you with as little compunction as I would a dog."

Hardy was evidently impressed with Jack's tone, for he resumed his walk slowly.

"What are you going to do with me?" he demanded.

"Take you back aboard the *Sylph*," replied the lad. "And now don't let me hear another sound out of you."

But the one cry for help which Hardy had made was enough to cause trouble. For now, from around the corner came a crowd of men, rushing up to Jack and his prisoner.

"One word from you," Jack warned Hardy, "and I'll let you have it, no matter what happens to me. Don't forget that."

By this time the vanguard of the crowd was upon them.

"What's the matter?" demanded a voice.

"Nothing," replied Jack calmly. "I thought for a moment this prisoner was going to get away. He broke loose and ran down the street, but I caught him. I called for help because I feared he would get away."

As he spoke he kept his revolver, which he grasped firmly in his pocket, pointed through the cloth full at his prisoner. Hardy saw that he was covered, and he realized that a miss at such close quarters was practically impossible. So he said nothing.

Jack's explanation seemed to satisfy the crowd, for, after following for some distance and asking a few questions, it gradually drew off.

"You'll never know how close you were to death," Jack informed his prisoner. "I thought once you were going to speak, and my finger was on the trigger."

"I saw it," replied Hardy quietly. "I am not entirely a fool."

"Remember it, then," was Jack's response.

For some moments they continued on their way in silence, and at last Hardy said:

"Listen here, Templeton! Isn't there some way we can fix this thing up? I know what will happen to me if I am taken back to the *Sylph*. If this thing had gone through I would have been a rich man. I am sure I can explain things satisfactorily to my superiors. Now you let me go and I'll see that you are put in a position that will make you independent—that you are made rich."

"Silence, you hound!" exclaimed Jack angrily. "One more remark like that, and I shall be tempted to shoot you anyhow. I have half a mind to, as it is."

"Oh, no, you won't," was Hardy's reply. "I know your kind too well for that."

"Be careful," said Jack, in a low tone, "don't drive me too far."

The silence that followed was broken a few moments later by Hardy, who uttered an exclamation. Jack followed the traitor's gaze, and broke into a cold sweat.

From the rear came a body of infantry at a run. Jack drew his revolver and shoved it up against Hardy's side.

"We'll do a little running ourselves," he said quietly. "Hustle, now, and remember I am right behind you, and that I'll put a bullet through you at the first false move."

Hardy, as he himself had said, was no fool. He realized that Jack meant business, and, in spite of his wound, that must have pained him greatly, he started off at top speed, Jack at his heels.

They were well beyond the town now, and from the condition of the road Jack knew that they were going in the right direction. Also it was growing dark, and Jack knew that it was necessary for him to reach the place where he had left the *Sylph's* boat by nightfall.

He was positive that his men would still be there, but he also knew that, in accordance with his orders, they would not remain a moment after the time he had set had passed. Consequently, he kept Hardy going at top speed.

From time to time the lad glanced over his head at his pursuers. He knew that he could outrun them, but he also knew that Hardy would soon diminish his speed if possible. Therefore he kept his revolver ready in his hand.

As he had expected, Hardy suddenly began to slow down.

"Run," commanded Jack, "no stopping now."

"But I can't run any farther," protested Hardy, panting.

"Can't you?" replied Jack grimly. "Then maybe this will help you."

His revolver spoke, and a bullet whistled by the traitor's ear.

Hardy leaped forward with renewed energy, and for a few moments Jack found it hard to keep pace with him.

Now the two came in view of the shore, and Jack spurred his captive to renewed speed. The Danish soldiers were still some distance behind, but now a shot rang out.

"No stopping now!" yelled Jack, and, side by side, the two ran toward the little boat that still lay in waiting, the crew of which was advancing to meet them.

"Quick, men, into the boat," panted Jack, as they came together. "We are pursued. We must get out of range quickly."

The men needed no further word. All ran for the boat at top speed, waded out into the water, and climbed aboard. Jack, shoving Hardy ahead of him, was the last over the side.

Quickly he stepped to the steering wheel, and a moment later there was a muffled chug-chug, and the little craft began to slip through the water.

There was a cry of "Halt!" from the shore; but this went unheeded.

Came a volley of rifle shots.

"Duck, men," cried Jack, suiting the action to the word.

One man was a trifle too late, and his arm fell useless by his side.

