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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MOTOR MATT'S CLOSE CALL; OR, THE SNARE OF DON CARLOS ***



MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING ADVENTURE	MOTOR FICTION	
NO. 17 JUNE 19, 1909.		FIVE CENTS
MOTOR MATT'S CLOSE CALL	OR THE SNARE OF DON CARLOS	

By THE AUTHOR

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MOTOR STORIES THRILLING ADVENTURE MOTOR FICTION
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Motor Matt's Close Call;

OR,

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By the author of "MOTOR MATT."

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CHARACTERS THAT APPEAR IN THIS STORY.

Motor Matt, a lad who is at home with every variety of motor, and whose never-failing nerve serves to carry him through difficulties that would daunt any ordinary young fellow. Because of his daring as a racer with bicycle, motor-cycle and automobile he is known as "Mile-a-minute Matt." Motor-boats, air ships and submarines come naturally in his line, and consequently he lives in an atmosphere of adventure in following up his "hobby."

Carl Pretzel, a cheerful and rollicking German boy, stout of frame as well as of heart, who is led by a fortunate accident to link his fortunes with those of Motor Matt.

Dick Ferral, a young sea dog from Canada, with all a sailor's superstitions, but in spite of all that a royal chum, ready to stand by the friend of his choice through thick and thin.

Don Carlos Valdez, a Central American trouble-maker and adventurer, who lays a snare for Motor Matt and thereby wrecks a revolution and the fortunes of several of his own friends.

Captain Abner Fingal, a ruffianly sea captain who assists the don when the snare begins to tighten.

General Pitou, a little swashbuckler who aimed to steal a government and comes to grief through his two spurs and his sword.

Ysabel Sixty, the daughter of the captured filibuster, James Sixty—a loyal friend who dares much for Motor Matt.

Pedro, a revolutionist who aids Ysabel.

Don Ramon Ortega, the Spanish consul at Belize, British Honduras; a gentleman of high character and ancient lineage, whose name is a thing to conjure with.

Gaines, Clackett and Speake, crew of the *Grampus*.

CHAPTER I.

CARL'S SERENADE.

Carl Pretzel was singing. If any one with an ear for music had heard him they might have guessed that he was selling fish, or buying old clothes, or having an auction with himself, but not, by the wildest flight of fancy, could they have imagined that he had burst into song.

It was a rare evening in old Belize. The moon was like a big yellow topaz pinned to a cushion of blue-black velvet, and around it lay the stars like scattered diamonds. Carl could not see the moon or stars very distinctly, for it was so beastly hot that the perspiration trickled into his eyes and half blinded him.

The zephyrs, laden with spicy fragrance from orange groves and pineapple fields, breathed softly through the tops of the palms; but Carl couldn't enjoy the zephyrs, for a cloud of mosquitoes was pestering him and he had to use both hands on his guitar.

The house before which Carl was playing and singing was a whitewashed bungalow. Between the bungalow and the street ran a high brick wall. The iron gate leading into the yard was locked, and Carl had climbed the wall, skinning his shins and tearing his clothes. But he didn't mind that. He had read somewhere that when a gay young Spanish blade admires a young Spanish lady, he grabs a guitar and goes and sings to her. Carl wasn't going to let any Spaniard back him off the boards, so he grabbed a guitar and stole like a thief into that Belize yard to serenade Ysabel Sixty.

Carl was not very well acquainted with the lay of the land in Belize. By an error of judgment he had got into the wrong yard, and by another conspiracy of circumstances he began pouring out his enraptured soul under the window of a room in which Captain Reginald Charles Arthur Pierce-Plympton, of the local constabulary, was trying to sleep. Miss Sixty was staying with relatives a block farther on, around the corner of the next street.

Utterly unaware of his mistake, Carl fought the discomforts of his situation and heroically kept to his labor of love. Ysabel Sixty was a fine girl, and Carl had a warm spot in his heart for her.

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"Der rose iss ret,
Der fiolet's plue,
Oof I lofe me
As you lofe you,
No knife can cut us togedder!"

This touching bit of sentiment was merely the overture. Carl knew how to play the guitar, for he had once been a member of a knockabout musical team, and he could get music out of anything from a set of sleigh bells to a steam calliope. If he had been able to use his voice as well as he used the guitar, Captain Reginald Charles Arthur Pierce-Plympton would probably have slept on or even have been lulled into deeper slumber; but there were dull spots in Carl's voice where there should have been sharps, and high places where there should have been flats, and whoops, grunts and falling inflections where there should have been trills, grace notes and a soft petal generally.

Captain Reginald Charles Arthur Pierce-Plympton stirred uneasily, sat up suddenly in his bed and knocked his high forehead against the iron bar that supported a canopy of mosquito netting. As he rubbed his temples and said things to himself, he listened with growing anger.

"*Du hast diamanten und perlen—*
(Chimineddy, vat a hotness!)
Hast alles was menschen begehren—
(Whoosh! Der muskedoodles vas vorse as der heat!)
Du hast ja die schönsten augen,

Captain Reginald Charles Arthur Pierce-Plympton blinked his eyes and began forming a plan of campaign. There was a pitcher of water on a table in his room, a bulldog in the yard, and a valiant assistant in the form of Hadji Sing, his Hindoo servant. Getting softly out of bed, the captain prepared for his attack on the enemy.

When Carl climbed over the wall he had dropped into the yard at the foot of a lemon tree. He had jarred the tree and a half-ripe lemon had dropped on him. This omen should have sent him away and postponed the serenade, but it did not.

After slapping at the mosquitoes and drawing his sleeve across his eyes, Carl went on picking the guitar.

"Now for der nexdt spasm," he murmured. "I vill put der German vorts into English for der leedle gal, yah, so.

"You haf plendy oof tiamonts und bearls,
Haf all vat a laty couldt vant,
You haf likewise der peautiful eye-es,
My tarling vat more——"

Just then the water descended. It was well aimed and Carl caught the whole of it. Probably there was no more than a couple of gallons, but Carl, for the moment, was under the impression that it was a tidal wave.

His song died out in a wheezy gurgle and, for a moment, he was stunned. Then, suddenly, he realized that he had been insulted. Ysabel Sixty, the beautiful maiden who had captured his young fancy, had deliberately thrown—— But his thoughts were interrupted by a voice from the window—a voice that certainly was not Miss Sixty's.

"Bah Jove! I'll throw the pitcher at you, fellow, if you don't clear out!"

Carl was dazed. He knew, then, that he had made a mistake. While he stood there, half drowned and trying to find his voice, the bark of an approaching dog came from the rear of the house.

Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and it flashed over Carl on the instant that if he wanted to save himself he would have to run. Without standing on the order of his going, he whirled and fled toward the fence. The dog was close and rapidly drawing closer. Behind the dog came a white-turbaned figure that was urging the brute onward with strange language.

The front fence looked altogether too high for Carl, and he turned and made for a wall at the side of the yard. Just as he gained the foot of the barrier the dog was snapping at his heels.

"Dere!" he whooped, turning and smashing the guitar over the dog's head, "how you like dot, hey?"

The dog was rebuffed, but not discouraged. Carl had gained a few valuable seconds, and he grabbed at a vine that covered the wall and climbed frantically upward. He heard a growl below him as he ascended, and felt a shock as the savage teeth closed in his trousers. The dog was heavy, his jaws were as strong as a steel trap, and as Carl hung wildly to the vine he knew that something would have to give way or else that he would be captured. It was with a feeling of joy, therefore, that he heard a tearing sound and experienced a sudden relief from his enforced burden. The next moment he was over the wall and floundering about in a thorny rose-bush covered with beautiful blossoms. But the beautiful blossoms did not make so deep an impression on Carl as did the thorns.

As he rolled out of the bushes his language was intense and earnest; and when he got up in a cleared stretch of ground he felt a sudden coolness below the waist-line that informed him fully of his predicament. He had left an important part of his apparel in the next yard.

"Vat a luck id iss!" he muttered. "I porrowed dot kiddar from der vaider py der hodel, und id vas gone to smash. Meppy I vill haf to pay as mooch as fife tollars for dot. Und den dere vill be anodder fife tollars for some more pands. Fife und fife iss den. Oof I make some more serenadings I vill be busted. Vat a laff Matt und Tick vill gif me! Py shinks, I can't go pack py der hodel like dis! Vat iss to be dit? Mit some clot', und some neetles und t'read, I could make some patches. Vere vill I ged dem?"

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He paused to shake his fist in the direction of the yard he had just left. All was silent on the other side, and the man and the dog, Carl reasoned, must have gone back where they belonged.

A survey of the situation in the moonlight showed Carl another bungalow. It was not so pretentious as the house in the next inclosure, but its walls were as brightly whitewashed and the building stood out clearly against its background of shrubbery. The windows of the house were dark. But this was to be expected, as the hour was past midnight. The noise which Carl had made had not seemed to disturb the inmates.

"Oof I hat der nerf," thought Carl, "I would go dere und ask der beople for somet'ing to fix meinseluf oop, but meppy I wouldt get soaked mit some more vater, und meppy dere iss anodder tog. No, py shinks, I vill go pack py der hodel und led Matt und Tick laff as mooch as dey vill."

But luck was still against Carl; or perhaps, in the inscrutable way whereby fate occasionally works in order to secure the greatest good for the greatest number, he was merely encountering obstacles in order to gain knowledge of a plot that had been leveled against Motor Matt.

Carl found a tall iron gate, set into the high front wall as snugly as a door in its casing. But the gate was locked. More than that, the wall could not be scaled, for there were no vines or near-by trees to offer a lift upward.

Carefully he made his way around all four sides of the inclosure, only to be balked at every point. Then he hunted for a ladder, a box, or some other movable thing on which he could stand while getting over the wall, but his search was fruitless.

"Py shinks," he muttered, again moving toward the house, "I vill haf to shpeak mit somepody in der blace und dry und ged oudt. I don'd vant to shday here undil morning."

At the rear of the house he rapped. Although he pounded heavily, no one answered his summons. Alarmed by the thought that there was no one at home, he moved around to the front door and rapped again, still without effect. Next he tried the door. To his amazement he found it unlocked.

When the door swung open a blank darkness yawned beyond it.

"Hello, somepody!" Carl called, thrusting his head inside. "I don'd vas a t'ief, or anyt'ing like dot, aber I vas in drouple. Hello! Come und led me oudt oof der yardt, blease, oof you vill be so kindt."

His voice echoed rumbingly through the interior of the house, but won no response. Hesitatingly, Carl stepped across the threshold. He had matches in his pocket, and they had come through the recent deluge unharmed. With fingers none too steady he scratched one, held the flickering glow above him and peered around.

The next moment his startled eyes encountered an object on the floor that caused him to drop the match from his nerveless fingers and fall back gaspingly against the wall.

CHAPTER II.

DON RAMON ORTEGA.

The object which had so startled the Dutch boy was the figure of a middle-aged man, sprawled at full length on the floor matting. His hands were secured behind him and his feet were bound at the ankles with twisted towels. Over the lower part of his face another towel had been tied, thus effectually preventing outcry.

Carl's own troubles faded into the background. As he slowly got the whip hand of himself, he struck another match and stepped to the man's side. The man gurgled incoherently behind the gag and his dark eyes pleaded for immediate release.

"Dere iss some dricky pitzness here, you bed you!" exclaimed Carl. "Don'd be schared oof me," he added to the man, "I vas a friendt, und I vill helup you. Schust vait a leedle undil I ged some pedder lighdt as vat I haf."

There was an oil lamp on a table, and Carl stepped to it and applied a match to the wick. In the glow that presently flooded the room, the Dutch boy returned to the man, knelt down beside him and removed the towels.

"*Ay de mi!*" stuttered the man, attempting to rise and falling helplessly back again.

"Vas you hurt some blace?" asked Carl solicitously.

"Hurt?" echoed the man, speaking good English, although with a very perceptible foreign accent. "Not at all, señor; only my limbs—they are so cramped from confinement that I cannot stand. Soon they will be all right. But who are you?" and suspicion suddenly flamed in the dark eyes. "How does it happen that you know of my trouble and have come here? Are you a confederate of the rascally Don Carlos?"

"Ton Garlos?" repeated Carl. "I don'd know dot feller from Atam. I vas a shdranger in dis blace, und all I know iss der Amerigan consul, Misder Hays Chordan und Tactor Armsdrong, und——"

"You are American?" interrupted the other eagerly.

"Yah, so; Amerigan mit a Dutch accent."

"How do you happen to be here?"

"Id vas a plunder, dot's all," answered Carl. "A pulltog chaced me und pooty near caught me, doo. I got ofer der vall from der odder site und couldn't get pack some more. Vat a high vall iss aboutt der blace! Und so smoot' und shlippery as I can't dell."

"What were you doing in the other yard?"

Carl didn't want to mention that part of it, but it seemed necessary in order to convince the man of his harmless intentions.

"Vell," he answered diffidently, "I vent der mit meinseluf to serenate a yoong laty py der name oof Miss Sixdy——"

"Miss Ysabel Sixty?" the other again interrupted, even more eagerly than he had done before.

"Yah, so!" beamed Carl. "You know der laty?"

"Indeed, yes. But she does not live in the next house, señor. An English captain lives there—an officer in charge of the constabulary. Miss Sixty is staying with friends a block farther down the

street, and around the corner."

"Vell, I t'ought I hat made some misdakes," said Carl, vastly relieved. "A parrel oof vater vas tropped on me, und I vas run off mit a pulltog, und—und— Blease, haf you some clot' patches und some neetles und t'read? I vouldt like to be respectaple vonce more."

The man got to his feet slowly and then, his eyes gleaming ominously, caught Carl's arm in both hands.

"Let us not think so much of ourselves now, señor," he said thickly, "but of others!"

"Vat aboutd id?" inquired Carl, wondering whether the released gentleman was crazy or excited.

"I am Don Ramon Ortega," answered the man.

This was another surprise. Carl had heard of Don Ramon Ortega. He was the Spanish consul in Belize, a man of high lineage and of much importance.

"How keveer dot I shouldt come py your house like vat I dit, Ton Ramon!" muttered Carl. "I hope," he added, in a tremor, "dot der laties von't come—"

"There are none here but ourselves," cut in the don. "My family and all the servants have gone to Mexico. I myself was intending to go in the morning, but now I shall not leave Belize until I make that scoundrelly Don Carlos Valdez answer for this rascally work he has done!"

"Ton Carlos Valdez?" repeated Carl. "I don'd know der feller. Vat has he dit?"

"I will tell you," answered the don. "Come, let us sit down for a moment. My limbs are not strong yet, and there is much to be done."

Carl, excited and curious, dropped into a chair. The don, after giving a cautious look outside, closed the door and returned to Carl. Drawing a chair close, he seated himself.

"Tell me," said he, "do you know of a submarine boat in the harbor called the *Grampus*? You are American, and the boat is owned by Captain Nemo, Jr., an American. You should know of her."

"Vell, py chiminy Grismus," boomed Carl, "you bed you! Vy, ton, I vas vone oof der crew oof der *Grampus*! I come mit her ven she arrifed, und I vas mit her ven she got der American consul away from der repels in der rifer Izaral. Vy, Modor Matt, who vas boss oof der poat ven she dit dot, iss my friendt, my bard! Und so iss Tick Ferral! Know der *Grampus*! Py chincher, I know her insite und oudt, oop und down und sitevays. My name is Pretzel, Carl Pretzel."

Don Ramon Ortega was astounded, but happily so. Reaching out his hand, he clasped Carl's convulsively.

"Ah, what good fortune!" he murmured, "what amazing luck! Destiny is at work in all this. Fate guided you to me to-night, *amigo mio*!"

"A pulltog hat more to do mit it as fate," answered Carl simply.

"Listen!" proceeded the don hurriedly. "I was here alone in the early evening. Some one rang the bell at the gate. I went out and admitted"—anger throbbled in the Spaniard's voice—"Don Carlos Valdez! He is, what you Americans call, a trouble maker. I call him a pestilence, an evil spectre who stalks through the devoted countries and helps revolutionists overthrow established governments. I am Spanish, but I love law and order! I hate violence and bloodshed! I am for peace! But Don Carlos is always for war, and more war, for in that he finds unholy profit. Well, it was he who called on me to-night. He declared that he wanted a passport, for he was going abroad. I told him to go to my secretary, at the legation. He said he had been there, but that the secretary was not in. I could not refuse him the passport if his intentions were peaceable and he paid the fee, so he came back into the house with me. As I seated myself and leaned over the table, the demon struck me from behind. I fell unconscious. When I recovered, I was bound as you saw me, and I have laid so for hours. But Don Carlos had not left when I regained consciousness. He and I have long been at swords' points, and he taunted me with the base plans he intended to carry out."

Don Ramon writhed in his chair in a spasm of fierce anger.

"Vat it vas he iss going to do?" asked Carl.

"He has designs on the submarine!" proceeded the don. "He thinks the boat would be valuable to the revolutionists to the south of us. They are threatening Port Livingston, at the mouth of the Izaral, and are seeking to secure the fort there. The lawful authorities of the state will send ships of war to defeat the revolutionists, and Don Carlos wants the submarine to destroy the war vessels."

"Himmelblitzen!" gasped Carl. "Aber," he added soothingly, "don'd you be vorked oop, ton. Der schemer von't ged der supmarine. Captain Nemo, Jr., iss sick, aber Modor Matt iss on der chob, und you bed you he von't let Don Carlos haf der *Grampus* to helup oudt der repels."

"*Diable*, no! Motor Matt will not hire the boat to the rascally Don Carlos, but he is a serpent for craft. He intends to get the boat away from Belize by a ruse—and will use my name, my honorable name, to help him prosecute his villainous plot! Think of that, *amigo*!"

"How vill he do dot, ton?"

"I do not know, but such is his miserable intention; he flaunted it in my face as I lay on the floor at his feet, helpless to move or to speak. We must prevent him from carrying out his contemptible designs. I have told you so much, because it was necessary that you should understand. Come!

Let us go at once to Motor Matt! Let us warn him, and put him on his guard."

"Dot's me, ton!" agreed Carl heartily, "aber haf you a pair oof drouzers vat I couldt veer?"

"That is a small matter, Señor Pretzel," demurred the don on his way to the door, "and we have other and larger matters to claim our instant attention."

"Some more drouzers iss kevite imbortant mit me," insisted Carl. "Id von't dake more as a minude, ton."

Rather than waste time arguing, Don Ramon flung off into a neighboring room. He returned presently with a pair of white duck trousers, and Carl climbed into them. They were too long and too narrow, but the Dutch boy contrived to make them serve.

"Now, ton," said Carl, "ged der key by der front gate und lead der vay."

The don took a key from the drawer of the table.

"Come, *amigo*," said he, hurrying from the door.

"Id's a funny pizness," remarked Carl, following, "dot dis Carlos feller vouldt leaf der door oben und lock der gate."

"The gate locks itself when it is closed," explained the don.

