

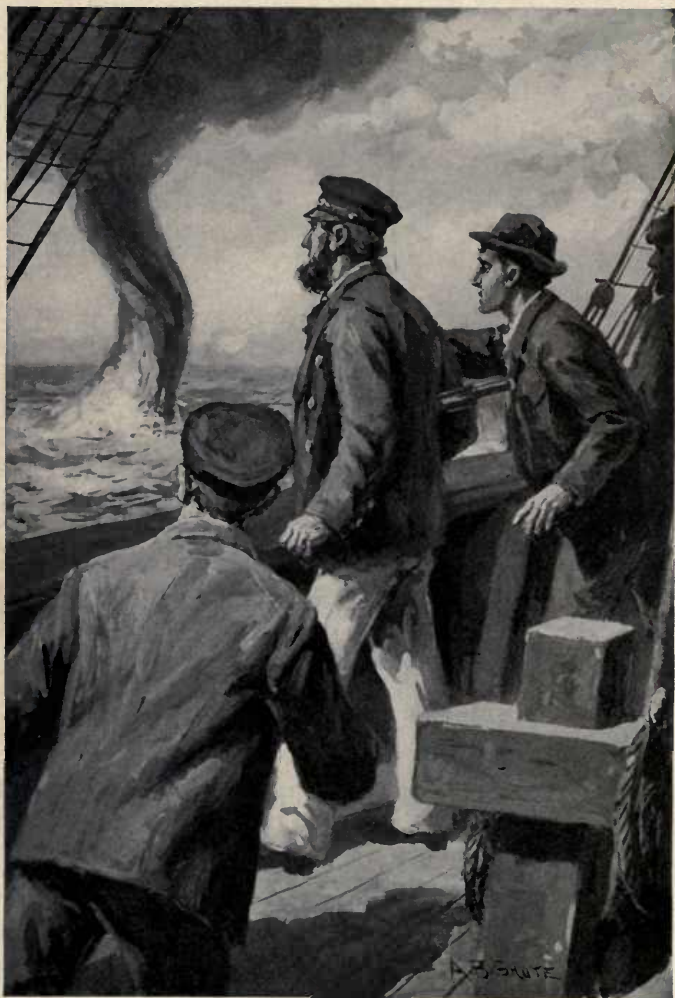
AT THE FALL OF PORT ARTHUR

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EDWARD STRATEMEYER

123





“It is coming this way!” yelled Larry.— Page 84.

Soldiers of Fortune Series

AT THE FALL OF PORT ARTHUR

OR

A YOUNG AMERICAN IN THE JAPANESE NAVY

BY

EDWARD STRATEMEYER

Author of "Under the Mikado's Flag," "On to Peking," "Two Young
Lumbermen," "Old Glory Series," "Colonial Series,"
"Pan-American Series," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY A. B. SHUTE



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AT THE FALL OF PORT ARTHUR

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PREFACE

“AT THE FALL OF PORT ARTHUR” is a complete tale in itself, but forms the third volume in a line issued under the general title of “Soldiers of Fortune Series.”

The story relates primarily the adventures of Larry Russell and his old-time sea chum, Luke Striker, already well known to the readers of my “Old Glory Series.” Larry and Luke are aboard of their old ship, the *Columbia*, bound from Manila to Nagasaki, with a cargo designed for the Japanese Government. This is during the war between Russia and Japan, and when close to the Japanese coast the schooner is sighted by a Russian warship and made a prize of war.

As prisoners both Larry and Luke see something of life in the Russian navy. When close to Vladivostok, the Russian warship falls in with several ships of the Japanese fleet, and after a thrilling sea-fight surrenders with her prize. This brings Larry and Luke before Admiral Togo, and as Larry's brother Ben, with their mutual friend, Gilbert Pennington, is already in the Japanese army, Larry enters the

Japanese navy and Luke follows suit. The siege and bombardment of Port Arthur are at their height; and the particulars are given of many battles both on the sea and on land, leading up to the ultimate surrender of that brave Russian commander, General Stoessel, and the fall of the city. By this surrender the Japanese obtained many thousands of prisoners of war, hundreds of cannon, with large quantities of ammunition, and several scores of vessels, useful for either fighting purposes or as transports. Moreover, this victory placed the entire southern portion of Manchuria under Japanese control, giving the army untrammelled use of the railroad running from Port Arthur to Liao-Yang, a city on the road to Mukden, captured some time before, as already related in another volume of this series, entitled "Under the Mikado's Flag."