"Hurt much?" queried Jack anxiously.

"Not much, sir," came the reply; "arm's broken, I guess. That's all, sir."

Another volley came from the shore, but by this time the little craft had put such distance between itself and the shore that accurate shooting was impossible.

The speed of the little craft was increased, and it fairly skimmed over the water.

"They will be worried on the *Sylph*," Jack explained. "They are sure to wait for us till morning, but I want to get back at the earliest possible moment."

Hardly were these words out of the lad's mouth when there was a new commotion on the boat. Jack's troubles were not over yet.

"Prisoner overboard, sir!" came the cry from one of the sailors.

It was true. In the excitement of the moment Hardy had not been securely bound, and, taking advantage of a moment when his captors' backs were turned, he had slipped quietly over the side, and was swimming desperately toward the shore.

ABOARD THE "SYLPH" AGAIN.

Jack sprang quickly to his feet and in a moment had divested himself of his coat and shoes. Then he dived headlong into the dark water. The searchlight of the little craft was playing upon the water, and Jack could plainly see his prisoner a short distance ahead.

Jack was a strong swimmer. At his home in the little African village he had spent many hours in the water; and now with great strokes he was overhauling his quarry.

"I'll get him if I have to chase him all over Denmark," the lad told himself grimly, as he swam along. "I should have watched him more closely."

For at least ten minutes the chase continued. Then, finding that Jack was bound to catch him, Hardy turned to face him.

Now, Hardy was no coward, and he was a big man. On even terms he figured that the lad was no match for him. He was also an accomplished swimmer; but he underrated the prowess of the lad who was pursuing him, and his arm was also in bad shape.

Jack came up with his enemy and reached out a hand to take him by the throat; but, as he did so, Hardy dove and disappeared from view. A moment later he came up close to the spot where Jack had been, and struck out fiercely, thinking to take the lad by surprise and stun him before his presence was discovered.

But Jack was not to be caught in this manner. He was far too wary. The moment Hardy sank from sight, Jack had surmised his ruse and had shifted his position accordingly. As a result, when Hardy came up, Jack had him at a disadvantage. In his haste, however, to get his prisoner back to the launch, Jack failed to use his advantage and the blow he aimed at his adversary went wide. Whereupon Hardy immediately dove again.

Spurred to greater mental activity by his failure, Jack determined upon a bit of strategy. Believing that Hardy would remain under water this time as long as possible, in the meantime swimming for shore, Jack struck out for shore with all his might. Then, when he thought that Hardy must come to the surface, the lad made a sudden dive.

That Jack's estimate was a good one was quickly proven. He had gauged the distance Hardy could swim with such accuracy that he found himself swimming directly under the fleeing man. This was his opportunity, and, rising close to the surface, Jack seized Hardy by one of his feet.

Hardy kicked out angrily, but to no avail. With a quick jerk Jack drew the traitor under the water. Then, rising, he struck out at his adversary and, taking a deep breath, dived again, grabbing Hardy by the throat as he went down.

Beneath the dark water of the ocean the fierce struggle went on. Jack found his opponent a hard customer, but soon the lad's endurance began to tell. The long breath he had taken just before diving for the last time was what finally gave him the victory.

Hardy's struggles became weaker and weaker, and finally there beneath the water he fell limp in the lad's arms. Quickly Jack rose to the surface, bearing his prisoner with him. Taking a deep, refreshing breath, he struck out for the little launch, which had approached to within a short distance of him.

Willing hands lifted Hardy over the side and helped Jack aboard. The prisoner was laid on a seat, and, after he had been worked over for some minutes, regained consciousness. This time he was securely bound.

"Well, I guess you have got me at last," he said to Jack, when he had observed his surroundings.

"Yes," was the lad's reply, "and you may be sure that you shall not escape again."

The little launch was now headed at full speed for the spot where they had left the *Sylph* the night before, and after some hours the patience of those on board was rewarded. In the distance could be made out the faint gleam of a searchlight.

Rapidly the two vessels approached each other, until the launch at last scraped the side of the scout cruiser. A moment later Jack and his prisoner were safe on board.

Lord Hastings' first thought was for Jack.

"Are you all right?" he demanded anxiously.

"Fit as a fiddle, sir, except that I could go to sleep right here on the deck."

Frank approached and grasped his friend's hand silently. The pressure of his hand was more significant than words, and Jack returned the grip with interest.