"I don'd t'ink, anyvay, dere iss mooch use being in some takings aboutt der poat," proceeded Carl, as the don unlocked the gate. "Dot Carlos feller vill haf his hants full pulling der vool ofer Modor Matt's eyes."

"You do not know Carlos as well as I," answered Don Ramon ominously. "He is plausible, he has many tricks, and then he is impersonating *me!* Motor Matt must know me by name, although I have not the pleasure of his personal acquaintance. I am fearing the worst, ah, yes, the worst!"

The gate clanged shut behind them and the don and Carl raced for the International Hotel. Matt and Dick stayed at the hotel while they were ashore. Carl had not seen either of his chums at supper, and he had not spent much time looking for them. The serenade was uppermost in Carl's mind, and he was afraid Matt or Dick might propose something that would interfere with his plans.

In the hotel office they learned that Matt and Dick had gone out to the submarine early in the evening to arrange some stores that had been taken aboard. They had not come back, so the inference was that they were staying the night on the craft.

There was nothing left for the don and Carl to do but to hurry on to the wharf. There, at the landing from which sailboats usually carried the *Grampus'* crew to the anchorage, half a mile out in the bay, they met a policeman.

"What are you looking for, Don Ramon?" inquired the officer respectfully, touching the don on the shoulder as he and Carl were gazing off across the surface of the bay.

"For the riding lights of the submarine boat, *amigo*," answered the don.

"You won't see them, sir. The submarine left the harbor four hours ago, bound south."

"*Carramba!*" cried the don. "We are too late! Tell me, did she have any passengers?"

"Motor Matt and the boat's usual crew were aboard anyhow, I saw Motor Matt and his friend, Ferral, going out."

"Did any one else go out to the boat?"

"Yes, Don Carlos Valdez and four or five negroes. They——"

The don whirled away and caught Carl's arm.

"Too late!" he whispered hoarsely. "But perhaps there is still something we can do. Come! We will call on the American consul; we will tell him what we fear!"

Carl was in a daze. That serenade of his, which had proved a farce, seemed to be leading up to something tragic.

CHAPTER III.

THE SHADOW OF TREACHERY.

"What's our next billet going to be, matey?" inquired Dick Ferral, sprawling out comfortably on top of the long locker in the periscope room.

Matt was just coming down the ladder after putting the riding lights in position.

"Wish I knew, Dick," he answered, switching on the incandescent in the periscope room and dropping down on a low stool.

"I had a dream last night," and Dick gave a short laugh as he spoke. "I was doing as sound a caulk as ever I did in my life when that dream jumped in on me, and it was so blooming realistic that it brought me up in my bed with a yell."

"You must have been eating *chili con carne*, or some of the other hot stuff they have down here,

before you went to bed. The peppery grub they give you in Belize would make a wooden Indian have the nightmare! But what was it, old chap? You've got me interested."

"It was about Fingal."

"Fingal?"

"Aye, matey, Captain Abner Fingal of the schooner *North Star*, the hooting, tooting old revolutionist, and brother of Captain Jim Sixty, who's now, I hope and believe, doing time in a United States' federal prison."

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"Fingal," observed Motor Matt, "is a tough old proposition to dream about."

"I won't forget in a hurry how he crossed our hawse, down there on the River Izaral, or how you came up under our gasoline launch with the good old *Grampus*, tipped over the launch, and released the prisoners and pulled them out of the drink. Fingal and one of the rebel soldiers got away from us by the skin of their teeth. Do you remember how, when Fingal reached the bank, he got up on his knees and shook his fist after us?"^[A]

[A] See No. 16 of the MOTOR STORIES, "Motor Matt's Quest; or, Three Chums in Strange Waters."

"I'll not forget that in a hurry," said Matt. "If Fingal could have had us in his hands then we'd have experienced a little more trouble than we could have taken care of. But what's the dream?"

"Well, I thought I was adrift in a big forest, with Fingal and a lot of revolutionists hustling after me, full and by and forty knots, all with machetes. General Pitou, the French leader of the revolutionists, was with Fingal, and the whole pack of them had machetes in each hand and another between their teeth. Finally they caught me, and I was hacked in pieces——"

"Mighty pleasant, that!" grinned Matt.

"They hung my head up in a tree," proceeded Dick grewsomely, "and when I saw the rest of me scattered over the ground underneath, my nerves went to pieces and I fetched a yell that ought to have raised the roof. Strike me lucky, but I was in a sweat! We're not done with Abner Fingal, mate. He'll foul our course before we're many days older."

"I don't take any stock in dreams. They always come from a fellow's stomach—something he eats that disagrees with him. As for Fingal, you can bet he'll not come to Belize. He'd like to play even with us, all right, but he has got sense enough not to run his head into a noose."

Speake, Gaines and Clackett were stowing supplies in another part of the boat. From time to time, as the boys talked, muffled thumps and a sound of distant voices came to them. Cassidy, the mate, was ashore, taking care of the sick captain.

"What's the latest news from Nemo, Jr.?" queried Dick. "The last I heard was this morning. The captain wasn't so well then, Doctor Armstrong told me."

"I saw Cassidy just before we started for the landing to come out to the submarine," said Matt. "He said the doctor was sure the captain would pull through, but that he would need careful nursing, and not be bothered with business of any kind."

"Cassidy will give him the right kind of nursing! I never saw a shellback that was so handy in the sick bay, nor who tried to do more. Nemo, Jr., ought to forgive Cassidy for his treachery, down there on the Izaral."

"The captain will do that, I'm sure. Cassidy is mighty sorry he allowed his temper to run away with him. Fingal was responsible for what Cassidy did."

"Fingal and the grog," commented Dick. "A few tots of rum will make pirates and beach combers out of a lot of honest men. But why are you getting all these supplies aboard, mate? We're loaded to the marks with provisions, gasoline, oil, and everything else."

"You know, don't you," returned Dick, "that Captain Nemo, Jr., is planning to sell the *Grampus* to the United States government?"

"Aye, aye. The captain has had that bee in his bonnet for a long time."

"When we went down the coast and rescued the American consul from the revolutionists, it was at the instigation of the United States authorities. Of course, they were anxious to have the consul rescued, but they were equally anxious to see what the *Grampus* could do."

"Well, we showed 'em!" said Dick proudly. "The little old flugee, and every one aboard, did themselves proud! What else does your government want, matey?"

"I don't know as the government wants anything else, but I have thought it best to keep the *Grampus* in trim for any demand that should be made on her. Any time, now, I'm expecting to see the U. S. cruiser *Seminole* stick her nose in the bay with orders for the *Grampus* to get under way for the Potomac, bound for Washington. If the order comes, it must find us in the pink of condition."

"Suppose the order comes before the captain gets well?"

"Then the chances are he'll ask us to carry out the order for him. We're in pretty good shape to do that, even without the assistance of Cassidy. Our little crew of six can manage the craft, all right. Carl has been taking lessons from Clackett and can look after the tank room almost as well as Clackett himself; and you have learned to run the motor in a way that has made a hit with Gaines."

"We'll do, matey," said Dick, with a long breath of satisfaction. "With you as skipper, I wouldn't be afraid to ride in the *Grampus* from here to the North Pole. Speaking of Carl, though, what's become of the lubber? He cut his cables mighty sudden, seems to me."

"He borrowed a guitar from a fellow in the hotel," laughed Matt.

"A guitar? What does that mean?"

"I shouldn't wonder if he had gone off to serenade somebody."

Dick rolled over on his back and kicked the locker with his heels.

"Oh, my eye!" he sputtered. "It's Ysabel Sixty! Carl's been gone in that quarter for some time." Suddenly Dick hoisted up on his elbow and peered at his chum. "What do you say, mate? Let's go ashore and slant away for the place where Ysabel is staying. We can look over the fence and jolly our Dutch messmate just as he gets tuned up. How about a bit of a lark?"

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"I'll go you!" chuckled Matt, "but there's no use starting for two or three hours yet. Midnight is the witching hour."

"Carl's showing good taste, anyhow," continued Dick. "Ysabel Sixty is a fine girl. Now that her father, Jim Sixty, is put where he can't interfere with her, she's going to be happier than she ever was before. But Carl is off soundings. The lass hasn't an eye for him, matey, but for *you*."

"Oh, splash!" grunted Matt.

"That's right—flog the cat. But it's a fact, all the same. The lass has taken a fancy to you, Matt, and you wouldn't turn your head to look at the handsomest girl that ever walked. Gasoline motors are your hobby. An explosive engine will be your best girl till the end of the chapter."

Matt enjoyed this. Dick had a way, now and then, of giving a subject a humorous turn that was highly diverting. Just as Matt was on the point of giving some jesting reply, a voice came to them from without.

"Ahoy, de *Grampus*! Tumble out an' pass us a line!"

Both boys gained their feet on the instant.

"That's Sambo with his sailboat!" exclaimed Dick. "He's bringing visitors. Nice time, this, to receive callers from Belize."

"Perhaps it's Carl coming back," answered Matt, halfway up the iron ladder toward the conning-tower hatch.

"If it is," went on Dick, laying hold of the ladder, "then our fun for to-night is knocked in the head."

As soon as Matt got his head out of the hatch he saw a small sailboat hove to alongside the submarine. There were several men in her, and two were standing forward and aft to catch the ropes they were expecting to be thrown. Because of the evening dusk it was impossible to distinguish those in the boat, but it was plain that the craft was the one which the crew of the *Grampus* used for going ashore.

A dark shadow was thrown by the boat against the lighter background of water—a hovering, ominous shadow of treachery—all the more ominous because neither of the chums were suspecting underhand work there in those peaceable waters off the British town of Belize.

CHAPTER IV.

DON CARLOS LAYS HIS SNARE.

"Ahoy, yourself!" shouted Matt. "What do you want?"

"Dar's a gentman here, Marse Cap'n, dat wants tuh come on bo'd," answered the voice of Sambo.

"Who is he?"

Here another form pushed forward and another voice took up the conversation.

"Are you Motor Matt?" asked the voice.

"Yes."

"You have charge of the submarine while Captain Nemo, Jr., is sick?"

"Yes."

"Then you're the person I wish to talk with. I am Don Ramon Ortega."

Matt was deeply impressed by the name. Everybody in Belize had a good word to say for Don Ramon Ortega, the Spanish consul. He was a chivalrous gentleman of the old school, a friend of the United States when many other of his countrymen cherished a grudge against the country, and a philanthropic and kindly man in all his dealings.

"I shall be very glad to have you come aboard, Don Ortega," called Matt respectfully, "but it is against our rules to allow more than one stranger aboard the *Grampus* at any one time."

"Then I will come alone."

Matt and Dick got out of the tower and each hurled a rope to those forward and aft on the sailboat. After the two boats had been hauled as close together as possible, a plank was shoved over the side of the sailboat and left with its outer end resting on the rounded deck of the submarine. Don Ramon turned and handed something to Sambo.

"Haul off," said he, "and wait until you receive a signal from me. If you don't receive a signal, put back to the landing."

"All right, boss."

Matt was a little surprised at this order, but presumed that he would soon be told why it had been given. Reaching out, he caught the don's hand and helped him off the end of the plank.

"I must speak with you immediately," said the don. "Can we go somewhere for a little private talk?"

"Certainly," answered Matt, his wonder continuing to grow.

The don carried a canvas bag whose contents jingled musically with every movement. While Matt and Dick escorted their caller below, those on the sailboat hauled in the plank and stood off toward the shore.

Speake, Gaines and Clackett were still busy stowing the supplies and getting the *Grampus* shipshape below decks. The two boys and their guest made themselves comfortable in the periscope room.

Don Ramon, as Matt looked at him now for the first time, had the appearance of a courtly gentleman. He was swarthy, well dressed, and his dark eyes, as they stared about him curiously, looked like points of polished jet.

The don took a card case from his pocket and extracted a square of pasteboard bearing the coat of arms of his native country, his name and the information that he was Spanish consul at Belize. He handed the card to Matt, and Matt, in turn, passed it along to Dick.

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"We have heard a good deal about you, don," remarked Matt, "but this is the first time we have ever met."

"And I have heard much about you," was the answer, in most gracious tones; "very much to your credit. The recent performance of the *Grampus* made a deep impression upon me, and that is why I am here to-night. If you wish, you can render a great service to the cause of right and justice; possibly it hangs upon you to terminate the uprising in the unhappy little republic that lies to the south."

Matt and Dick were all interest on the moment.

"What do you mean, don?" asked Matt.

"Pitou and his rebels have captured Port Livingston and the fort on the headland across the river from the town. Every inch of the coast is guarded. The loyal army is marching from the Pacific side of the republic—very few in numbers and poorly armed. Pitou, the great rogue, has laid a trap for the loyalists. Unless General Mendez, in charge of the loyal troops, is communicated with to-morrow morning, there will be fighting and bloodshed, and perhaps the insurrectionists will win."

Matt and Dick were following the don closely, wondering what he was driving at.

"Of course," the don resumed, after a brief silence, "as Spanish consul, I am not warranted in mixing in the imbroglia. Whatever I do, I do in a private capacity, and merely as a preserver of peace. However, it is well known that the insurrection, headed by this soldier of fortune, Pitou, is merely for the sake of gain. If successful, Pitou and Fingal would get a grip on the throat of the little republic, and lawlessness would reign. You know something about Pitou and Fingal and their base methods and designs. Therefore, I come to you."

"Why do you come to me, don?" inquired Matt.

"Why, with the submarine you could pass the mouth of the Izaral under water and unseen by the rebels; you could continue up the Izaral, still below the surface, to the place where the Purgatoire enters the stream. From that point I could communicate with General Mendez and warn him of the trap that has been laid by Pitou. The general could save his army—and the fate of the republic hangs on General Mendez. Will you do this? Will you assist Don Ramon Ortega in such a humanitarian work?"

Matt was dazed by the proposition.

"You," pursued the don passionately, "come from a great and rich country, where there is always peace. Then have you got it in your heart to withhold a helping hand from a smaller and war-harried little country whose fate may hang upon your decision? See!"

The don pulled a stool in front of him, untied the canvas sack and spilled a heap of golden sovereigns out of it.

"Here are fifty pieces of gold, Motor Matt," went on the don, "and, if we are successful in passing the revolutionists and getting word to General Mendez, you shall have *one thousand more*. Will you do this for me, Don Ramon Ortega? Will you do it for humanity? I do not appeal to your wish for gain—you are above such sordid things—but I ask you in the name of right and justice! Lives, human lives, depend on you! The fate of a republic depends on you! As for the risk to you and the submarine—bah!" The don shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. "Am I not going with you?"

Would I endanger my own life?"

The don paused anxiously for reply. Dick peered at his friend reflectively. Speake, Clackett and Gaines, having finished their work below, had come to the periscope room and were standing in one of the bulkhead doors. They had heard the don's proposition, and the gold was sparkling its lure in their greedy eyes.

"I am sorry, don," said Matt, with a note of deep regret in his voice, "but I have not the authority to let you have the *Grampus* for any such work."

"You are the captain?"

"I am in charge of the boat while her captain is sick. You should take your proposition to Captain Nemo, Jr."

"I went to see him, but the doctor refused to let me in. The doctor said the captain was unable to talk with anybody. So I came to you."

"I haven't the authority, don," repeated Matt firmly. "Wait until the captain is able to talk business. I can't risk the boat."

"There is no risk!"

"Perhaps not; but I have no more right to take this boat out of the harbor, don, than you have."

The don passed his dejected glance from Matt to Dick, and then toward the three faces in the narrow doorway.

Gaines pushed forward.

"Matt," said he, "I think you might stretch a point. Them golden sovs look mighty fine to me. There's two hundred an' fifty dollars' worth there, and we're promised five thousand dollars' worth more. Cap'n Nemo, Jr., if he was able, would tell us to go ahead an' capture the prize money. I move we hook up with the don."

"Might jest as well turn a few honest dollars, Matt," put in Speake, "as to be layin' idle here, off Belize."

"My idee, exactly," said Clackett. "I know the cap'n would do it if he was able to hear the don's proposition."

"Why not, matey?" said Dick, in a low tone.

Matt shook his head decidedly.

"I'd go in a minute if I had the right to do so," said he, "but I haven't. Suppose the *Seminole* should put into the harbor to-night with orders for the *Grampus*? You know what it would mean, Dick."

Dick was silent, but not convinced. The men were disappointed, and watched the don as he shoved the gold coins back into the bag. [Pg 9]

"I am sorry, too," said he, tying up the bag, "and I feel, Motor Matt, that you are letting a lot of useless red tape interfere with your duties to humanity."

"Perhaps, don, I merely understand my duty better than you do," answered Matt, respectfully but firmly. "I haven't any love for Pitou, or Fingal, or the rascally revolutionists, and I promise you this, that I will see Captain Nemo, Jr., personally in the morning, and, if the doctor will let me, will put your proposition before him. If he agrees, we will start for the south at once."

"That will be too late," said the don, getting up and taking his bag of sovereigns. "I will bid you good evening, hail my boat and go ashore," he added stiffly.

With chilly dignity he climbed the conning-tower ladder and hailed the sailboat. Matt, Dick and the others saw him safely aboard and the boat headed shoreward, then again went below.

"I'm tired," announced Matt, cutting short a further discussion of the don and his proposition, "and I'm going to bed. You and Clackett, Gaines, will have the anchor watch till midnight. After that, call Dick and me."

"Very good, sir," replied Gaines.

Dick accompanied Matt to a room abaft the periscope chamber, in which a couple of cots had been set up, and silently the two chums turned in. Nothing more was said about going ashore to interrupt Carl's serenade. Matt knew that Dick thought he should have accepted the don's proposition, and yet, feeling that he was in the right, did not care to discuss the matter. With a hearty good night to Dick, he turned over and went to sleep.

How long Matt slept he did not know, but he was awakened by the throb of a motor and started bolt upright in his bed.

The *Grampus* was moving! The roll of the craft proved that she was on the surface and under way. All was dark in the little steel room, and Matt got up and groped for the switch that turned on the incandescent light. A moment later there was a dazzling glow, and Matt looked at the bulkhead doors. They had been open when he and Dick turned in, and now they were closed!

He started for the door leading to the periscope room. Just as he laid his hand on it, Dick roused up.

"What's the blooming go, matey?" queried Dick, rubbing his eyes. "We seem to be on the move."

"We are," answered Matt grimly.

"Who's in charge, and where are we going?"

"Give it up! All I know is that we're locked in."

Then he began shaking the steel door and kicking against it.

"Gaines!" he yelled.

CHAPTER V.

A MUTINY.

"What is it, Matt?" asked the muffled voice of Gaines from the other side of the closed door.

"Let me out of here!" ordered Matt.

"Can't do it just yet, Matt," answered Gaines apologetically.

"What does this mean?"

"It means that we're going to help out General Mendez with that warning of the don's. You wouldn't take the responsibility, but Speake and Clackett and me are willin' to bear it."