As I have mentioned in a previous work, it is as yet impossible to state what the outcome of this terrific conflict will be. So far victory has perched largely upon the standard of Japan. The Russian navy has been practically shattered and its army fought to a standstill. The cost of the war has been tremendous to both countries. Countless thousands of lives have already been sacrificed. Would that peace were soon at hand!

Again I thank my young friends for their appreciation of my former stories. May the present tale fulfill every reasonable expectation.

EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

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CHAPTER I

LARRY AND HIS FRIENDS

"UNLESS I miss my guess, Luke, we are going to have a storm."

"Jest what I was thinking, Larry. And when it comes I allow as how it will be putty heavy," replied Luke Striker, casting an eye to the westward, where a small dark cloud was beginning to show above the horizon.

"Well, we can't expect fine weather all the time," went on Larry Russell, inspecting the cloud with equal interest. "We want some wind anyway," he added. "We are not making this return trip to Nagasaki nearly as fast as we made the trip to Manila."

Luke Striker, a bronzed and weather-beaten Yankee sailor, rubbed his chin reflectively. "I was jest thinking o' the day I spied the old *Columbia* in Manila harbor," he said, meditatively. "Tell ye,

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Larry, the sight 'most struck me dumb. 'The *Columbia*,' sez I to myself. An' then I thought I must be a-dreamin'. I wanted to find this ship ag'in in the worst way."

"The ship certainly seems like a home to me, Luke—and I reckon she always will seem that way. I've traveled a good many miles in her, since I first struck her at Honolulu in the Hawaiian Islands," responded Larry Russell.

"Yes—both of us have. But we never took no trip like this afore—carryin' a cargo for the Japanese Government, with that government at war with Russia." Luke Striker lowered his voice. "What's the outlook? Does the old man reckon to fall in with a Russian warship afore we can reach Nagasaki?"

"Hush, Luke; you mustn't mention our cargo," came from Larry Russell, hastily.

"I ain't mentionin' it to anybody but you."

"Captain Ponsberry is in hopes that we shall not meet any Russian warships."

"But what if we do?"

"Then we shall have to show our heels as best we can."

"A sailing vessel can't show much o' a pair o' heels to a man-o'-war."

"That is true."

"I suppose, if the *Columbia* was overhauled by a Russian warship, they'd consider us a prize of war; wouldn't they?" continued the old Yankee sailor.

"They would, unless Captain Ponsberry could get out of it in some way."

"How do you think he might get out of it?"

"Well, you must remember that our cargo doesn't belong to the Japanese Government yet. We are carrying it from Manila to Nagasaki for the Richmond Importing Company. The Russians would have to prove their case against us before they could claim the schooner as a legitimate prize of war."

"I see. Well, I reckon as how them Russians would do 'most anything to square accounts with the Japs. So far, accordin' to my notions, they have been losin' ground right along in this war."

"Yes, and they'll lose more before the Japs are through with 'em, Luke. But that storm is coming up fast," went on Larry Russell, with another examination of the black cloud. "I'll have to tell the captain. If we don't shorten sail it may do us some damage."

With the last-mentioned remark Larry Russell walked aft, toward the companionway of the *Columbia*, a staunch three-masted schooner that hailed from Gloucester. He was second mate of the craft

and as such it was now his duty to inform Captain Nat Ponsberry that a storm was approaching.

To those of my young friends who have read "Under Dewey at Manila" and other volumes of the "Old Glory Series" Larry Russell needs no introduction. He was one of three brothers, who, left in the charge of a miserly step-uncle, had thought it best to go away from home and seek fortune in various parts of the globe. Larry had drifted to San Francisco and then to Honolulu, where he had fallen in with Captain Nat Ponsberry and the *Columbia*, as already mentioned. He, with his sailor friend, Luke Striker, had been cast away, and while adrift on the Pacific had been picked up by the Asiatic Squadron under Commodore (afterward Admiral) Dewey, to serve with honor during the memorable battle of Manila Bay.

Since those days a great many things had occurred to the Russell boys. Ben, the oldest of the three, had served as a young volunteer in Cuba during the advance on Santiago, and as an officer with the army in the Philippines, and Walter, the third brother, had served in the navy in Cuban waters and elsewhere. In the meantime the miserly step-uncle had reformed, and now thought "his three boys," as he called them, "the best young fellers in all America, barrin' none!"