"You turn in immediately," was Lord Hastings' command to Jack. "I'll look after the prisoner."

"I'd like to see him safely ironed first, sir," said Jack. "I had so much trouble getting him, that I would like to feel sure there is no chance of his escaping again."

"Have your own way," laughed Lord Hastings, and Jack went forward to see the job done.

Hardy safely in irons, Jack and Frank returned to their own quarters.

"Now tell me all about it, old fellow," said Frank.

"I'll tell you in the morning," was Jack's reply, as, completely exhausted, he fell over in his berth and into a deep sleep, while from above Frank heard the signal:

"Full speed ahead."

THE REWARD OF BRAVERY.

Steadily the *Sylph* continued her homeward journey. She passed several vessels, all flying the British flag, and, in lieu of wireless, her ensigns many times were dipped in passing salute.

At length the little scout cruiser docked in the exact spot where the boys had gone aboard her the night they put forth for the North Sea. Upon Lord Hastings' request, which was almost in the nature of a command, Frank and Jack, as well as Alice Beulow, agreed to go with the British nobleman to his beautiful and spacious dwelling.

"My home is yours," Lord Hastings told them. "You shall stay there always when in London."

Arrived in London, Lord Hastings' large automobile was telephoned for, and several hours later Frank and Jack found themselves once more installed in the pretentious quarters where they had first talked over their plans of going to war.

Lord Hastings, still somewhat feeble because of his illness, was immediately ordered to bed by his physician, who prescribed rest and plenty of it.

"You will be all right in a week," was his comforting verdict.

As Frank, Jack and Alice were dining with their hostess that evening, a huge motor-car drove up to the house. A footman jumped to the car and opened the door, and there stepped from within a tall man with a full beard. The footman bowed low, and the visitor, alone, made his way up the steps and into the house. A moment later he was escorted to Lord Hastings' chamber.

This unceremonious entrance none of the diners saw, but the two boys were made aware of it a short time later. A butler entered the dining-room with word that Lord Hastings desired the presence of Frank and Jack at once.

The two lads followed the servant to Lord Hastings' chamber, where the visitor sat near the nobleman's bedside. Both lads stopped stock still in the doorway, the utmost surprise manifested on their faces. They had recognized Lord Hastings' visitor.

Lord Hastings raised himself upon one elbow.

"Your Majesty," he said, "allow me to present to you, Midshipman Frank Chadwick and Midshipman John Templeton, to whom Your Majesty, upon my request, was so good as to grant commissions only a short time ago. They have proven that Your Majesty has no braver officers in his entire navy!"

Both boys bowed very low, for Lord Hastings' visitor was none other than George V., King of England.

The king smiled pleasantly.

"Lord Hastings, my cousin and good friend," he said, "has spoken of your bravery in glowing terms. I know that he has not praised you too highly. Come, sirs, tell me, what do you think of life on the sea under the Lion of England?"

"There could be none better, Your Majesty," replied Jack.

"Indeed there could not, Your Majesty," said Frank.

"Well," said the king pleasantly, "I see that you are fond of the life of midshipmen. What would you say to accepting, in exchange, lieutenancies in the Royal Navy?"

Jack's surprise was so great that he was unable to utter a word. His face turned red, and he hung his head as would a small boy caught in some mischief.

Frank was equally as astonished.

"I—we—I—" he stammered.

The king laughed outright, and Lord Hastings smiled faintly.

"You may make sure, sirs," continued King George, "that you shall receive your commissions as fourth lieutenants in the British navy before another sun has set! You may go!"

Here is the fitting place to take leave, for the time being, of Midshipman Frank Chadwick and Midshipman John Templeton, of the Royal British Navy; here is the time to say a brief farewell to the two gallant lads whose adventures we have followed through these pages, for the final chapter in the lives of Frank Chadwick and Jack Templeton, as British midshipmen, has been written—though not the last chapter of their adventures in the greatest war of all history. The King of England kept his royal word and on the day following the boys' brief interview with him they were duly commissioned Lieutenant Frank Chadwick and Lieutenant John Templeton.

So their further adventures and achievements, in a different capacity, but in the same cause, and under the same brave and gallant commander, Lord Hastings, will be duly chronicled in a second volume, entitled: "The Boy Allies Under Two Flags; or, Sweeping the Enemy from the Sea."

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