"Do you mean to say," cried Matt hotly, "that you have deliberately sailed away from Belize without permission from Captain Nemo, Jr., or from me?"

"That's the size of it," was the respectful but decisive answer. "We know that the cap'n would tell us to go ahead and help the don. We ain't finding any fault with you for not doing it on your own hook, 'cause you're a stickler for what you think's your duty. We feel we're doin' right, though, and we want you to feel the same way."

"This is mutiny!" cried Matt.

"That's a pretty hard name for it, Matt. I've been in ships, man and boy, for thirty years, and this is the first time any one ever accused me of mutiny. We just think we know what ought to be done and are goin' ahead and doin' it. You'll be able to tell the cap'n, when you next see him, that you couldn't help yourself. Speake, Clackett and me are banking on it that the cap'n'll say we did just right."

This line of reasoning surprised Matt. For a moment he was silent, turning it over in his mind.

"I can hardly believe this of you, Gaines," said the young motorist finally. "How are you running the ship?"

"We're short-handed, and that's a fact; still, we're making shift to get along. We're running on the surface, so Clackett don't have anything to do in the tank room, and he's running the engine."

"Who's doing the steering?"

"The don's doing that. He knows the coast, he says, and he seems to be right handy with the wheel. But I'm watchin' to see that he don't make any flukes."

"You'll have us on the rocks first thing you know!" cried Matt. "Put her about and go back to Belize."

"You might just as well understand, Matt," answered Gaines firmly, "that we've started on this business and we're going to see it through. We want your good will—and we think you'll give it to us before we're done with this cruise. It's a short cruise, anyhow, and we ought to be back at Belize by to-morrow night."

"If anything happens to the *Grampus*," said Matt, "you'll be held responsible."

"We're willin'. We went into this with our eyes wide open. First thing we did was to shut both doors of that room and lock 'em; then we heaved up the anchors as quiet as we could, and you and Dick were so sound asleep you didn't hear a thing. It's two in the morning now, and we're well down the coast—so far down that we might as well see this thing through as to put back. Don't you think so?"

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"It doesn't appear to make much difference what I think," said Matt grimly.

"Well, not a terrible sight," went on Gaines, "only, as I said, we'd rather have your good will than your bad."

"How did you work this? How did the don get back?"

"He stood off and on in the sailboat. As soon as you were asleep, Clackett and I dickered with him and he came aboard."

"I haven't much of an opinion of Don Ramon Ortega!" exclaimed Matt. "Any man who will hire a crew to disobey orders has a crooked strain in him somewhere."

"We're doin' this for humanity," asserted Gaines, in a highly virtuous tone.

"Bosh," scoffed Matt. "You're doing it for five thousand two hundred and fifty dollars—which you won't get."

"Won't get?" demanded Gaines, in ludicrous alarm.

"That's my view of it, Gaines. There's something wrong with Don Ramon. After what he's done, I'm positive that he told us a pretty tall yarn. Let me out of here!"

"Sorry, but it ain't to be thought of—just yet. When you and Dick will promise to go with us, and not make any trouble, we'll let you out."

"Looks like we'd have to go with you whether we wanted to or not, you old pirate!" cried Dick.

"Aren't you with us, Dick?" called Gaines, in a pleading voice. "We hate to have the two of you against us."

"With you," whooped Dick, "and against my old raggie, Motor Matt? Well, I should say not! You're a lot of blooming beach combers to act in this way."

"But you thought the don's proposition was all right."

"Vast, there, about what I thought of the don or his proposition—it's what Matt thought about it that cuts ice with me. Oh, you're a nice lot of swabs, you are! If you know when you're well off, you'll haul that don out of the conning tower and put him in double irons; then you'll let Matt and me out of here and obey orders. It's not too late yet to undo the trouble you've caused. Just let that bounce around in your locker for a while and see what you make of it."

"We're in this thing now, and we're going to hang to it," was the dogged response.

Gaines turned away and the two chums could hear him moving off. Matt went over to his cot and sat down.

"Great spark plugs!" he exclaimed. "Who'd ever have thought Speake, Gaines and Clackett would take the bit in their teeth like this?"

"They mean well, matey," said Dick, with a grim laugh. "They are trying to take the responsibility off your shoulders, Matt. They could see that you were hungry to go with the don, but that you didn't think you had the right. They've shouldered that part of it themselves."

"And they've got the lot of us into trouble," said Matt. "There's something off color about Don Ramon Ortega or he wouldn't have hired Speake, Gaines and Clackett to do this directly against my orders."

"Don Ramon is a pretty high jigger in Belize."

"He's not what I thought he was."

"Well, we're in for it," laughed Dick.

"In more ways than one," said Matt moodily.

"We're bound for the Izaral again, and will probably save that devoted outfit of 'breeds commanded by General Mendez."

"If I can get out of here they'll never put this boat into the River Izaral."

"That's my game old raggie for you!" exclaimed Dick. "But what could you do, matey? There are four against us, counting the don—two to one."

"I'll do my best. As for Gaines, Speake and Clackett, they wouldn't dare lay hands on me. I can take care of the don, I guess!" and Matt's gray eyes flashed dangerously.

"They'll not let us out of here, old ship," said Dick. "Gaines and the rest know their business."

The steel room was as solid as a prison cell. There were small ventilators for admitting fresh air, but these were no larger than loopholes. Apart from the ventilators there were absolutely no other openings in the metal walls except the closed doors.

Matt laid down on the cot again and continued turning the situation over in his mind.

The thing that worried him was the possibility of the cruiser *Seminole* putting in at Belize with orders for the *Grampus*—orders which might have something to do with the sale of the boat to the United States government.

Matt, who was in Captain Nemo, Jr.'s, confidence more than any of the others, understood that such a sale was the object for which the captain was striving—that it was that, and nothing else, which had led him to bring the submarine into Central American waters. And now to have the captain run the risk of losing a sale through the misguided and utterly unwarranted action of Speake, Clackett and Gaines was a hard thing to bear.

Yet Matt could see no way out of the difficulty. Gaines and his two shipmates were determined to help the don, and the boat was well along toward the Izaral.

For three or four hours Matt lay sleeplessly on his cot, listening to the hum of the motor and rolling back and forth with the rough swaying of the boat.

Then, suddenly, he was brought up with a start. The steady song of the cylinders had given way to an ineffectual popping, and he knew that something had gone wrong. The propeller ceased its revolutions, and the submarine came to a dead stop and rolled helplessly in the swell.

"Something's busted," remarked Dick, sitting up.

Muffled voices could be heard and sounds of movements as though one of the crew were going aft to the engine room.

Sputter, sputter, pop, pop, pop!

Again and again the noise reached Matt's ears, but the motor would not take the spark properly. After half an hour of this, some one banged a fist sharply against the other side of the door.

"Matt!" called the voice of Gaines.

"Well?" answered the young motorist.

"You'll have to go and fix up the motor. I'll be hanged if I can do it."

"You're running the boat," said Matt. "Fix it up yourself."

"I tell you it's too many for me!"

"You ought to have thought that something like that might happen before you started out. You're in trouble now, so get out of it the best you can."

Matt, highly enjoying the situation, settled back on his cot.

"Something has got to be done quick," cried Gaines, "for we're in danger!"

"What sort of danger?" Matt had bounded from the cot and was close to the door as he spoke.

"There's a line of reefs on the port side, and the current is drawing us that way! Unless we get the propeller to work in less than fifteen minutes the *Grampus* will be wrecked!"

"Open the door!" said Matt sharply.

"You won't make us any trouble?" parried Gaines.

"Open the door, I tell you!" shouted Matt. "We haven't a minute to lose!"

Without a promise to bind him as to his future course, Matt was allowed to leave the steel room. Paying no attention to the don, who was standing in the periscope chamber, he rushed through another door, dropped down a narrow hatch and crawled aft to the motor room.

CHAPTER VI.

A LESSON IN "WHO'S WHO."

In order to reach the motor room Matt had to crawl through a low chamber closely packed with storage batteries. There were sixty cells with a power of one hundred and sixty volts, and with a capacity of what is known, in electrical parlance, as sixteen hundred ampere hours. This room was Speake's dominion, and he sat on a low stool, his head just clearing the deck above, watching furtively as Matt scrambled past him.

Tucked away in the stern, at the end of the floored space, was the motor room. It looked like the tunnel shaft of an ocean liner.

At one side there were switchboards for two dynamotors: one of ten horse power to compress air, and a second of two horse power to supply lights and assist the ventilation. The spiral resistance coils were close to the switchboards. The gasoline engine was in the centre of the compartment, and back of this stretched the shaft, finally passing out into the water through a stuffing box.

Matt glanced at a clock on the wall. From somewhere in the distance he could hear breakers churning soddenly against a reef.

Clackett, crouching low in the curve of the boat's side, looked anxiously at Matt. He paid no attention to Clackett, but gave the fly wheel a sharp turn.

Sputter, pop, pop!

Matt listened. It was marvelous how completely he was in touch with the engine.

"Did you strain the gasoline before you put it into the tank?" he demanded of Clackett.

"Always do that, Matt," was the reply.

"The carburetter valve is clogged. Lay hold here."

In ten minutes the valve was clear, the engine "turned over" and the motor working properly. Matt switched the power into the propeller.

"All right, periscope room!" he called through a tube.

"Bully!" came back the voice of Gaines. "We were almost on the rocks. You're the boy, Matt!"

"Send Dick Ferral down here," ordered Matt curtly.

Dick presently appeared.

"Take charge of the engine, Dick," said Matt.

"What are you going to do, matey?" asked Dick.

"You'll know in a few minutes." He turned to Clackett. "Go up to the periscope room, Clackett," he went on. "I may need you."

"But say, Matt——"

"You heard what I said!"

There was that in Motor Matt's voice and eyes that sent Clackett crawling forward along the passage.

Matt followed him. In the battery room they picked up Speake, and Matt sent him trailing after Clackett. In that order all three finally gained the periscope room.

"What the blazes is the matter with you fellows?" shouted Gaines.

He was doing the steering himself, and was standing by the periscope table.

"Keep your eyes on the periscope," said Matt. "Attend to your work, Gaines."

Matt whirled about to where the don was sitting on a stool. There was a sharp gleam in the Spaniard's eyes, although he was otherwise cool and perfectly collected.

"This is a good time to give you fellows a lesson in who's who aboard the *Grampus*," said Matt. "Don Ramon, you did a rascally thing when you hired these men to take you south in direct defiance of my orders."

"What of it?" The don shrugged his shoulders. "We'll soon be at the mouth of the Izaral——"

"We are *not* going to the Izaral River," cut in Matt. "We are going back to Belize."

"We are not going back to Belize until we finish our work in the Izaral," was the insolent response.

"No?" returned Matt coolly. "We'll see. Gaines?" he called.

"Aye, aye, sir," answered Gaines, keeping his eyes on the periscope.

"Put about!"

Gaines made no move to shift the wheel.

"You heard what I said, Gaines?" went on Matt, his voice pitched low but carrying an emphasis that lifted it above the hum of the motor.

"I heard you, Matt," replied Gaines.

"Either obey the order or give up the wheel to Clackett."

Brought directly face to face with the issue, Gaines hesitated. The sharp eyes of the don noted the effect the masterful young motorist's words were having on Gaines.

"Don't you do it, Gaines," said the don coolly. "Think of the money you're to get. Motor Matt has not the courage——"

"Don't talk foolish!" growled Gaines. "Matt's got more pluck in a minute than any of the rest of us have in a year. I know him."

"He hasn't the courage to go to the Izaral," growled the don.

"He's only off'n his course a little about that," answered Gaines.

"Will you obey orders, Gaines, or leave your post?" asked Matt.

"He'll obey my orders," flashed the don, "and he'll stay right where he is and hold to his present course."

As the don spoke he pulled a hand from the breast of his coat. The hand gripped a revolver.

"That's your game, is it?" asked Matt, peering steadily into the snaky orbs of the Spaniard.

"We have come thus far on my mission," returned the don, "and we are going the rest of the way."

"Put up that gun!" said Gaines angrily. "If you try any shootin', we'll throw our hands in the air and put back to Belize."

Speake and Clackett moved forward. Matt waved them aside.

"I'll manage this," said he. "Gaines, keep your eyes on the periscope. A fine fellow, this don of yours. You men ought to feel proud of the way you hooked up with him, and——"

Matt, while he was talking, had kept covert eyes on the don. At just that moment the *Grampus* gave a heavy roll. The don's stool slid back against the steel wall and the point of the revolver was thrown, for the fraction of a second, toward the curving deck, overhead. This was Matt's opportunity. Quick as a flash he hurled himself upon the Spaniard, bore him from the stool and they rolled over and over upon the heaving floor.

The struggle lasted only a few moments, and when Matt withdrew from the don and got to his feet, he was holding the revolver.

"I'll make you answer for this!" cried the don, in a furious temper.

"You are welcome to try—just as soon as we get back to Belize," said Matt. "If this matter is aired, it won't sound very well when your government hears of it."

A mocking light crossed the don's angry face.

"*Diable!*" he exclaimed. "I'm not afraid of my government."

"Throw it overboard, Speake," said Matt, handing the revolver to Speake. "We don't need that thing here. If I can't have obedience on the *Grampus* without looking at her crew over the sights of a gun, I don't want it."

Speake, without a word, took the revolver and went up the ladder into the conning tower.

"From this on, Don Ramon Ortega," said Matt, "you will consider yourself a passenger. I will treat you better than your conduct demands, and will not make a prisoner of you unless you attempt to interfere with the management of the boat. Do you understand that?"

The don muttered something under his breath.

Before Matt could speak further, a shout came from Speake.

"Small boat off the starboard beam, close in!"

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Gaines, pushing farther into the hood of the periscope. "Look here, Matt!"

As Matt turned, an evil, triumphant light flashed in the don's eyes. Matt could not see it, and it escaped Clackett.

In the mirror top of the periscope table, clear and distinct, was reflected a ship's boat, a yawl, heaving helplessly on the waves. The boat was not over a hundred feet from the submarine, and the periscope showed it with startling fidelity to detail.

Aboard the yawl were five persons—four men and a boy. They seemed to be in difficult straits, for the men were standing erect and waving their hats frantically.

"They've been shipwrecked, Matt," said Gaines, "and they've lost their oars."

One of the men was a burly individual, wearing an oilskin coat and a sou'wester. All the others were roughly dressed, the boy wearing a pea-jacket and a stocking cap pulled well down over his face.

"There's a sailing craft hull down, off to port," said Matt. "It's a wonder that boat didn't pick those fellows up. But that's unimportant. We'll lay them aboard and take them off. Clackett!"

"Here, Matt!" answered Clackett.

"Take two coils of rope and go aloft." Matt turned to Gaines. "Get as close to the boat as you can, Gaines," he added.

Clackett rushed up the conning-tower ladder, and followed Speake out onto the curving plates of the deck. Matt went after the two men to direct operations from the conning tower.

Those in the boat—with the exception of the boy—appeared in the last stages of exhaustion. On seeing that their wild signals were to be answered, they dropped sprawling over the thwarts.

The boy still stood erect and made gestures—stealthy movements with one hand which puzzled Matt.

"That youngster seems to have stood their hard luck better'n the men," remarked Clackett, moving toward the bow with a coil of rope.

Matt made no answer, but continued to watch the dancing yawl as Gaines brought the submarine steadily nearer.

"Stand by to catch a rope!" shouted Matt presently, when they were close enough for a cast. "Let 'er go, Clackett!"

The rope left Clackett's hand, untwined itself sinuously in the air, and the end of it was grabbed by the big fellow in the sou'wester.

"All fast!" he boomed in a voice that was strangely strong for one whose actions showed him to be nearly fagged out.

Speake's rope was then thrown, and thus, with a double cable, the yawl was drawn close against the rounded side of the submarine.

In the periscope room were only the don and Gaines. Gaines' head was shrouded by the folds of the black periscope hood, and the don, unseen, was rubbing his hands delightedly. [Pg 13]

CHAPTER VII.

THE SNARE TIGHTENS.

The yawl was on the windward side of the *Grampus*. Matt, calling down directions to Gaines, had the submarine brought about so that the yawl lay on the lee side. This, to some extent, gave smoother water for the unloading of the small boat's passengers.

Speake, holding to one of the wire guys that supported the periscope tube, descended the rounded deck until up to his knees in water. Stretching out his hand he caught the fist of the big fellow in the sou'wester. The latter, standing on the gunwale of the yawl, gave a leap and landed sprawling on the submarine's deck.

A wave rolled over him, but he managed to clutch the guy rope and hang on. The next moment he rolled over close to the conning tower and lay there, face down, apparently almost spent.

Clackett, imitating Speake's manoeuvre, was bringing another of the men aboard. One by one the yawl was unloaded, the boy being the last to come.

Matt, climbing out of the conning tower, ordered the rescued men below. Two of them had vanished through the hatch when Matt, bending over the big fellow by the base of the conning tower, asked him who he and his comrades were, and how they happened to be adrift in a small boat.

"Had er shipwreck," answered the man hoarsely.

"Can't you get up?" asked Matt. "We'll have to get you below, somehow."

"Mebby I kin make it if yer put yer arms under mine an' give me a lift."

Bracing himself on the deck, Matt reached downward and pushed his hands under the man's armpits. At the same moment, the big fellow developed a surprising amount of strength. Both his arms went upward, as he whirled over on his back, and closed about Matt's waist like the two jaws of a vise.

"Now, then, nail 'em, you swabs!" he roared. "I got the boss o' the gang, an' you git the rest!"

Not until that moment did Motor Matt suspect treachery. The revelation came to him like a lightning flash.

A wild uproar echoed from below, and forward and aft Speake and Clackett were struggling with those they had helped aboard.

The rounded deck of the *Grampus*, slippery with water and deluged again and again by the waves, was a fearsome place for such a struggle. How the combatants ever kept themselves out of the sea was a mystery.

Matt fought as best he could. He recognized the big fellow as Abner Fingal, and knew, as well as though he had been told, that Don Ramon Ortega had engineered a cunning plot for the capture of the submarine.

"What are you trying to do, Fingal?" Matt demanded, as the scoundrel held him helpless in his iron-like grip.

"Trying to even up fer some o' the things you done a spell ago!" roared Fingal. "Stop yer squirmen', or——"

With a fierce effort, Matt succeeded in breaking free. He rose to his knees, only to meet the flint-like fist of Fingal. The terrific blow hurled him backward, and he slid along the sloping deck against the guy rope that supported the small flagstaff, close to the bow.

Fingal jumped after him, caught him by the collar and pulled him back before he could slip from the support of the rope and drop into the sea. The jerk Fingal gave him hurled Matt headfirst against the iron socket in which the base of the staff was secured to the deck. It was a savage blow, and Matt straightened out limply and a wave of darkness rolled over him.

When Matt opened his eyes again, he was in the same room where he and Dick had been confined by Gaines, Speake and Clackett. But there was another prisoner now, for Speake was with Matt and Dick.