Larry Russell was a natural sailor, and when his term in the navy came to an end he could not bear to think of giving up the sea. He heard that his old ship was bound for a trip to Japan and other ports, and at once communicated with Captain Ponsberry, with the result that he became second mate of the schooner, the first mate being, as of old, Tom Grandon, a personal friend of Captain Ponsberry.

At this time Walter Russell had gone into business, and was doing remarkably well. But Ben was doing nothing, and Larry persuaded his oldest brother to come aboard the ship at Manila, for the trip to Nagasaki and Port Arthur. This was just at the outbreak of the war between Russia and Japan, but the brothers at that time knew nothing about the tremendous conflict so close at hand.

The *Columbia* was carrying a cargo for the Richmond Importing Company, represented in Japan and China by Gilbert Pennington, who had served with Ben Russell in our army in Cuba and the Philippines. From Manila Gilbert had gone to China, to fight the Boxers, as already described in "On to Peking," the first volume of this "Soldiers of Fortune Series." With the end of the Boxer conflict, Lieutenant Pennington, as he had then become, turned from war to business, and soon made a number of

business transactions which were highly gratifying to the company that he represented.

When the *Columbia* arrived at Nagasaki, Captain Ponsberry learned that the war had begun and that to get to Port Arthur—a Russian stronghold in Manchuria—was out of the question. While he was awaiting orders Gilbert Pennington appeared on the scene. Gilbert had had great difficulties in getting away from Port Arthur, having been suspected by the Russian officials of being a spy. He wished to know at once if the ship's cargo was safe.

"As safe as when we left home," had been Captain Ponsberry's reply.

"Good!" answered the young agent, and then he wished to know if anything had been done about selling the goods. Captain Ponsberry replied that he had been ordered to do nothing until he received word from Gilbert. This suited the young representative; and the upshot of the matter was that the cargo, instead of going to a Russian port, was sold to the Japanese Government at a price considerably above the ordinary market value.

Gilbert Pennington was enthusiastic about joining the Japanese army for a campaign in Manchuria and he imparted a large share of this enthusiasm to Ben Russell. As a result both enlisted and became captains in a special command, under a Major

Okopa, who could speak very good English. The part of the army to which they were assigned landed at Chinampo, in Korea, and in the second volume of this series, called "Under the Mikado's Flag," I related the particulars of the crossing of the Yalu River and of the many skirmishes and battles leading up to the terrific ten-days' contest before Liao Yang. During these fights Ben and Gilbert did their full duty as officers, and when the Russians retreated to the North both were well content to take a much-needed rest. But additional struggles were still in store for them, as will be learned in the pages which follow.

At first Larry Russell had been inclined to follow his brother and his friend Gilbert into the Japanese army. But Captain Ponsberry did not wish to lose his services as a second mate, and when it was decided that the *Columbia* should make a quick run to Manila and back, for another cargo for the Japanese Government, he made up his mind to stick to the ship.

The run to Manila from Nagasaki was made without special incident, and, once at the main seaport of the Philippines, Captain Ponsberry lost no time in getting on board the cargo the Richmond Importing Company had ready for him. The cargo was a valuable one and it was calculated that

if rightly sold it would yield the company a profit of five or six thousand dollars.

"You have got to take care and not run into any Russian warship," said the agent of the company at Manila. "If you do you may have a whole lot of trouble in explaining matters to the Russian commander's satisfaction. I see by the reports that the Russians have already held up several English and South American ships."

"I shall keep a sharp lookout for 'em," was Captain Ponsberry's reply.

"And another thing, Captain," went on the agent, in a lower tone; "you want to watch your crew."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't like the looks of two or three of them. For all you know they may be more than willing to expose you—if you fall in with the Russians. Can you trust your first and second mates?"

"I can! They are as honest as myself."

"Then caution them to keep an eye on the hands. One of those fellows looks like a Russian to me—the chap with the heavy black beard."

"You mean Semmel. He says he is a Pole and that he hates the Russians."

"Humph! Well, I saw him talking to a lot of Russians night before last. And when they passed

a Jap the whole crowd jeered at the little brown man."

"Semmel, too?"

"Yes."

"Then I shall watch him," answered Captain Ponsberry, decidedly.

"Do, but don't let him know it. Some of these foreign sailors are ugly when they find out they are being suspected."

"Trust me to manage him," returned the commander of the *Columbia*; and there the talk on the subject came to an end.