Dick, on a stool beside the cot, was rubbing Matt's temples. Across from them, on the other cot, Speake was sitting, nursing a bruise on the side of his face.

"Hard luck, old ship!" muttered Dick ominously. "How are you feeling?"

"None too good," answered Matt.

"You got a crack fore and aft. It's a wonder one of 'em didn't bash in your skull."

"It wasn't the blows I received that's hurting me now, Dick," Matt went on, "but the fact that we were trapped when we thought we were helping a boat load of shipwrecked sailors. Have they captured the boat?"

"Well, I should say! That outfit of pirates swarmed all over her. I was down in the engine room, you know, and, while I knew by the racket that something was happening that wasn't down on the bills, yet I didn't dare leave the motor. After a while the racket died out a little and I called up through the speaking tube to learn what was going on. Some one laughed; then, the next I knew, Fingal came driving Gaines along. A swab trailed after Fingal, and both of 'em had guns. I was ordered up to the periscope room, and Gaines was sent to the motor, the other chap staying with him and keeping the gun aimed at him all the time. Oh, I guess you fellows have got enough of helping the don, haven't you?" and Dick turned to Speake.

"We was a pack of fools," answered Speake.

"What happened to you, Speake?" inquired Matt.

"The same as happened to all the rest," was the growling response. "That was a husky lot o' shipwrecked mariners we picked up! They didn't seem hardly able to crawl aboard, but they woke up considerable as soon as they got their feet on the *Grampus'* deck. I had it which an' t'other with a chap for'ard o' the connin' tower, and I held my own until Clackett was downed and the man that was goin' for him came at me. Then, o' course, I had to give up. Clackett an' me was sent below at the pistol's p'int. Clackett's in the tank room, and Gaines is in the motor room, both with a couple of the thieves holdin' guns on them an' makin' 'em run the boat. The don's steerin', and we're hikin' right on toward Port Livingston. Oh, what a howlin' mess!"

Matt sat up and bowed his head in his hands for a moment. His brain ached, and he was trying to think and get at the full extent of the disaster.

"It was all a put-up job, matey," remarked Dick.

"That's easy to guess, Dick," returned Matt, lifting his head. "The boat I saw hull down, off on the port side of us, must have been Fingal's schooner, the *North Star*. The schooner was expecting the don along with the *Grampus*, and was laying to get that crew of rascals aboard of us. Dropping the yawl in the water, the schooner left the boat behind. Oh, I see it all now. But I can't understand this Don Ramon Ortega. This business will open the eyes of a good many people in Belize."

"But what's the upshot of it all? What's the don tryin' to do?"

This from Speake, as he continued to nurse his injury.

"I can smoke Fingal's roll, all right enough," said Dick. "He's playing even with us for what we did on the Izaral River, a few days ago."

"He has captured the *Grampus*," added Matt, "and probably intends to turn her over to General Pitou."

"An' there wasn't anythin' in that story of the don's?" asked Speake. "It was a pretty good story, an' sounded to me like it might be straight goods."

"The don is helping Fingal," returned Matt, "and the submarine is now in the hands of the five we 'rescued' from the yawl, and the don. There are six of our enemies and only five of us. Naturally, we don't count, being locked up in this steel room; and Gaines and Clackett can't count for much, either, with revolvers staring them in the face whichever way they turn. This is a hard row of stumps for us, pards!"

"An' all owin' to Clackett, an' Gaines, an' me!" mourned Speake.

"There's nothing to be gained thinking over that part of it, Speake," said Matt. "We've got to look this thing squarely in the face and do what we can to recapture the submarine."

"Nothin' we can do!" grunted Speake. "That outfit of roughs have got the whip hand of us, and they're going to keep it. They was wise to keep Gaines an' Clackett to attend to the runnin' of the machinery, an' I guess the don can do the steerin', easy enough."

"I wonder if there was any truth at all in the don's story?" ventured Matt.

"In what part of it, matey?" queried Dick.

"Why, about the revolutionists capturing Port Livingston, and the fort across the river."

"If part o' his yarn's crooked," grumbled Speake, "then I'll gamble the whole of it's crooked. Why, Matt? What difference does that make?"

"Well, if Port Livingston is in the hands of the revolutionists, then we'll be taken there, and not up the Izaral."

"Strike me lucky!" exclaimed Dick, as a sudden thought came to him. "Don Ramon Ortega is in mighty poor business, mates, if he's helping these revolutionists. What a two-faced swab he is! When he talked with us, last evening, he was all against the rebels; now he's for them. What will the Spanish government say to that sort of work?"

"There's something about Don Ramon that's mighty puzzling," said Matt. "He's a scheming scoundrel, though, and it's our business to recapture the *Grampus*—if we can."

"How'll we go to work, Matt?" asked Speake gloomily. "Every man in Fingal's party is armed. What could five of us do ag'inst six armed men, providin' we was able to bunch together and face 'em?"

At this point, the door leading into the periscope room opened and the don and Fingal stepped through. Matt, Dick and Speake all started up on the entrance of the two men, but the latter carried revolvers, and another armed man stood in the doorway behind them.

"Don't get reckless, you fellows!" warned Fingal. "We ain't particularly anxious to hurt ye, but there's no tellin' what'll happen if you try to climb over us an' git through that door." The burly ruffian turned toward his companion. "Fire away, don," he added, "and tell 'em what you got on your mind."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DON'S PROPOSAL.

Before the don could follow Fingal's suggestion and unburden himself of what he wanted to say, the splash and gurgle of water entering the submersion tanks reached the ears of those in the steel room. At the same moment a shiver ran through the boat's fabric and she began to sink.

"What are you doing?" demanded Matt sharply.

"Going under the water," explained the don affably. "We're off Port Livingston and are going to proceed up the Izaral without being seen."

"What's that for? If the town and the fort are in the hands of the rebels, you won't have anything to fear."

"We don't know whether the rebels have captured the fort yet or not," said the don, "and we don't want to take any chances of being sunk by the fort's guns in case they are still in the hands of the enemy."

"If you don't know anything about this boat," said Matt, "you'll get us all into trouble trying to manoeuvre it."

"Gaines an' Clackett, I guess," put in Fingal, "'ll keep us from gettin' inter any very serious fix. They're helpin' run the craft, ye know," and Fingal leered cunningly. "Go ahead, don," he added, as the submarine halted its downward plunge and started onward again.

"Motor Matt," said the don, "I have a proposition to make to you and your men. You will find it to your interest, I think, to accept it."

"What's the proposition?" asked Matt curtly.

The more Motor Matt studied Don Ramon, the more puzzling the man became. His English was good, and yet he was undeniably of Spanish descent. Somehow Matt was gathering the idea that the don was a native of Central America, and not of Spain; yet Matt knew that this could not be, for he had heard that the Spanish consul at Belize hailed from Barcelona.

"My friend, Fingal," proceeded the don, "appears to think that you and your men owe him something on account of what happened during your former visit to the River Izaral, and——"

"So they do!" growled Fingal, with a savage frown; "they owe me somethin' not only on account o' that, but on account o' my brother, Jim Sixty. If it hadn't been for them, Jim would never have got nabbed by the United States' gov'ment for filibusterin'. I swore I'd git even with 'em for——"

"Forget that for a little, Fingal," interposed the don. "I've reasoned with Fingal," he went on to Matt, "and he has agreed to let bygones be bygones, providing you fall in with our plans."

He paused, his piercing eyes on the young motorist's face.

"I'm waiting to hear what your plans are," said Matt.

"We captured this boat for the revolutionists," continued the don, "and she will be of great help to General Pitou in his work; but, in order to be as efficient as possible, the craft ought to be manned with her regular crew. So——"

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"Then that story you told us about General Mendez, and about the trap Pitou was laying for him, was untrue?"

"Much of it was not the exact truth," the don cheerfully admitted. "General Mendez and his force are not far from the Purgatoire River, but it is he who is laying the trap for Pitou, and not Pitou for him. General Pitou will have to capture the fort at the mouth of the Izaral and be able to turn its guns on General Mendez, or the loyalist forces will drive the rebels into the sea. In order to keep track of Mendez, we need the submarine for scout duty up and down the river. Now, Motor Matt, you are thoroughly familiar with the boat, and our proposal is that you and your men take charge of her and render gallant service for General Pitou. Some of our men, of course, will stay on the boat to make sure that you prove faithful to your promises to us, but that will be a mere formality.

"If you will do this, I promise to pay you the sum, in gold, that I mentioned when talking to you in the harbor at Belize. Furthermore, in the event that General Pitou's uprising is successful, and we make him dictator of the country, you and your friends will share liberally in the division of the spoils. What do you say? You are young men—mere youths, in fact—and such a golden prospect ought to appeal to you."

Matt stared at the don.

"And you," he breathed, "are the Spanish consul at Belize! What would happen to you if they knew, in Spain, how you are meddling with the affairs of a country with which your own is at peace?"

The don laughed.

"I might just as well puncture that bubble here and now," said he. "I am not Don Ramon Ortega, the Spanish consul, but Don Carlos Valdez, the revolutionist."

Matt started back.

"Don Carlos Valdez!" he exclaimed.

"Now, sink me!" cried Dick. "We heard about you in Belize, Don Carlos."

"And what do they say about me in Belize?" asked the don.

"Why, that you're the greatest rascal unhung!"

"They say more than that," added Speake wrathfully, "and that you'll *be* hung, one o' these fine days."

Speake was chagrined and spiteful because of the way he and his mates had been taken in by the plausible revolutionist at the start off. He saw, now, how farsighted Motor Matt was in refusing to have anything to do with the don.

Carlos Valdez smiled ironically.

"What they say doesn't make any material difference," he answered. "I have been in Belize for a week. I walked the streets openly, and no one dared to molest me. Why, I even went to the

Spanish consul and asked for a passport. While he was preparing to make it out, I felled him with a blow and left him bound and gagged in his own sitting room. I had to do that, you see, before I dared to call on you, Motor Matt, and impersonate him."

"At any rate," said Motor Matt, "I am glad of one thing."

"And that is?"

"That Don Ramon Ortega is not the villain I know you to be."

"Your opinion counts for as little as does that of the people of Belize," returned the don easily. "You have not answered my question as to whether you and your men would accept our proposal."

"I didn't think it was necessary to answer it," said Matt. "I would blow up the *Grampus* before I would allow her to fall into the hands of General Pitou."

"Better think well before you make a foolish answer like that," struck in Fingal.

"That's my answer, just the same."

"How about the rest of you?" and the don turned to Dick and Speake.

"What Motor Matt says matches my sentiments to a dot," replied Dick.

"Mine, too," added Speake. "If me and my mates had obeyed Motor Matt like we'd ought to have done, we'd never have got into this fix in the first place. It may be a little late in the day, but here's where I begin carryin' out his orders jest as he gives 'em."

"Do you know what this decision means?" queried the don gravely.

"I'm not thinking of that, but of my duty to Captain Nemo, Jr.," said Matt.

"It means," fumed Fingal, enraged at the refusal of Matt and his friends to cast their lot with the revolutionists, "that you'll never live to get back to Belize!"

"Or even back down the river to Port Livingston," supplemented the don. "Presently we are going to tie up at an old landing on the river bank. After that, we will leave you by yourselves until nightfall. This will give you a little more time to think over our proposition. Life is a pleasant thing to young men like you, and you ought not to cast it lightly aside. Come on, Fingal," he finished.

The don and Fingal stepped back into the periscope room, closing and locking the door behind them.

Dick went over to his cot and sat down with a mirthless laugh.

"The old hunk has given us his ultimatum," said he. "We must either run the submarine for the revolutionists, or go to Davy Jones. Pleasant prospect, eh, matey?"

"Wonder if they've batted up the same proposition to Gaines and Clackett?" mused Speake.

"Probably they have," said Matt. "They want to secure the services of the submarine's crew, and Gaines and Clackett are important members of the ship's company."

"What sort of a move would it be," suggested Dick, "to pretend to join the swabs and then, watching our chances, cut and run back to Belize?"

Matt shook his head.

"They wouldn't trust us even if we agreed to join them. Didn't you hear what was said about having an armed guard constantly on the boat, as a 'mere formality'? No, Dick, the best thing for us will be to come out flatfooted and let the rascals know just where we stand. If they attempt to take any desperate measures against us, we will claim the protection of Old Glory."

"What do they care about a piece of bunting?" returned Dick. "See how they ran off that American consul? Why, these revolutionists aren't responsible for anything, matey, and they'll do just what they please."

In his own heart, Matt himself felt that Dick was stating the exact truth.

While the boys and Speake were talking, the turbines could be heard emptying the ballast tanks, and the boat began slowly rising. A little later the boys knew they were on the surface of the river. Steps were heard running along the deck, overhead, and a sound of voices came to them. Then there was a bumping along one side of the hull, a stopping of the motor, and the submarine was at a halt.

"I suppose we're tied up at that bally landing," observed Dick, "and here we're to stay and think matters over until nightfall, as the don put it. By the way, isn't it about time to eat? You and I, Matt, haven't had a mouthful since last night."

The words were hardly off of Dick's lips when the door leading into the periscope room opened and closed. The prisoners caught a glimpse of armed men standing in the other chamber, and then gave their attention to the boy who had entered with a basket.

The lad still had his stocking cap drawn down over his ears, and the collar of his jacket turned up about his throat.

"What have you got?" demanded Speake. "If it's grub, set it down. We was jest wonderin' if your outfit was calculatin' on starvin' us to death."

The boy's actions were peculiar, to say the least. Laying a finger on his lips, he bent his ear to the

edge of the door and listened; then, turning around, he jerked off his stocking cap.

"Matt," he whispered excitedly, "don't you know me?"

Matt gazed at the lad's handsome face like one stupefied.

"Ysabel!" he murmured; "Ysabel Sixty!"

"Jupiter!" gasped Speake.

"Great guns!" muttered Dick.

CHAPTER IX.

YSABEL SIXTY'S LOYALTY.

The astonishment of all three of the prisoners was overwhelming. Ysabel Sixty, the daughter of Captain Jim Sixty, the captured filibuster, there aboard the *Grampus*! She was so artfully disguised, too, that the prisoners would never have recognized her had she not taken the pains to reveal her identity.

Ysabel set the basket down on the floor.

"Fingal and all the others except Don Carlos are eating," said she, in a low voice. "The don has gone ashore to hunt for revolutionists. My uncle made me get the meal for him and his men, and then sent me here with something for you."

"You are still a friend of ours, Ysabel?" whispered Matt.

"Always!" the girl breathed.

"Does your uncle, Abner Fingal, know that?"

"Of course not! Why, he doesn't even know I am Ysabel Sixty!" She gave a low, sibilant laugh. "I have fooled him as well as the others."

It hardly seemed possible that the girl could hide her identity from her uncle simply by donning male attire. And yet she looked vastly different in boy's clothes.

"I'll not be able to stay here long," proceeded Ysabel, "so you had better let me do most of the talking. The *North Star*, Abner Fingal's schooner, lay off Belize part of the day, yesterday. She had been repainted, renamed, and was flying the Cuban flag. No one recognized her as a filibuster's boat. Fingal came ashore and had a talk with Don Carlos, and together they plotted to capture the submarine. And I also plotted," said the girl. "That's how I happen to be here now."

"But how did you learn about the plot?" queried Matt breathlessly, "and how did you manage it?"

"You remember my old friend, Pedro? The man who used to sail on my father's ship, the *Dolphin*?"

Matt nodded.

"Well, as it chanced, Pedro came north on the schooner with Abner Fingal. My uncle values Pedro highly because he was with my father on the brig, and it was from him that Pedro learned that the object of the schooner in going to Belize was to capture the submarine. Pedro was sent ashore at Belize to find four or five white men to help out the plot. He picked up three, and those were all he could get who, according to his ideas, were trustworthy. He called at the house in the evening, just before the schooner was to sail, and talked with me.

"When I learned that Fingal was trying to capture the submarine, and that Don Carlos was planning to help, I was wild to get word to you, and warn you. But this was impossible. You were not at the hotel, Pedro said, and the doctor would not admit any one to talk with Captain Nemo, Jr. I would have gone to the American consul, but Pedro would not let me. He said that if I did such a thing I would get everybody into trouble, himself as well as my uncle. I cared little about Fingal, but I did care a good deal about Pedro. He has always been a true friend, and a great help, to me. If I couldn't warn you, Matt, I made up my mind that I would sail with the schooner and do what I could to aid you in case Don Carlos' snare proved successful.

"Pedro tried to argue me out of that, but I insisted. At last he went to a junk shop in town and bought a suit of boy's clothes for me, and this stocking cap; then he cut off my hair"—the girl shook her head and set the short locks flying—"and I was soon changed into Manuel Ybarra, a small brother of Pedro's. We went out to the schooner in the evening. Fingal was already aboard and waiting for us. After that we sailed south, and, in the first gray of morning, we hove to, and Fingal himself climbed to the masthead with a glass. He watched carefully along our back track, and when he came sliding down to the deck he said loudly, so all could hear, that Don Carlos had succeeded in luring the submarine away from Belize, and that now we must carry out our part of the programme.

"Pedro and three other men were lined up on the deck, and each was given a revolver; then a small boat was put over and the four men got into the boat. Just as they were about to cast off, I jumped in.

"Fingal swore and ordered me back, but Pedro begged so hard for his 'little brother' that I was allowed to stay. As soon as we had cast off from her side, the schooner bore away with all sail set;

then our boat was rowed off over the water and the oars were tossed into the sea.

"'We're shipwrecked sailors,' said Fingal, with a laugh. 'Play the part, every man of you! The submarine will pick us up, an' then we'll capture her.'

"My heart turned sick at that, for not until then did I understand what the plan was. I hoped that you would not see us and pick us up; but then, Don Carlos was on the submarine, and it was certain that he would be on the watch for us. You know what happened after that. Didn't you see me motioning to you to keep away when you were in the conning tower?"

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"I saw you motioning, Ysabel," said Matt, "but hadn't the least idea what you meant. You were well disguised, and that stocking cap is just the thing. But be careful! If Abner Fingal should discover who you really are——"

"He won't," she answered. "Pedro is looking after me. I am supposed to be his brother, you know."

"Do you think you can help us recapture the *Grampus*?"

"That's what I want to do."

"Will Pedro help you?"

She was doubtful.

"Pedro won't do anything to get me into trouble, but whether he would help or not I don't know. You see, Matt, Pedro thought a lot of my father, and he doesn't feel very kindly toward you and your friends. With me it's different. My father was never good to me, but was always beating me and forcing me to tell lies to help out his plans. But," she added, catching herself up, "we must only talk about important things. Pedro is on guard at the door, eating his meal with a revolver on his knee. He will let me stay in here as long as I like, but if Fingal should suspect anything——"

The girl winced and shrugged her shoulders.

"You'd better go now, Ysabel," said Matt. "If Fingal happened to find out who you are, at this time, it would be impossible for you to do anything for us."

"I'd better tell you all I can, that's of importance, while I'm here," insisted the girl, pulling her cap down over her ears. "I may not have so good a chance as this again."

"Where are we, Ysabel?" put in Dick.

"Tied up to an old landing, halfway between the mouth of the Izaral and the place where the Purgatoire flows into the stream."

"Are there any soldiers near here?"

"There are, unless General Pitou has captured the fort. If the rebels have won that, then they're probably all down at the mouth of the river."

"Where's General Mendez?"

"Somewhere near the Purgatoire. He's coming down the river as fast as he can, hoping to fight with the rebels before they can get to the fort."

"Why did Don Carlos go ashore?"

"To find General Pitou. If the general thinks it safe, he may come back with Don Carlos."

"When does Don Carlos expect to get back here?" put in Matt.

"That depends on how far away the rebels are. He may return soon, and he may not return until nearly night."

"About what time is it?"

"Nearly noon. Tell me, Matt, how you think I can help you! I'm not nearly so clever as you are, and you might be able to think of something I could do."

Matt was thoughtful for a moment.

"Where are Gaines and Clackett?" he asked at last.

"They are shut up in the torpedo room. Fingal intends to keep them shut up all the time they are not needed for running the boat."

"By George!" exclaimed Matt.

"What now, matey?" whispered Dick.

"Why, if necessary, one of those fellows could shoot the other out through the torpedo tube! I got out that way once, you remember, in Atlantic City, and the *Grampus* was submerged, at that. Here she's on the surface, and the mouth of the tube isn't more than two feet under water!"

"What good would it do for one o' them fellers to be shot out of the boat?" queried Speake. "He'd only find himself in the hands of those outside."

"Well, Speake, if we got a chance to leave here and run the revolutionists off the boat, one of the men from the torpedo room would prove a big help to us. With Don Carlos gone, there are only Fingal, Pedro, and two more against us—and perhaps Ysabel could keep Pedro from taking a very active part in the fighting."

"But there are the guns—consarn 'em!" growled Dick. "What could we do against four, or even

three, armed men? They could riddle us before we got close enough to use our fists."

"If I could take the cartridges out of the revolvers," said Ysabel, "wouldn't that help?"

"How could you do that?" queried Matt eagerly. "Aren't the weapons in the men's pockets?"

"There were only four revolvers," went on the girl, "and one of the men gave his to Don Carlos. That leaves only three on the boat. Pedro has one, Fingal has one, and one of the other men has one. If I——"

Just at this point the door opened and the swarthy face of Pedro was thrust in.

"*Mujercita!*" he called softly.

The girl, with one last, quick look at Matt, hastened from the room. The door was closed and locked, and the prisoners could hear the hoarse voice of Fingal rumbling through the periscope room. Matt glided to the door and listened. A moment later he drew a long breath of relief and turned away.

"I was afraid he might discover her," said he, "but he only came down to borrow some tobacco of Pedro."

"About all we can do is to wait," murmured Speake.

"That's all," said Dick; "wait for something to happen and hope for the best."

"And let's not forget, while we're waiting," added Matt, "that we've got one loyal friend among our captors—and she's as brave as she is loyal."

CHAPTER X.

AN OPPORTUNITY.

The three prisoners were hungry and they lost no time in making an attack on the basket. While they ate they discussed the situation in whispers.

"Did Fingal come down the ladder from the conning tower, mate?" asked Dick.

"I thought so," was the reply, "from the noise he made."

"Did he go back to the deck?"

"I didn't wait to listen."

"If we could git that gang separated," said Speake, "we could lay 'em out one at a time—an' I guess the revolvers wouldn't cut much figure."

"That would be fine, Speake," returned Dick, "but Fingal and his gang are not doing the things we want 'em to."

"If we're to accomplish anything toward recapturing the submarine," chimed in Matt, "we'll have to do it before Don Carlos gets back. He may bring a gang of soldiers with him. Besides, don't forget what's to happen to us at nightfall in case we don't agree to join the revolutionists." [Pg 18]

"I'm not pinin' to have my name wiped off the articles," said Speake, with a wry grimace. "For one, I'd rather take long chances tryin' to run the rebels off the boat. It's a heap more comfortin' to get done up that way than by lettin' Fingal an' Pitou an' this Don Carlos do what they please without never liftin' a hand to help ourselves."

"I can't see anything comforting in that proposition, either way," observed Dick. "All I hope is, just now, that Ysabel will be careful, and that Pedro will look after her. Everything depends on her."

"She's a brick!" murmured Matt admiringly.

"And she's doing all this for you, matey!"

"It's for all of us!" declared Matt.

"Don't you never think it," said Speake. "She's runnin' a lot o' risks, an' I wouldn't never have thought a girl could have the grit. But Motor Matt was in danger! That was enough for her to know."

"I wonder how Carl came out with his serenade?" remarked Dick. "Ysabel wasn't at the house, and it's a fair guess that our Dutch raggie got into trouble."

Carl certainly had tumbled into difficulties—but it was not because he hadn't found any one at home.

"What do you suppose Carl is thinkin' about *us*?" said Speake.

"Our disappearance will bother a good many people," answered Matt.

Speake's conscience troubled him.

"I feel like an ornery cur," said he, "over the way Gaines, an' Clackett, an' me acted! Ye remember how mad us three was at Cassidy when he got in such a takin' because Matt was put in charge o' the *Grampus*? Well, to my notion, we ain't acted any better than Cassidy did."

"You ought to feel cut up," reproved Dick. "The only way you can square yourself, Speake, is by doing a lot to help recapture the ship."

"Jest give me the chance," answered Speake, his eyes flashing, "an' I'll show you what I can do."

The boys finished the food, took a drink all around from the bottle of cold coffee that Ysabel had put in the basket, and then continued their wait for something to happen. They felt better physically, even if they were not more hopeful.

Dick lay back on one of the cots and went to sleep; Speake pulled his hat down over his eyes and leaned against the forward bulkhead; Matt, flat on his back on the other cot, stared upward at the rounded deck, wishing that he could poke a hole through the steel plates and so gain freedom for himself and his friends.

Speake dozed a little. Something white, poked through one of the ventilator holes above his head, floated downward and landed on his knee. He stared at it drowsily, then brushed at it mechanically with one hand. Suddenly he realized that the falling of a scrap of white paper was rather a peculiar circumstance, and snatched it off the floor.

"Matt!" he called.

"What is it?" returned Matt, rising on his elbow and directing his gaze at Speake.

"This dropped down on me!" Speake held up the paper.

Matt was off the cot in a flash and standing at Speake's side.

"When?" he whispered.

"Jest now."

"It was pushed through one of the ventilator openings. It's a note—from Ysabel."

He passed to Dick's side and shook him into wakefulness.

"What's the row?" inquired Dick.

"A note from Ysabel, pushed in to us through one of the holes in the forward bulkhead."

"Keelhaul me!" muttered Dick, smothering his excitement. "Read it, matey! Perhaps she's captured the revolvers."

The note was written in pencil on a ragged scrap of paper. Matt, in a guarded voice, read it aloud:

"Pedro is asleep at the door. Fingal has gone off on the river bank. The two others are playing cards on the deck. I have Pedro's revolver and have unlocked the door. Now is the time! Capture Pedro and tie him—but don't hurt him. Be quiet—if he makes an outcry all is lost. Hurry!"

Speake pulled off his coat.

"This is bully!" he whispered. "Now we've got a chance."

"It's an opportunity I wasn't expecting," said Matt, pulling off his shoes carefully. "In our stocking feet, fellows! We must not make any noise. While Speake and I are binding Pedro, Dick, you go down and let Gaines and Clackett out of the torpedo room. If we work this right we may be able to get away from here and down the river."

All three of the prisoners were excited, as well they might be. An opportunity offered to save themselves and the boat—success or failure hanging on their quickness and silence.

Advancing to the door, Matt laid his hand on the knob. Slowly he twisted the catch out of its socket, and then inch by inch forced the door open.

Yet, slight though the noise was that accompanied the click of the catch, Pedro heard it. With a startled exclamation he leaped to his feet.

Matt and Speake sprang at him, Matt catching his wrists and Speake throwing an arm about his throat and clapping a hand over his lips.

The odds were against Pedro, and he was helpless; yet, for all that, he managed to squirm about and make considerable noise.

There was a drone of voices overhead, coming down the open hatch. The voices suddenly ceased, and some one was heard floundering over the deck to the top of the tower.

The electric light was not burning in the periscope room, and the only light that entered the chamber came from the hatch. Any one looking downward would not have been able to see anything distinctly except in the immediate vicinity of the bottom of the ladder. Matt, Speake and Pedro, as it chanced, were close to the locker.

"Anythin' wrong down there, greaser!" called a husky voice.

"No, señor," answered Matt, trying to imitate the rough voice of the Mexican.

"Thought I heard you movin' around," said the man above, turning away from the top of the tower. [Pg 19]

Pedro was forced down on the locker, and Ysabel glided forward with a piece of rope for bonds and a piece of cloth for a gag. Pedro turned his wild eyes on the girl with startled inquiry and

suspicion.

"You will not be hurt, Pedro!" whispered the girl; "don't make a noise—please."

She followed this with some soft words in Spanish. But Pedro, loyal though he undoubtedly was to the girl, continued to struggle. Matt and Speake, however, managed to get him bound and gagged.

"This is only the beginning, Motor Matt," breathed Ysabel, her cheeks flushed with excitement and her eyes bright as stars. "Here is Pedro's revolver—take it."

Matt took the weapon and thrust it in his pocket.

"We can't use firearms," he whispered, "for they make too much noise. Our hope lies in capturing our enemies one at a time, then cutting the cables and dropping down the river. If possible, we must do this before Fingal gets back."

"Where did Dick go?" asked the girl.

"To release Gaines and Clackett. The torpedo-room door is fastened by a bolt on the outside, so he'll have no trouble in getting them out. We'll wait till they come before making our next move."

Matt had hardly finished speaking before Dick came in through the forward door of the room. Clackett followed him—but Gaines was not along.

Matt lifted a warning finger as Dick was about to speak, pointed upward toward the deck and then motioned for Dick and Clackett to come closer.

"Where is Gaines?" he whispered.

"He got out through the torpedo tube, half an hour ago," said Dick.

Matt, as will be remembered, had already thought of this manœuvre. But it was unfortunate that Gaines had put it into effect, in view of what was transpiring.

"What was Gaines going to do?" asked Matt, of Clackett.

"He reckoned he'd go up the river an' try an' find General Mendez," replied Clackett. "We sort o ffiggered it out between us that some of the soldiers under Mendez could come here and capture the boat and release the rest of us."

Here was an awkward situation, and Matt wrinkled his brows over it.

They could not leave without Gaines. He was taking chances and doing his best to be of service to his comrades, and dropping down the river without him was not to be thought of.

"What shall we do now, matey?" asked Dick.

"Keep on with our plan," answered Matt. "There are two of the scoundrels playing cards on deck. We must get them as safely as we have got Pedro."

"Shall we make a racket and bring them down?"

"They'll both come, if we do that. We can capture them with less noise if they come one at a time."

Ysabel started forward.

"I'll go up the ladder," said she, "and say that Pedro wants one of them. After you capture him, I'll go up after the other."

"Good!" exclaimed Matt. "Get ropes, boys," he added to the others, "and stand ready for some swift and noiseless work."

Ysabel glided to the ladder. Before she could mount, however, some one was heard climbing over the top of the conning tower. As those below looked upward, a pair of booted feet swung down.

"Fingal!" gasped Ysabel, drawing away fearfully.

Matt motioned her out of the room.

"Stand ready for him," he whispered, "as he reaches the bottom of the ladder. The smallest mistake now means failure. Ready!"

Scarcely breathing, Matt, Dick, Speake and Clackett stood waiting for the burly ruffian who, jointly with Don Carlos, was responsible for all their troubles.

CHAPTER XI.

EXCITING WORK.

Fingal was a big fellow, and Matt remembered with a shudder the crushing embrace of his huge arms at the time the crew of the submarine were routed. But Matt, with so many to help him, was not worrying over the outcome. What caused him the most concern was the thought that, in spite of their precautions, there would be noise enough to alarm the two men who were playing cards.

Fingal came down the ladder slowly. Fortunately for those below he kept his gaze upward as he descended. When he reached the foot of the ladder his face was toward the after bulkhead of the periscope room, and those who were waiting were behind.

At a signal from Matt the attack was made. Matt himself sprang at Fingal's throat and caught his bull-like neck in a strangling grip. Like a huge animal, Fingal pushed himself around. Speake had one of his arms and Dick the other. Clackett, bending down, caught his feet and jerked them off the floor.

Fighting furiously, Fingal was thus thrown bodily into the hands and arms of Matt, Dick and Speake. They were not expecting to receive the heavy weight, and the huge body crashed to the floor. Matt's grip about Fingal's throat was wrenched loose, and a half-strangled bellow of fury went up from the desperate scoundrel.

Feet stamped the deck. There was no need of a demand from those above as to what was going on, for both the men knew that there was trouble. Fingal would not have bellowed in that fashion if there had not been.

"Never mind the noise, now," panted Matt. "We're in for it, and we must be quick."

One of the other men already had his feet on the ladder. Leaving Dick, Speake and Clackett to handle Fingal, Matt jumped up the ladder, caught the descending feet and flung his whole weight on them.

As a result, the man's hands were torn from the iron rungs, and he and Matt tumbled in a heap on the floor of the periscope room.

Matt came off better than his antagonist, for the latter struck his head against the steering wheel, doubled himself up in a ball, then flung out his limbs convulsively and lay silent and still.

"Look after both of them, fellows!" cried Matt. "I'm going after the other one."

The second of the two men who had been on the deck was showing more wariness than his companion had done. The abrupt disappearance of his comrade from the top of the ladder had filled him with doubts, and when he saw Matt rushing upward, he must have gained the idea that all the others were captured. Yet, be that as it may, he whirled from the conning tower in a panic and leaped off the boat.

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When Matt lifted his head clear of the hatch, a sharp report echoed out, and a bullet struck the sloping side of the conning tower and glanced harmlessly off into the river.

The ruffian was standing on the planks that had formed the old landing. Undeterred by the shot, Matt threw himself out of the tower, gained the rickety wharf at a jump, and raced after the man.

The latter retreated to the bank, turned there, and essayed another shot. A metallic click echoed out, but no report. Again and again the trigger fell uselessly.

With an oath, the fellow hurled the weapon at Matt, faced about, and dashed into the timber.

Matt gave pursuit. Had it not been that Gaines was missing from the boat's complement, Matt would not have chased the fugitive; but Gaines' absence made it necessary for the submarine to remain at the landing until he should return, and if this man got away he would probably spread the news of what had happened and cause a detachment of the revolutionists to charge the boat.

Matt, it will be remembered, was in his stocking feet. The ground over which he was running was covered with sharp stones, and before he had gone a hundred yards he realized that he would have to give up the pursuit.

Turning back, he regained the landing, leaped to the deck of the submarine and bent over the hatch.

"How are you, down there?" he called.

"Finer'n silk!" came the jubilant voice of Speake. "We've got lashings on both men. Where's the other chap?"

"He jumped ashore and got away. Come up here, Dick, you and Clackett. One of you bring a hatchet. Let Ysabel watch the prisoners, and you, Speake, go below and see if everything is in shape for a quick departure."

"Goin' to leave without Gaines, Matt?" asked Clackett.

"Not unless we have to. We're going to hang out here until the last moment."

Dick and Clackett presently showed themselves on deck. Matt had already discovered that the *Grampus* was moored to two trees with a couple of cables at the bow and stern. The boat was pointed upstream.

"Cast off the stern cable, Clackett," ordered Matt, "and throw it aboard. One rope is enough to hold us. Go out on the bow, Dick," he added, "and sit there with the hatchet. If you get an order to cut the cable, don't lose any time in carrying it out."

"Aye, aye, matey," replied Dick.

Clackett went ashore and unfastened the rear cable from the tree. Matt drew it in, coiled it, and dropped it down the hatch.

"What am I to do now, Matt?" shouted Clackett.

"Go up the bank and a little way into the woods," answered Matt; "hide yourself and watch for soldiers. If you hear or see any, rush this way and give the alarm to Dick. He'll cut the cable, and then the two of you dodge below as quick as the nation will let you, the last one down closing the hatch after him. Understand?"

"That's plain enough," said Clackett, climbing the bank and vanishing in the timber.

Matt went down into the periscope room and found Ysabel sitting on one of the stools and keeping watch of the prisoners.

Fingal, his great arms twisting fiercely against the ropes and his eyes glaring, lay on the floor. Near him was the other prisoner. The latter had recovered from the blow that had stunned him, and, to judge from his humble appearance, his war-like disposition was entirely gone.

"What shall we do with Pedro, Matt?" asked Ysabel anxiously.

"Does he want to go back with us to Belize? Ask him."

"If he did that, they would probably arrest him for what he has done," said the girl.

She put the question, however, and Pedro shook his head.

"Ask him if he wants us to put him ashore here."

Pedro nodded as soon as Ysabel had translated the words into Spanish.

"Tell him we'll do that before we leave," said Matt, "but that we can't trust him ashore until we are ready to go."

Pedro tried to talk in response to this, and Matt removed the gag for a moment. Turning his face toward Ysabel, Pedro spoke rapidly for a few moments. Ysabel's face became very serious as she listened.

"What is it?" inquired Matt.

"He says that the *Grampus* will never be able to leave the river," answered the girl; "that the fort is in the hands of the rebels and that they are planting mines in the river, so close to the bottom that the submarine will strike them if she submerges. If she floats on the surface, then the guns of the fort will sink her."

There was terror in the girl's face as she repeated Pedro's words.

Here was an unlooked-for difficulty, and one that gave Matt the utmost concern.

"Just ask him, Ysabel," said he, "why the rebels planted mines in the river when they knew the submarine was in the hands of their friends? Pedro's story sounds improbable, to me. If it comes to that, we passed the mouth of the river under water, and no one in the fort or the town saw us."

Ysabel talked for a few moments more with Pedro.

"He says," the girl reported finally, "that Don Carlos saw the flag of the rebels flying from the fort by means of the periscope when we ascended the stream; that the don knew there were some submarine mines in Port Livingston, and that he was going to have the soldiers plant them. He was afraid Fingal might try to run away with the *Grampus*, and intended to pen her in the river."

"Then even these revolutionists can't trust each other!" exclaimed Matt. "With such a lack of confidence as that, if it extends to the rank and file, the insurrection will prove a farce. Just——"

At that moment some one landed heavily on the deck of the submarine. Matt straightened erect and stepped to the foot of the ladder. Looking up, he saw Clackett gazing down.

"There are two men comin', Matt!" reported Clackett. "One of 'em's Don Carlos, an' the other wears a red coat with shoulder straps and has a sword."

"Some officer, I suppose," said Matt. "Come down here, quick, Clackett, and tell Dick to follow you, but not to cut the cable. Speake!" he called through one of the tubes.

"What is it?" came back the voice of Speake.

"Up here with you! More work."

Speake, tumbling up from below, and Dick and Clackett, dropping down from above, reached the periscope room at about the same time. Matt had been replacing the gag between Pedro's lips.

"Drag the prisoners into the room where they were keeping us," said Matt. "There's going to be more lively work here, and we've got to clear decks for action."

While Speake, Clackett and Dick fell to with a will, half dragging and half carrying the prisoners into the steel chamber off the periscope room, Matt kept close to the periscope and watched the bank above the landing.

Then, just as his comrades finished their work, and returned to his side, he gave vent to an exclamation and whirled away from the periscope table.

"Don Carlos is coming," he whispered, "and General Pitou is with him! Now, at one stroke, we can lay the rebel general by the heels and nip this revolution in the bud. Steady, now! Not a whisper, mind. There are two of them, and we must capture them both."

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CHAPTER XII.

CAPTURING THE GENERAL.

Matt, on the occasion of his former visit to the River Izaral, had caught a fleeting glimpse of

General Pitou. Speake, who had been a prisoner in the general's hands for a brief time, was more familiar with his appearance. Gliding to the periscope table, Speake took a look for himself.

"You're right, Matt," he whispered, "it's the old villain himself."

"I should think he was takin' chances coming so far from camp," remarked Clackett, "and right in the direction of General Mendez and his troops."

"Mayhap," chuckled Dick, "he was expecting to drop down the river in the submarine. Let's not disappoint him, mates. He'll go down, but not with the people he intended to have as companions."

"Hist!" warned Matt.

A deep silence reigned in the periscope room. Voices were heard on the landing, and then a clattering rattle as the general landed on the deck. Don Carlos followed more lightly, and stepped to the conning tower.

"Fingal!" called Don Carlos. "The general is here, and he feels that the prisoners must be dealt with in a summary manner at once. He doesn't think it advisable to wait until nightfall. Better bring them up."

Here, in a moment, a situation was developed which threatened Matt's plan for entrapping Don Carlos and Pitou. The don and the general were not intending to come into the boat, but to wait on the deck while the prisoners were brought up.

"I say, below there!" called Don Carlos, in a louder voice. "Wake up, you! Where's Fingal?"

"Ahoy, don!" bellowed Matt, trying his utmost to imitate the raucous tones of Fingal's voice. "Bring the general down a minute!"

Matt's imitation was fairly good, but not good enough to deceive the keen ears of Don Carlos.

With a yell of alarm, the don sprang ashore.

"This way, general!" he shouted; "hurry! There's something wrong here."

There followed a crash, a rattling slide of some object over the sloping deck of the boat, then a shrill "*Pardieu! Sacre, sacr-r-r-e tonnerre!*"

Matt rushed up the ladder and looked out of the hatch.

The general was a little man, and he carried a prodigious sword and wore a pair of immense spurs on his cavalry boots. As near as Matt could judge, from what he saw, the general had tried to leap ashore and his spurs had caught in one of the guy ropes. Instead, therefore, of leaping, he fell in a heap, and had clattered and banged along the deck until he was caught and held between the side of the boat and a pile that formed part of the wharf.

The general was seeking in vain to extricate himself from his difficulties. Every time he tried to get up, his boots would slip on the rounded plates, and he would sit down on the sharp points of his spurs.

The air was fairly blue in his immediate vicinity, and a perfect bedlam of epithets went up from him. Don Carlos, seeing Matt in the top of the tower, guessed rightly that the prisoners had released themselves in some manner. The don did not return to assist the general, but danced about on the bank, tossing his arms frantically and shouting for him to make haste.

The general was more than anxious to oblige, but fate was against anything like haste. The sharp points of his spurs galled him, and when his spurs ceased from troubling, his long sword got between his legs and tripped him.

Matt had abundant time to slide over the top of the conning tower, grab the general by the collar of his red coat and pull him erect on the ridge-like spine of the deck.

With a howl of wrath, Pitou backed up against the conning tower, drew his sword, threw his left arm over his face and proceeded savagely to carve slices out of the air.

The situation was serious, from several points of view, but Matt, for all that, could hardly repress a laugh.

Then, to crown the ignominy that was being heaped upon the general, Speake suddenly hoisted himself above the top of the tower, noted the situation, reached out calmly and passed his arms about the general's body under the shoulders.

The next moment Matt had a glimpse of a red coat, a pair of cavalry boots, and flashing spurs being elevated and dragged down into the maw of the tower.

It was a tragic disappearance—tragic for the general—for, in this inglorious manner, he was leaving the scene of his military exploits.

As soon as Matt got below he found his friends enjoying the general as much as he had done. Clackett had taken his sword, Speake had pulled off his boots, and Dick was sitting on the captive's breast, pinning him to the floor while he affixed cords to his wrists and ankles.

"Fer goodness' sake," cried Speake, "get somethin' between his jaws! He's chatterin' more'n a cage o' monkeys."

Ysabel stepped forward with a bandage, and the general was soon silent. Dick finished by dragging him into the prison chamber and dropping him down beside Fingal.

"Oh, what a fine general it is!" laughed Dick. "And he was trying to make himself dictator of the

country! I wonder what sort of a population they have here, to let a little wasp like that go on the warpath and make trouble!"

"He is a little wretch!" exclaimed Ysabel, with flashing eyes.

"And that's the military phenomenon your uncle, Abner Fingal, was trying to make you marry!" exclaimed Dick, suddenly recalling a half-forgotten episode in Ysabel's life.

The girl flushed crimson.

"Never!" she breathed fiercely.

"If it hadn't been for his spurs and his sword," said Matt, "he would have been able to get away. But we're strangely reckless, friends," he added, "to amuse ourselves with the general when we are in such desperate plight. We can't leave here until Gaines gets back, and not only has one of Fingal's men escaped us, but Don Carlos has likewise got away. Both will carry the news of what we have done to the camp of the rebels—and you can imagine what will happen when the rebels hear that we have got their general below decks. We'll have the entire army about our ears—and that won't do; at least, not until we have Gaines with us. After that, we can close the hatch, sink below the surface and glide down-stream without——"

Matt paused. He suddenly remembered what Pedro had said about the submarine mines at the mouth of the river.

"What's taken you aback, matey?" spoke up Dick. "You act as though you had just thought of something."

"We may have a hard time getting out of the river," returned Matt. "Pedro told Ysabel that the rebels had planted mines in the river bed, close to the fort, and that they were so low in the water we would probably strike them if we tried to pass the fort submerged. Again, if we attempt to gain the gulf by keeping on the surface of the river, the cannon in the fort will bombard us."

"A plague on their mines and their cannon!" cried Dick recklessly. "We'll run past the fort. If the soldiers are all as able as their general, they couldn't hit us with grape and canister."

"Well, that's a bridge for us to cross at a later time," said Matt. "Just at present we have Gaines to think about. He ought to have got back by this time. Clackett, go back to your post in the woods and keep a sharp watch for soldiers. We'll surely have a visit from them now. Up on deck with your hatchet, Dick, and stand ready to cut the cable at the first sign of an attack."

"Aye, aye," responded Dick, picking up the hatchet. "I think, matey, we could capture the whole rebel army if it came our way."

"We've had one experience with the rebel army, Dick," said Matt, "and it was far from pleasant. Let's not repeat the experience. Climb for the deck, and——"

Events were happening for the young motorist and his chums that day! They were coming like the rapid reports of a Gatling gun, and hardly was one issue met and vanquished before another was raised.

Dick and Clackett were on their way up the ladder when a rattle of musketry reached the ears of those in the submarine. It came from the direction of the bank, and was followed by loud cries and a tremendous thrashing among the bushes.

"Hurry!" cried Matt. "Don Carlos must have met a detachment of Pitou's army and have headed them this way! We can't wait any longer for Gaines! Up with you and cut the cable!"

Clackett stepped off the ladder to make room for Matt, who sprang to follow Dick aloft.

When Dick reached the deck, he gave a shout of astonishment.

"Lively, matey!" he called.

When Matt was able to see what was going on, he was as greatly surprised as Dick had been.

Coming down the bank, and traveling as fast as his long legs could carry him, was Gaines. He was clad only in shirt and trousers, and his bare feet were bleeding from their contact with the sharp stones. Unmindful of this trying discomfort, he rushed down the bank with flying leaps, while bushes crackled behind him and little wreaths of smoke rose upward, marking the discharge of firearms.

Matt rushed along the deck and caught the hatchet out of his chum's hand.

"Go to the engine room, Dick," said he quickly, "and take charge of the motor. Send Clackett to the tank room. Let Speake take the wheel until I come. Submerge when I give the word, and do it *quick!*"

It was no time for hesitation, and Ferral darted back down the hatch.

CHAPTER XIII.

OFF FOR THE GULF.

It was easily seen that Gaines was nearly spent. His breath tore through his lips in gasps, and when he reached the edge of the wharf, he fell there, unable to roll over the edge and drop down

on the deck of the *Grampus*.

Out of the bushes at the top of the bank came the foremost of the pursuing soldiers. Fortunately for Matt and Gaines, they were armed with muzzle-loaders, and were frantically getting another charge into the barrels.

Dropping the hatchet, Matt leaped to the wharf, caught Gaines and pulled him down on the deck; then, springing back, he picked up the hatchet and severed the cable with a blow.

The bow of the submarine caught the current, swung farther out into the stream, then whirled around and started away. This placed the conning tower between Matt and Gaines, and several bullets hit the tower and glanced singing into the air.

"You're all right, Gaines," said Matt, bending over the motorist. "You got out of that fix——"

"By the skin of my teeth!" panted Gaines. "Oh, what a run! I never ran so fast, and so far, and over so many stones and briars, before in my life. I thought, a dozen times, they had me."

"Hard luck that you should have run into the rebels when you were looking for the soldiers of General Mendez."

"Rebels?" cried Gaines. "Why, Matt, those fellows weren't rebels. They were the loyalist soldiers!"

"The troops of General Mendez?"

"Yes."

"Then," queried Matt angrily, "why were they chasing you, and shooting at you?"

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"I give it up. They must have taken me for one of the rebels—possibly they thought I was General Pitou."

"They couldn't have thought that," answered Matt. "The general is only about half your size."

"Clackett told you why I got out through the torpedo tube?"

"Yes. But how did you ever do it without being seen by Fingal and his men?"

"I was shot along upstream, and straight into the bank. Fingal was sitting on the deck at the time, and the sudden heave of the forward end of the boat drew his attention, but he didn't see me. As soon as I could I got up the bank, but the compressed air had made me dizzy and I was obliged to rest before I could travel. After I got started I found that I couldn't go fast on account of my bare feet. I must have been about a mile away before I saw any soldiers. There was a straggling column of them, and they appeared to be the vanguard of an advancing army. They were Mendez's men, and I was pleased a lot, because I was sure I could get them to go back with me and help recapture the submarine.

"When I started toward them, though, they began to shoot and to run toward me. I couldn't stop and explain, for I wasn't at all sure that my explanation would be accepted. So all I could do was turn and see how quick I could get back over the ground. That's about all, Matt. But how did you get clear? It was a surprise to see you on the boat. I was expecting to be met by Fingal and his gang."

"That's too much to tell just now, Gaines. We're all free, however, and all together once more. We have been waiting for you."

"What became of Fingal?"

"He's a prisoner."

"Good! Any more prisoners?"

"General Pitou——"

"General Pitou!"

"Yes; and one of Fingal's men, and another who is more a friend of Ysabel Sixty's than he is of Fingal's."

"What about Ysabel Sixty?"

"She's below, too."

"Where did she come from?"

"She was one of those we took out of that yawl. We all thought she was a boy until she told us who she was. We owe our escape to her."

While sitting on the deck, Gaines had been slowly recovering his strength. He was still muttering dazedly over Matt's amazing disclosures, when Speake showed himself at the hatch.

"You fellows better come below!" he called. "Dick said you wanted the boat submerged, Matt, an' I guess that the quicker we do it the better. There's an outfit of black soldiers, dead ahead, waiting for us."

Matt whirled around and allowed his eyes to follow the direction of Speake's pointing finger.

On a shelf-like projection of the high bank, perhaps a quarter of a mile ahead, was a group of rebels. They could be seen only indistinctly, but it was apparent from their actions that they were waiting for the *Grampus* to come within good range.

"Climb for the hatch, Gaines!" ordered Matt. "We've got to get below the surface. If we stay out here, while we're passing those soldiers, they'll shoot us off the deck."

Gaines got to his feet and walked painfully to the tower. After he had climbed in, and vanished, Matt followed, closing the hatch behind him.

"Fill the ballast tanks, Clackett!" called Matt, through the tank-room tube. "About ten feet will do, just so the periscope ball is awash."

A moment more and the submarine began to settle downward.

"What are you going to do when we get near the fort, Matt?" asked Speake.

"I don't believe the rebels have had time to plant any submarine mines," said Matt. "It takes some time to do that, and not enough time has elapsed since Don Carlos reached the fort and reported that the submarine had been captured. We'll pass the fort under water, and chance the mines. Better that than running on the surface and being bombarded."

Patter, patter came a ringing hail on the deck.

"Ah!" cried Gaines, "the soldiers are taking a whack at us!" He laughed derisively. "I guess we can stand as much of that as they want to give us. Their lead slides from the deck like water off a duck's back."

Patter, patter—*smash!*

"Great spark plugs!" cried Matt. "What was that? Something broke."

"The periscope ball!" gasped Speake. "They've put the periscope out of commission. Empty the tanks!" he yelled into the tank-room tube.

The periscope table reflected nothing of the treacherous channel along which the current and the propeller were carrying the *Grampus* at a terrific pace.

It was necessary to come to the surface as quickly as possible and use the conning-tower lunettes.

"Reverse your engine, Dick!" cried Matt to the motor room. "Full speed astern!"

The engine was instantly reversed, but not until the submarine had run into some obstruction, halting her with a jar that threw all her passengers off their feet.

For a moment the silence was broken only by the hum of the fiercely working cylinders, and the splash and bubble of the current as it met the obstruction of the huge steel shell.

"Cut out the turbines!" yelled Matt; "empty the tanks by compressed air. Full speed astern, Dick! Every ounce of power now!"

"What's happened, do you think, Matt?"

The question came from Ysabel. She had been sitting on the locker in the periscope room, watching eagerly all that had taken place.

"The river winds about a good deal, Ysabel," Matt answered, "and we have probably run into the bank. When the periscope went out of commission it prevented us from keeping track of our course. Ah!" he added, noticing that the propeller was dragging them against the current and away from the bank, and that they were rising toward the surface. "We'll do, now."

"But we can't pass them cannon on the surface," observed Speake.

"There's nothing else for it, Speake," answered Matt, "but a dash straight for the gulf. We'll have to keep to the surface, and if the rebels are able to aim straight, they're going to give us a lively time."

Matt relieved Speake in the conning tower. With his eyes against the lunettes, the king of the motor boys kept keen watch ahead as turn after turn of the river unfolded before the racing boat.

At last they came close to a bend on the opposite side of which Matt knew there was a straightway stretch of water leading to the gulf.

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He signaled the motor room for full speed astern once more, then slowed down until the backward pull of the propeller just balanced the rush of the current, the *Grampus* hanging stationary in mid-stream.

"Gaines," called Matt, "are you well enough to take the engine? I want Dick up here with me."

"Sure," answered Gaines.

"Then go down and send him up."

Dick reached the periscope room in a few moments.

"Dick," said Matt, "our periscope is out of commission and we've got to pass the fort on the surface of the river. We could wait until night. That would give the rebels less of a chance at us, but it would also make our dash for the gulf a good deal more dangerous. The daylight has advantages as well as disadvantages, and so has the night. What do you say?"

"I'm for running their bally old fort," answered Dick. "We'll go so fast they can't hit us."

"Get the Stars and Stripes out of the locker, Dick," said Matt. "We'll haul it up to the staff as we pass and see if it commands their respect."

Matt threw open the conning-tower hatch. The next moment, with his body half exposed above the hatch, he rang for full speed ahead.

As the *Grampus* started on the last leg of her dangerous voyage, Dick forced his way up beside

his chum.

"Give me room, old ship," said he, between his teeth. "I'm going out on deck. If the flag commands any respect, it will be under my personal supervision."

"Run up the flag and then get back below," answered Matt, squeezing to one side of the tower so that Dick could pass.

Dick had kicked off his shoes and thrown aside his hat. Stripped for action, he bent the flag to the halyards as the submarine swept onward toward the threatening wall of the fort.

CHAPTER XIV.

RUNNING THE BATTERY.

Signs of activity showed around the fort as the *Grampus* rushed down toward it. Soldiers with rifles appeared on the walls, and the muzzles of the cannon were being slowly depressed in order to get the boat under a drop fire.

"They're going to let us have it—hot blocks, matey!" called Ferral, still working with the flag.

"Get the bunting up and return below!" ordered Matt.

"I suppose you think, matey, that you're the only one who's privileged to show himself while the rebels are shaking out their loads at us."

"I don't want you to expose yourself to needless danger, Dick," said Matt.

"Danger!" Dick gave vent to a scornful laugh. "I don't think the greasers can shoot. Let's give 'em a chance at us and see if——"

Dick was interrupted by a hoarse boom!

Four cannon commanded the river side of the fort, and four the bay side. It was one of the guns on the river side that had spoken. A round shot plunged into the water on the port side of the boat, sending a jet of spray high into the air.

"I told you so!" yelled Dick, and shook his fist at the fort.

As he looked upward he saw three soldiers on the wall getting ready to shoot.

Boom! Boom!

Two more cannon were fired, almost at the same time. The solid shot plunged into the water altogether too close to the boat for comfort.

"Up with the colors, Dick!" shouted Motor Matt; "let's see if they dare fire on that flag!"

Dick hauled up the flag. As the gay little banner caught the breeze and opened out, a crack of rifles was heard from the fort.

The flag fluttered sharply.

"What do you think of that!" roared Dick, once more shaking his fist upward in the direction of the fort; "they've put a hole through the flag. Oh, strike me lucky! If it was the British flag they treated like that, an army would march through the country before the scoundrels were a month older."

"They're an irresponsible lot, anyhow," said Matt. "Besides, we've got General Pitou below, and General Mendez will have an easy time of it when he gets here with his army. The uprising is as good as squelched. If anything——"

A perfect roar of guns echoed from the hill. With a crash the periscope mast went by the board, and the round shot caused the water to bubble and boil all around the submarine.

"They've got a grouch against that periscope, old ship!" laughed Dick.

"We'll have to have a new mast and ball as soon as we get back to Belize," said Matt.

Just then he guided the *Grampus* in a wide sweep around the headland to the left of the river mouth.

"A moment more," said Dick, "and we'll have the town between us and the fort. They're slow at loading those old carronades. Never saw so many butter fingers! Those fellows' hands must be all thumbs. If——"

Dick did not finish his sarcastic remarks. Just then there was a tremendous explosion just behind the submarine. A column of water arose high in the air and, descending in a huge wave, carried the stern of the boat under and threw the bow high in the air. The water all around was a veritable caldron.

Frantic cries came from within the hull. Matt, owing to the almost vertical inclination of the steel hull, was hurled out of the conning tower and came into violent collision with Dick, who was clinging with a life-and-death grip to the flagstaff guys.

For a second the *Grampus* heaved and tossed on the troubled waves, then righted herself buoyantly and drove ahead.

Matt picked himself up and climbed hastily back into the conning tower. He was sore and bruised, but he realized that he could not leave the submarine to steer herself.

"What was that, old ship?" cried Dick, rising to his knees and lifting a pale face upward.

"It must have been a submarine mine," answered Matt, in a voice that shivered perceptibly.

"A mine!" returned Dick. "But it exploded *behind* us! If we set it off, why didn't it explode under us and blow us to smithereens?"

"It must have been a mine of the floating variety—a contact mine which was out of working order. We passed over it; and then, when we were safely out of the way, the pesky thing let go." [Pg 25]

Dick Ferral's face grew even paler than it had been. As the dread import of Matt's words dawned on him, he realized the close call the submarine and all her passengers had had.

"Dowse me!" Dick muttered, getting slowly to his feet and rubbing his head, "I never want to get so close to kingdom come as that again! Why, Matt, we couldn't have done that trick once in a thousand times."

"We did it this time, anyhow," answered Matt quietly. "A miss is as good as a mile, Dick. Better go below and explain to our friends."

Dick staggered back and climbed into the tower, and his face was still white as he dropped off the ladder into the periscope room.

Clackett, Speake and Ysabel crowded around him.

"What happened?" cried Clackett. "The old catamaran turned a regular handspring; then she stood on her propeller for about a minute and seemed to be thinking of going down to stay."

Dick explained in a low voice what had happened, sitting on the locker and almost overcome by the narrow escape of the boat and her living cargo.

Speake began to shake; Clackett rubbed a dazed hand across his eyes; and Ysabel, dropping on one of the low seats, buried her face in her hands.

"Matt!" she gasped, looking up; "how can he stay up there in the conning tower after such a hairbreadth escape as that?"

"Matt?" returned Dick. "Why, he's as calm as a day in June. He's not even ruffled. He——"

"Listen!" called Clackett. "Matt's saying something."

"Speake!" came the voice from the conning tower.

"Aye, aye, sir," answered Speake.

"Get to work on your electric stove, providing it wasn't smashed by that somersault we turned, and see if we can't have a piping-hot meal. Ysabel will help you."

"That's what he's thinking of," muttered Dick, "something to eat. Well, my old raggie has got more nerve than I have."

While Speake and Ysabel were getting supper ready, Dick and Clackett went into the prison room and looked at the men confined there.

They were all lying in an indiscriminate heap near the after bulkhead.

There was a chorus of wild gurgling behind the gags, and Dick and Clackett set to work and laid the prisoners around the room in something like order. The overturned cots were placed upright, and Pedro was laid on one, and the unknown member of Fingal's gang was placed on the other. Fingal and the general were left lying on the hard floor.

"The general," remarked Clackett, poking him in the ribs with the toe of his boot, "was goin' to take care o' us in a summary fashion. He couldn't hardly wait till nightfall, the general couldn't. Ain't he a nice-lookin' specimen, Dick?"

"He's the worst-looking swab I ever saw!" averred Dick. "He was all sword and spurs, and he didn't know how to use 'em. That's the reason he got captured. I guess he'll be hung, fair enough. He ought to be hung, anyhow, and he would have been if he had fallen into the hands of General Mendez. We ought to have put him ashore to take the place of Gaines. We robbed the soldiers of one victim, and we should have given them another."

"I tell ye what we ought to have done," averred Clackett.

"Out with it, mate."

"We ought to have laid all these here prisoners out on the deck when we was passing that fort."

"Sink me," cried Dick, "but that was a bright idea. But," and Dick's face fell, "like a good many bright ideas it came too late."

"With them fellers on the deck," said Clackett, waxing eloquent over his afterthought, "I'll bet somethin' handsome we could have run past that fort and never been fired at once."

"Like enough. But we're past the fort, and we're right side up with care, and we've got Motor Matt to thank for it all. Let's go back and see how near it is to supper time."

CHAPTER XV.

THE "SEMINOLE."

All night long the *Grampus* felt her way up the coast. Clackett acted as pilot some of the time, and Matt "spelled" him in two-hour watches. Neither was very well acquainted with the coast, and it was necessary to proceed slowly.

The electric projector was turned against the forward lunettes, and, with this trail of light stretching before them, the *Grampus* plowed her way through the breaking seas and safely escaped the reefs that lined her course.

Morning found the submarine still several hours from Belize.

Ysabel and Speake got breakfast, and while it was being eaten a cry of "Sail, ho!" came from Clackett, who was in the tower.

"Where away?" called Matt, only passively interested.

"Dead ahead," answered Clackett. "But I ought to have said 'Smoke, ho!' as the craft is a steamer."

"Which way is she heading?"

"Toward us."

"Then probably she's some Costa Rica fruiter."

Matt went on with his eating. Dick was below, standing his trick at the motor in order to give Gaines a chance to eat and rest.

"We're going back to Belize," said Gaines humbly, "and I feel like a criminal, caught and carried back to jail."

"Why so?" inquired Matt.

"Why, because Speake, Clackett and I got the *Grampus* into that mess of trouble. She's had more narrow escapes this trip than she ever had since she was launched—and when we listened to the don you'd have thought we were off on a little pleasure excursion."

"I feel mighty tough myself," put in Speake.

"So do I," cried Clackett from the conning tower.

A little of the conversation had drifted up to him—enough so that he could catch the prevailing sentiment of the remarks.

"Don't fret about what you can't help, men," said Matt.

"But what will Cap'n Nemo, Jr., say?" said Gaines.

"Why, you said he'd be glad we went, after we came back and reported," said Speake. "Have ye changed yer mind, Gaines?" [Pg 26]

"I've changed my mind a good many times since we set off on this cruise," replied Gaines.

"I don't believe the captain will find any fault with you," said Matt. "I'll do what I can to smooth the thing over."

"It's like you to do that," returned Gaines gratefully. "You were the same with Cassidy, that other time when he came in from the River Izaral, and I remember I thought you were rather too easy on him."

"We all thought that," said Speake. "And I'm free to say that I think Matt's too easy on us."

"That bag with the gold pieces was left down in the torpedo room," went on Clackett.

"It was?" queried Matt, deeply interested.

"Yes. I left it there. I wouldn't have touched it with a ten-foot pole."

"That will pay for a new periscope ball and mast," said Matt, "and for the provisions and gasoline we used up on this trip. Taking it all together, we've had a very successful cruise——"

"Hot and lively," put in Speake.

"And short," added Gaines; "that's the best part of it. If it had kept up much longer, I'd have been down with heart failure. We not only had a close call in the matter of losing the ship to Fingal and his gang, but likewise in the matter of that submarine mine. My nerves are in rags, and I hope Nemo, Jr., isn't going to sit down on us too hard. That would be about the last straw!"

"Hard lines that we couldn't have nabbed Don Carlos," wailed Speake. "I'd have taken particular pleasure in herding him with the rest of our prisoners."

"We've got Pitou," said Matt, "and he's of more importance. There——"

"Hello, down there!" came from Clackett.

"What now, Clackett?" sang out Matt.

"That steamer's a warship—I've just been able to make her out. By jing, I believe she's the *Seminole!*"

The announcement aroused a commotion.

"Make way for us to get out on deck, Clackett!" called Matt. "If she's the *Seminole*, I want to speak her."

Matt, Speake, Clackett and Ysabel clustered on the forward deck near the conning tower.

"Get the code book and the signal flags and the binoculars," cried Matt. "She's got signals going up at her gaff and wants to talk to us."

Speake went below for the required articles and, after fifteen minutes of study and work, Matt and his friends learned, to their surprise, that the *Seminole* had put in at Belize the day before and had been sent by the American consul to find the submarine. There was so much to be said that signal flags could not convey that the cruiser hove to and had the *Grampus* come around under her lee.

In this manner the submarine was able to come quite close—so close that Matt and Dick could see their tow-haired chum on the cruiser's bridge. Carl picked up a megaphone and hurled the following at his friends:

"Ah, dere, bards! How you vas? You t'ink id vas some shmardness to run away from me, eh? Vell, I haf been having some hot dimes so vell as you. Dere is anodder seat oof drouple pesides Bort Lifingston und der——"

Just there the captain grabbed the trumpet out of Carl's hands to do a little talking that amounted to something.

"We've started for the Izaral River to look for you," called the captain.

"How did you know where we had gone?" asked Matt.

"Don Ramon Ortega furnished the clue to the American consul at Belize."

"Where did Don Ramon get the clue?"

"Your Dutch pard helped—but he'll tell you about that later. What's the matter with your periscope?"

"Bombarded by revolutionists."

"Great Scott! Where?"

"Off Port Livingston."

"If those fellows to the south don't capture that little scoundrel, Pitou, before long, some of the bigger nations ought to interfere."

"He's captured," said Matt.

"Is that so? I didn't think Mendez would ever do it."

"He didn't. We're the ones!"

"Well, well! How did you manage?"

"The general got tangled up in his spurs, and before he could get clear we snaked him below decks."

A roar of laughter came through the cruiser's megaphone.

"He's not the only prisoner we've got," went on Matt. "Fingal is below!"

"Bully! We want him. Perhaps we had better take all your prisoners, eh?"

"We'd like to get rid of them."

"Well, stay where you are and we'll send a boat."

"You mustn't let Pedro go, Matt!" exclaimed Ysabel.

"That's so," said Matt. "Suppose you go down, little girl, and set Pedro free. Send him to the torpedo room and tell him to wait there until the cruiser is gone."

Ysabel vanished into the tower.

Meanwhile the cruiser had been clearing away a boat. When she hove alongside the submarine, Carl Pretzel, wearing a grin that could have been tied behind his ears, was sitting in the bow.

"I vill go mit you part oof dis groose, anyvay," he whooped. "Drow some lines so dot I may come apoard."

A line was thrown and Carl was heaved from the rocking rowboat to the submarine's deck. He threw his arms around Matt and almost hugged him over the side of the *Grampus*.

"I vas so habby as I don'd know!" he bubbled. "I t'ought you vas gone for goot, und dot I don'd vas going to see you some more. Dere iss a lod to dell, I bed you, und——"

"We haven't time to tell anything just now, Carl," said Matt. "As soon as we get rid of our prisoners we'll have a little leisure."

Carl restrained himself, assisted in the work of getting the prisoners up and transferred, and then watched while the launch pulled back to the cruiser with its melancholy load.

"What will you do with Pitou, captain?" called Matt through his megaphone.

"Turn him over to the government of that country down there to be punished for running off the American consul, and for his many other outrages against peaceable Americans."

"What do you think the government will do with him?"

"Firing squad at sunrise," was the laconic response.

"What about Fingal?"

"Our country will take care of him. He'll make a good cellmate for his brother, Jim Sixty. Sorry you didn't capture Don Carlos Valdez. The governor at Belize would like to lay hands on him. He made an unprovoked attack on the Spanish consul, and, if caught, would do time for it."

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By that time the launch had got back to the ship's side, and Matt, bidding the captain of the cruiser a hearty good-by, started the *Grampus* onward toward Belize.

Speake took the wheel for a while, and the three chums were able to enjoy a quiet little talk together. While they were at it, the door of the prison room opened and Ysabel Sixty stepped out. Carl almost fell off his seat.

"Iss dot a shpook vat I see?" he mumbled, staring at the girl, "oder iss id Miss Sixdy, der peaudiful maiten vat I know so vell?"

"Don't be foolish, Carl," smiled Ysabel.

"Foolishness iss natural mit me—I vas porn dot vay. I see somepody on der teck oof der supmarine, ven ve first come glose, und I t'ought id looked like you in der face, aber dose poy's clothes make some greadt shanges. How id vas, anyhow?"

"Look here, Carl," said Matt, "did you borrow a guitar from a fellow at the hotel the night the submarine left Belize?"

Carl proceeded to work up quite a temper.

"You bed you!" he cried, "und vat you t'ink? Dot feller vas some shkinflinds. He make me pay six tollar for dot kiddar! Yah, so helup me! Vy, I ged him for two tollar by any shdore in der Unidet Shdates vat I know. Dot's right. Six tollar! Dot's vat he make me pay."

"What happened to the guitar?"

"Vell, I hit some pulltogs mit id offer der headt, und dot kiddar vas proke in a lod oof bieces."

"How did you come to smash the guitar like that?"

"A fellar set der tog on me."

"Why?"

"Pecause I vas singing some songs unter a vinder oof a house vere I made some misdake. You see," Carl explained, "I t'ought id vas Miss Sixdy's house, aber I vasn't far enough down der shdreed und aroundt der gorner. It vas der house oof a feller vat hat a cross tisposition. He pour vater on my headt, und set der tog on me, und I haf plendy oof drouples. Aber oof id hatn't peen for dot, Matt, I vouldn't haf found der don, und vouldn't haf learned vat he hat to say."

"Tell us about that, Carl," said Matt.

Thereupon Carl turned loose and told all about his disastrous serenade, and how he climbed into the premises of Don Ramon Ortega, found the don bound and gagged in his sitting room, released him, and then hurried with him to the hotel to find Matt, and then to the landing, only to discover that the submarine had left the harbor.

"Afder dot," proceeded Carl, "der gonsul vas der feller for us. He say dot der *Seminole* vould be in der harpor in der morning, und dot he vould haf her go und look for der supmarine und Modor Matt. Und dot vas vat he dit, und py shinks I vent along mit meinseluf. Now, den, you fellers shpin some yarns und dell me all aboutt eferyding. I vant id all, py shinks, und mit nodding lefdt outd."

Carl got every detail, and by the time the boys were through straightening the various events out in his mind, Speake was ringing the motor-room jingler for less speed, and signaling for anchors.

"Belize!" he called. "We're at our old berth. Cut out the talk, down there, and make ready to go ashore. Let Carl and Dick be the anchor watch, Matt, for you know that Clackett, Gaines and I have business with Captain Nemo, Jr."

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

Captain Nemo, Jr., made an astonishing rally during the night the *Grampus* was creeping slowly up the shore of British Honduras. He awoke from a refreshing slumber, sound of mind and with an optimistic outlook on life which boded good things for Speake, Gaines and Clackett.

The doctor, when he called, shook his hand in congratulation.

"You are doing better than I dared to hope, captain," said he.

"Can I talk business, doctor?" asked the captain.

"As much as you like. Keep on with the same medicine, Cassidy," the doctor added to the mate; "I don't think we can improve on that."

As soon as the doctor had gone, Cassidy made a confession which he had been keeping stored away in his mind for several days. It was a confession of his treachery toward Motor Matt and the rest of his mates aboard the *Grampus* during the other cruise south to rescue the American consul.

Cassidy did not spare himself, but told the astonishing facts fully and in detail.

Captain Nemo, Jr., listened in pained surprise. For several minutes after Cassidy finished he did not speak.

"If you're going to begin drinking again, Cassidy," said the captain, "I suppose we ought to part company."

"I've taken my last drink," declared Cassidy.

"Do you mean it?"

"I do."

"And Motor Matt, on his way back from the River Izaral, put you back in the ship as mate?"

"Yes."

"Well, whatever Motor Matt does is good enough for me. If you were put there as mate, then you stay there."

"Thank you, sir," said Cassidy, shaking his captain's hand.

At that moment a rap fell on the door. Cassidy opened it, and Gaines, Speake, Clackett and Motor Matt walked into the room.

"Well, well, Matt!" cried Captain Nemo, Jr., his face brightening wonderfully at sight of the young motorist, "this is a pleasure, I must say! You've brought the entire crew of the *Grampus* with you, eh?"

"Not quite all of them," laughed Matt. "Cassidy was here, taking care of you, and we left Dick and Carl aboard for an anchor watch."

"You fellows act as though you had something on your minds," observed the captain, giving the three members of the crew a curious look.

"That's what we have, sir," answered Gaines. "We have a confession to make."

"Confession!" muttered the captain. "This seems to be my morning for hearing confessions. Well, go ahead."

Thereupon Speake, Gaines and Clackett, on their part, told the captain exactly what had taken place during this second trip to the River Izaral. Captain Nemo, Jr., was dumfounded. Pursing his thin lips, he leaned back in his chair and watched and listened with the utmost attention.

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"So," said he cuttingly, when the recital was done, "Motor Matt refused to take my boat south, in response to the request of this scoundrelly don, and you locked Matt and Dick in the storage room of the submarine and went off whether they would or no! And you called Matt out of the room to fix the motor and keep the boat from going on the reefs; and you picked up a supposedly shipwrecked crew out of a boat, and the crew turned on you and captured the *Grampus*; and, with the aid of Miss Sixty, Motor Matt and his friends recovered the boat, captured Fingal, Pitou and some others, and turned them over to the cruiser *Seminole*—all of which would not have happened had not you, Speake, Gaines and Clackett acted in an insubordinate and mutinous manner. What had I ought to do with them, Matt?"

"They behaved finely during the fighting and while we were running down the river, past the fort," replied Matt, "so I don't think they should be dealt with very severely, captain."

"You're too easy with them, Matt! Look at the trouble they caused you!"

"But see what good luck came out of it, captain. We captured Pitou and Fingal."

"That isn't the best thing that has come out of it, Matt," remarked the captain. "The best thing for me is the fact that this mutinous conduct of Speake, Clackett and Gaines proves, more than ever, that you are always to be depended on. You refused to sail away on a wild-goose chase after listening to a plausible story told by this rascally don, and——"

"I took a good deal of stock in the story at the time it was told, captain," said Matt.

"That may be; but you didn't let your own desires override what you conceived to be your duty. There would have been no merit in your act, for you, if you had not wanted to go with the don, but yet allowed your idea of duty to me hold you back. I am much obliged to you, Speake, Gaines and Clackett, for affording me this added proof that my confidence in Motor Matt is not misplaced. But, if I ever hear of any further mutiny on the *Grampus*, there will be something happen which none of you will ever forget.

"The U. S. cruiser *Seminole* is in the harbor, and I am positive that her captain bears some news for me of a very important nature. This may make it necessary for a call to be made upon the officers and crew of the *Grampus* for some further work. I cannot tell yet as to that. If so it turns out, then your commanding officer will be Motor Matt. Now leave me, all of you, for I have both listened and talked too much, and I am beginning to feel tired. Have the periscope ball and mast repaired, Matt, as soon as possible, and call and see me to-night."

As Matt left the house and made his way along the street, he came suddenly upon Ysabel Sixty,

again clad in her feminine clothes and looking like the Ysabel he used to know of old.

"You did not stay long at home, Ysabel," smiled Matt.

"I couldn't," she answered. "I wanted to find out what your plans were, and how long you expect to remain in Belize."

"That's all in doubt, as yet. I am to call on Captain Nemo, Jr., to-night, and perhaps he will be able to tell me something about future plans."

"I hope," and there was a tremulous earnestness in the girl's words, "that you are not going to leave Belize very soon."

"I should like to stay here a little while, Ysabel, myself," said Matt.

Her face brightened.

"And if you are here for a while, you will come often and see me?"

"You may depend upon it, little girl," said Matt, taking her hand cordially. "I shall never forget this last experience of yours, and how you undertook an exceedingly risky venture solely to be of aid to me."

There was a gentleman waiting for a word with Matt, and Ysabel, with a glad smile, turned away in the direction of home.

"Señor Motor Matt?" asked the gentleman, who had been waiting for Ysabel to finish her talk with Matt.

"The same, sir," replied Matt.

"I, my boy, am Don Ramon Ortega, the Spanish consul in Belize. I wish to beg your pardon for the serious misadventures into which you were plunged through the unwarranted use of my name by that unmitigated scoundrel, Don Carlos Valdez."

"You were not to blame for that, don."

"Perhaps not, but I feel keenly the trouble which my name—always an honorable one—has caused you. Some time, when my family return from Mexico, I shall hope to see you at my home as an honored guest. Will you come?"

"Certainly, sir, if I am in Belize."

"I thank you, señor," said the don; and then, with a courtly bow, he passed on.

The king of the motor boys hardly knew whether to laugh or look sober; but when he reflected on how the rascally Don Carlos had juggled with the Spanish consul's name, and used it for base purposes, he felt that perhaps the consul was right in taking the matter so much to heart.

That evening, Pedro was taken ashore and lodged in the house of Ysabel's relatives. The next day he took passage to Cuba, and forever cut himself adrift from revolutions and the filibusters who foster them.

THE END.

THE NEXT NUMBER (18) WILL CONTAIN

Motor Matt in Brazil;

OR,

UNDER THE AMAZON.

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PHILIP'S WAY.

By HORATIO ALGER, Jr.

"I mean to have a jolly time to-morrow, Phil," said Tom Chester. "I expect it will cost me a cool fifty dollars."

"What are your plans, that require so much expense?" asked Philip Marden.

"Being New Year's Day, I must make calls on my friends, you know. I've got about fifty places chalked down for visits. I mean to go in style, and so, have engaged a carriage all to myself for the day. That'll cost ten dollars, and perhaps more. Then in the evening I'm going to give a little supper to half a dozen friends. Will you be one of the number?"

"Thank you, I have promised to spend the evening with my aunt and cousin."

"Oh, they'll let you off."

"No doubt, but they would be disappointed, and I would rather not disappoint them. So, with many thanks, I must decline your kind invitation."

"I am sorry," said Tom, but he didn't care much really. The truth was that Philip was a little too sober and sedate to suit his taste, and the supper was likely to be a convivial one.

"So Tom is going to spend fifty dollars in pleasure," thought Philip. "Well, he can afford it for once, so far as money goes, and so can I. I will do it, too, only it may be that our ideas of pleasure will differ somewhat. I shall have a few calls to make also."

The next morning Tom set out on his tour of calls. He had a "jolly" time, as he expected, and drank wine at so many different places that his head got a little confused by the middle of the afternoon.

About ten o'clock Philip set out also, but in a less stylish manner. He paid five cents for a ride in the horse cars, getting out in a locality very far from fashionable. He stopped before a shabby, three-story house, and ringing the bell, inquired for Mrs. Lucas.

"Third floor, front, right-hand side," was the direction.

The staircase was as shabby as the exterior of the house. Philip soon stood on the third landing, and after a little pause, knocked at the door. It was opened by a pale, sickly-looking woman, who looked at him inquiringly.

"Is this Mrs. Lucas?" asked the young man.

"Yes, sir," said she inquiringly.

"My name is Marden. You made me some shirts lately."

"Yes, sir. I hope they fitted."

"Excellently."

"I am glad of it. Perhaps he has some more work for me!" thought the poor woman.

"I am afraid you find it hard work to get along in these days of high prices," said Philip, surveying the scantily furnished apartment.

"I do, indeed, sir," said Mrs. Lucas, sighing. "Rent and provisions are very high, and I can't always get work. I have a little girl of ten—she is out just now—but she cannot do much. I try to keep her at school, but I find it hard to keep her in decent clothing. It was a great help to me, the money I received for making your shirts."

"I shall have some more work soon," said Philip kindly. "Meanwhile will you accept this note? I hope it will be of service."

"Ten dollars!" exclaimed Mrs. Lucas in surprise. "You have made a mistake, sir. Have you not?"

"Not at all."

"Ah, sir, you don't know how much good it will do me," said the poor woman, her face lighted up

with pleasure. "Thank you many times for your great kindness."

"You are quite welcome, Mrs. Lucas. It is New Year's Day, you know—I wish you a Happy New Year."

"Indeed, sir, you have done much to make it so."

There was a warm glow at Philip's heart as he went out into the street. His call had been a pleasant one.

Two or three blocks brought him to another tenement house, more shabby and dilapidated than the one he had left.

"I think it is No. 17, rear house," he said.

He passed through a narrow passage, and emerged into a dark court about fifteen feet square, swarming with little children, and inquired of the first one that attracted his attention, "Does Mrs. Flaherty live here?"

"Yes, sir," said the little girl addressed, "she's my mother."

"Will you show me her room?"

Little Bridget Flaherty led the way upstairs, a little surprised at the appearance of her mother's visitor, and opened the door of a dirty room without a carpet.

Mrs. Flaherty rose in surprise, recognizing her visitor.

"It's Mr. Marden, shure," she said. "And how did you find the way, sir?"

"I happened to remember the street and number, Mrs. Flaherty."

"I hope there's nothing wrong about the clothes, sir?"

"Not at all; but I'm out making my New Year's calls."

"And it's an honor, indade, that you should call on me. Sit down, sir, if you please."

And she cleared off a chair, wiping it with her apron to insure cleanliness.

Philip chatted with her five minutes, inquiring about her family and circumstances. As he rose to go he took out ten dollars and handed it to her.

"Is it for me?" she asked incredulously.

"Yes, Mrs. Flaherty, a New Year's gift."

I should hardly venture to reproduce the grateful thanks which were showered upon Philip by the enthusiastic recipient of his gift, and how she invoked all the saints in the calendar to shield him from harm and fill his path with blessings.

Philip next went to a bookstore, and purchased a series of juveniles illustrated with bright, attractive pictures, and taking the horse cars again was landed near a quiet little street of no pretensions as regards fashion. He ascended the steps of a plain, wooden house of two stories, and rang the bell. It was the house of a widow, who made a scanty living by keeping boarders of an humble class. She had one boy of twelve, bright and athirst for knowledge, but an invalid, and not strong enough to go to school. There was nothing the lad loved like reading, but his mother could not afford to buy him books, and her friends were not many of them book owners. So he used to lie day after day on the old lounge, finding the hours weary and monotonous.

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It was his mother who opened the door.

"Jimmy will be so glad to see you, Mr. Marden," she said. "You'll find him on the sofa, as usual."

"Does he get no better?"

"Not that I can see. Poor boy, he finds the time pass very heavily."

"I've brought him some books that will while away the hours."

"How kind you are! He will be beside himself with joy."

She led the way into a small room, with a faded carpet on the floor. A young boy with a merry look on his pale face lay on a lounge. He lifted his eyes, and they brightened as they met the gaze of the visitor.

"Oh, Mr. Marden, I'm so glad to see you!" he exclaimed.

"And I am glad to see you, Jimmy—a Happy New Year to you!"

"And you also, Mr. Marden."

"Thank you, Jimmy. Now, what do you think I have got in this big bundle?"

"Is it books?" asked the boy eagerly.

"Yes, Jimmy, you have guessed right. Six new books, and all for you."

"All for me. Oh, how kind you are! Do open them quick."

Smiling at the boy's impatience, Philip cut the string with his penknife, and displayed six handsomely bound volumes, over which Jimmy was soon poring with delight.

"Then you like them, Jimmy?"

"Oh, so much. There was nothing which I should have liked as well. What a good man you are,

Mr. Marden. I don't deserve it."

"I like to make people happy, Jimmy, that is all."

"And you have made me very happy, sir," said the boy, his face lighting up with gratitude. "My life has been so dull sometimes."

"Let us hope it will be brighter in future."

"I think it will, Mr. Marden, thanks to you."

Philip called at three other places, where he dispensed timely and welcome gifts. We need not follow him. It is enough to say that each visit carried sunshine with it and left happiness behind it. When the last call had been made he found that he had expended just fifty dollars, but he felt richer without it.

The next morning the two young men met at their place of business, for both were employed in the same mercantile establishment. Tom Chester was heavy-eyed, and looked as if he had been up all night. Philip's eye was bright, and his nerves were as steady as usual.

"Did you have a good time, Tom?" asked Philip.

"Capital! I made all my calls, and had a jolly supper—to top off with. Didn't get into bed till four this morning. I feel rather seedy to-day, that's a fact. But New Year's Day only comes once a year."

"True; how much did it cost you?"

"Fifty dollars. I suppose you, like a prudent boy, saved your money?"

"There you are mistaken. I spent fifty dollars, also."

"You did!" exclaimed his friend in astonishment. "How was that?"

"In making people happy."

"I don't understand you."

Philip gave a brief outline of what he had done.

"You're a strange fellow," said Tom Chester. "Who'd ever have thought of spending New Year's Day in that way?"

"A great many, I hope. Depend upon it. Tom, the best way to secure happiness yourself is to promote the happiness of others. I wouldn't exchange my investment for yours."

Dear reader, I have sketched two ways of spending the day that ushers in the New Year. Tom Chester spent his time and money in selfish gratification. Philip devoted his to nobler uses. Which do you prefer?

PERILOUS OCCUPATIONS.

Sealskins are a costly commodity, in more ways than one. More perilous than almost any other mentionable pursuit, seal-hunting is yearly exacting a greater penalty in human lives than it ever did before. Hunted for generations, the seals have become more wary, and year by year they retire farther and farther into the well-nigh inaccessible ice of the highest northern latitudes.

It is not sport, this hunting the seal from the icy, storm-swept coast of Newfoundland; it is toil, whereby in part the hardy Newfoundlander wins his scanty measure of bread, and the chase is beset with multitudinous and unforeseen perils.

The wind gathers the ice into floes, and jams it against the coast, an immeasurable, jagged expanse of it, interspersed with plains; then the Newfoundlander takes his gaff and his food and his goggles, and sets out from his little harbor, starting at midnight that he may come up with the pack at dawn. But the wind which sweeps in the ice inevitably sweeps it out again, without warning, in an hour, or a day, or a week; nor does it pause to consider the situation of the men who are twenty miles offshore. It veers and freshens, and drives the whole mass, grinding and heaving, far out to sea, where it disperses it into its separate fragments.

The lives of the hunters depend upon the watchfulness of the attenuated line of lookouts, from the women on the headland to the first sentinel within signaling distance. But tragedies occur notwithstanding. Some years ago of five sealing-schooners that penetrated the drift ice then blocking the northernmost extremity of Baffin's Bay one only returned. Two or three years previously, at Kedy, near Cape Voronoff, Siberia, three hundred Russian sealers, at work upon an ice-floe, were driven northward into the frozen ocean, owing to the sudden springing up of a southerly gale, and were never heard of again.

At St. Paul's Island, one of the Pribyloff group, off the coast of Alaska, are the graves of seventy odd sealers, found frozen stiff and stark on an ice-floe that drifted ashore one night.

As with sealskins, so with pearls. The pearl-diver's occupation is among the most dangerous known. Generally either an Arab or a full-blooded negro, he is invariably a man of splendid physique and indomitable courage. Long practise has enabled him to remain under water for two minutes at a time without apparent inconvenience. Nevertheless, the life of a professional pearl-diver is not considered by experts to be worth more than six or seven years' purchase.

Many succumb every season to a strange and deadly form of paralysis. Many more are eaten by sharks, drowned through getting their feet entangled in weeds, caught in crevices in the rocks while exploring the depths of the sea, or seized and devoured quickly by shoals of gigantic octopi—those ghouls of the ocean—which invariably infest the fishing-grounds.

It is estimated that of the hundreds of egret-hunters who each year set out for the heronries of Yucatan, a full ten per cent. never return. Deep in the deadly, fever-laden recesses of the forest swamps of the hinterland these beautiful birds breed. The hunter pursues them remorselessly, his life in his hand, for the snow-white tail-feathers are worth from five to eight guineas.

The climate is deadly. The atmosphere is saturated with miasma and infected with myriads of poisonous insects. Alligators lurk, too, in the black slime of the tortuous bayous, which constitute the only means of inter-communication. An egret-hunter who runs short of ammunition or quinin simply lies down in the bottom of his canoe and waits for death. Usually he has not long to wait. On the average, for every half-dozen aigrettes—one may see hundreds being worn any afternoon in Bond Street—a man's life has been sacrificed.

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Hardly less perilous, if any, is the orchid-hunter's profession. Orchids love warmth and moisture, and warmth and moisture in tropical countries are synonymous with miasma and fever. Wild animals also and poisonous serpents abound in the umbrageous depths wherein the rarer varieties lie hidden. Not infrequently, too, the collector has to seek his specimens among savages or semicivilized peoples, who strongly resent his intrusion into their midst.

One firm of orchid-importers reported a year or two ago that they had had five collectors killed in as many months by the wild tribesmen of the Western Himalayan slopes; while other three, even more unfortunate, were made prisoners and carried off to undergo the nameless horrors which have from time immemorial been characteristic of Central Asian slavery.

Rubber is purchased at a terrible price. The mortality in the State of Amazonias, in Brazil, corresponds with almost diabolical exactness to the number of tons of rubber produced. In fact, it is said each ton costs a human life, and although there are no such horribly fiendish atrocities in Brazil as has been charged against the Congo, it is nevertheless true that the laborers who are brought into the rubber-fields do not average more than three years of life; and are, if not in law, at least in fact, subjected to hardships never known or endured by the slaves in the United States, or even by the slaves in the coffee countries of Brazil.

Of nearly seven million pounds of camphor obtained annually, Formosa produces all but about six hundred thousand pounds, but very few people have the faintest conception of the dangers to which Japanese camphor collectors are exposed in the Formosa hills when gathering this product. Up to the present, in fact, the Japanese have found it impossible to control the head-hunting savages of the hills, and the development of this valuable industry depends equally upon the success of their measures for encountering and suppressing these determined and as yet unconquered tribes.

Formosa, which is shaped somewhat like a huge sole, has a rugged, mountainous back-bone, in which Mount Morrison towers into the clouds to a height of twelve thousand feet. Throughout the wild penitralia of these mountains lurk a number of warlike tribes of varying strength, whose lives are devoted to hunting, fishing, and fighting with one another, their one community of interest being a passionate ardor in the collection of human heads, whether of their tribal enemies or of the Chinese coolies who live on the verge of the hills or are engaged in the camphor industry.

The tree from which camphor is obtained is a species of laurel indigenous to Formosa, and it is on the mountains overrun by these terrible hordes of head-hunters that the extensive forests from which practically the world draws its supply of camphor are found.

POI THEIR STAFF OF LIFE.

What bread is to the American or European poi is to the native Hawaiian. No meal is complete without it, and for the great majority of the natives it forms the principal article of diet.

Poi is made from a tuberous root about the size of a large sweet potato. It is first baked and afterward pounded up with water until a smooth paste is obtained, much resembling a wheat flour paste, except that the color is a pale pink or purple.

This paste is allowed to ferment slightly and is then ready for use. Formerly each family prepared its own poi, the work being done by the men, as in fact were most other cooking operations. Poi factories, in which machinery grinds and mixes the material, have largely supplanted the old method.

Many of the white residents of the islands eat poi to almost the extent of the natives, but the taste is largely acquired and strangers seldom care for it. Poi has a high food value, and since it formed the principal food of the old Hawaiians some persons credit it with the splendid physical development of the race.

Poi was always eaten from wooden bowls or calabashes and was conveyed to the mouth by the fingers, one, two or three being employed according to the consistency of the food, which fact establishes a designation of one, two or three finger poi. White poi eaters now usually employ a

fork or spoon in lieu of fingers, although it is still common even in the highest families to give native dinners or "luaus" at which knives and forks are taboo and fingers only used.

There is as much etiquette among the Hawaiians in eating with the fingers as with modern table implements, and the graceful motion by which a portion of poi is twisted up on the fingers and transferred to the mouth would not shock the sensibilities of the most refined. An invitation to a real luau at which poi, baked pig, fish baked in leaves and cocoanut in various forms were the chief features of the menu is an experience which every visitor to Hawaii sincerely covets.

A CITY BEGUN ON A RAFT.

The story of the founding of the City of Mexico is one of the most extraordinary tales in history. It happened in 1325, at least, it began a long time before that, but was an accomplished fact about 600 years ago.

In the first place, imagine an almost inaccessible mountain, crowned with a valley at the height of 8,000 feet above the level of the sea. In the centre of this valley was an immense lake. When the Aztecs arrived, led by the priests of the God of War, they found it in the possession of hostile tribes.

For that reason, and because the priests declared that in a certain part of the lake where there stood an elevation of stones an eagle had been seen devouring a serpent, they began the construction of the city on this spot, immediately over the deepest waters of the lake. There had long existed a prophecy among the Aztecs that their wanderings would end when they should have reached a place where the priests would behold an eagle resting on a cactus plant, devouring a serpent.

Confident that they had found the spot ordained to be their abiding home, they began to construct rafts of the trunks of trees, covering them with thick layers of earth, upon which they built rude huts of more or less solidity. Groups of dwellings soon began to form themselves in regular order, thus determining the primitive streets of the new city.

They also constructed boats and oars of different sizes useful in peace and war, and while certain of their number occupied themselves in defending their homes and brethren from the onslaughts of hostile tribes, others continued to improve and enlarge the new city. Gradually the lake was filled up, and terraces arose, one after another, in the place once occupied by the deep waters.

This was in itself a herculean labor, unsurpassed in ingenuity and durability by any similar work of ancient or modern times. Upon the first of these terraces was constructed the Teocalli, or sacrificial temple. It was begun in 1216 and not completed until 1325, a period of 109 years, from which time may be dated the official foundation of Tenochtitlan, to-day the modern City of Mexico.

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Added table of contents.

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Some inconsistent hyphenation (i.e. "war-like" vs. "warlike") retained from the original.

Page 14, changed "Ortera" to "Ortega" ("can't understand this Don Ramon Ortega").

Page 16, corrected "action" to "actions" in "The boy's actions were peculiar."

Page 26, changed "Ysabelle" to "Ysabel" ("Ysabel vanished into the tower").

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MOTOR MATT'S CLOSE CALL; OR, THE
SNARE OF DON CARLOS ***

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