CHAPTER II

A STORM ON THE PACIFIC

LARRY found Captain Ponsberry working over a chart on the cabin table, laying out the course of the ship. The commander of the *Columbia* was a bluff, hearty individual and he and the young second mate thought a great deal of each other.

"Well, what is it?" asked the captain, looking up quickly.

"I came to report that a storm is coming up from the west," answered Larry.

"Humph! I was afraid we'd catch it sooner or later. Is it close up yet?"

"It's coming up pretty fast."

Captain Ponsberry said no more, but threw down his parallel rulers and his pencil. Catching up his cap, he mounted to the deck, and the young second mate followed at his heels. The captain gave a long look to the westward and then a gaze around the remainder of the horizon.

"Tell Cal Vincent to call all hands to shorten sail!" he called out to Larry. "Tell 'em to tumble

up quick, too—thet storm ain't none too far off for comfort!"

Larry passed the word to Cal Vincent, who was the boatswain of the *Columbia*, and soon the whistle piped up shrilly, and those who were below or in the fore-castle, came on deck in a hurry. Already the wind was freshening, ruffling up the whitecaps in all directions. The sky, that had been so blue a short while before, became leaden, and the depths of the ocean took on a somber hue. The barometer indicated a great and immediate change.

"Lay aloft there, men!" cried Captain Ponsberry. "Our sails are mostly new and we don't want them ripped up if we can help it. Skip along there, Peterson!" The latter words to a big sailor who was moving across the deck at a snail's pace.

The sailor addressed, scowled. It was not his watch on deck and he hated to have his midday nap disturbed.

"Got a nail in ma boot," he said.

"Well, haul it out—after the sails are trimmed," returned the captain, and then turned to another hand: "Semmel, what's the matter with you?" This to the suspicious-looking sailor with the heavy black beard.

"Nodding," grumbled Semmel, and turned away sulkily.

“Then get a move on, or we may lose a stick as well as a sail,” and there followed a perfect volley of orders in a tone that none of the sailors misunderstood. Up to the yards they crawled like so many monkeys, and soon the creaking of halyard blocks was heard, as the topsails came down. The jib and flying jib were also taken in, and a little later the main-course and the mizzen-course.

“Reckon we can stand the fore-course for a little while longer,” said Captain Ponsberry to Tom Grandon. “What do you think?”

“We can, unless it comes quicker nor it is coming now,” returned the first mate.

“Well, keep an eye on the wind and reef her as soon as it begins to look nasty,” said Captain Ponsberry, and returned to the cabin, to finish his nautical calculations.

The *Columbia* had left the last of the Philippines behind and was headed north through the China Sea toward the lower extremity of Formosa. She was not as new a ship as when Larry had first boarded her at Honolulu, for since that time she had seen half a dozen years of hard service. But Captain Ponsberry was a careful man and believed in making repairs as soon as they were needed, so there was small danger of her opening her seams or going to pieces even in the stiffest of blows. She leaked a little—

the best of ships do that—but a short pumping every morning kept the water at the bottom of the well.

As second mate, it was Larry's duty to see that everything on the deck was "ship-shape," and this was especially necessary when a storm was coming up. He made a tour of the ship, his keen eyes taking in every detail.

As it happened, an hour before he had set the sailor Semmel to work stowing away some odds and ends of rope. He had supposed that this task was long since finished, but now he found the ropes scattered about as before.

"See here, Semmel," he called out, "why didn't you stow away those ropes as I told you?"

"Stow dem away in a leetle vile," answered the sailor with the heavy beard.

"You'll stow them away now," returned Larry, sharply. He did not at all fancy the manner of the hand he was addressing. "I told you to do it an hour ago. We don't want anything loose on deck when this storm hits us."

"Vincent kicked de ropes out dare," growled Semmel. "I had noddin' to do mit 'em."

"That isn't here or there. I told you to stow them away, and I want you to do it. If you don't, I'll have to report you to the captain."

"Oh, I do him!" grumbled Semmel, but he glared at Larry as if he wished to chew the young second mate up. "You put all dare vork on me, hey?" he added, after a pause.

"You've got to do your share of it."

"Humph!" Semmel seemed on the point of saying more, but shut his teeth and began to arrange the ropes in proper order. Larry watched him for a moment and then walked away. As soon as his back was turned the sailor shook his fist at the young second mate.

"You vait!" he muttered. "Chust vait, you Jankee rat!"

The sky kept growing darker, and soon came a puff of wind much heavier than any that had gone before. The *Columbia* had been moving over the waves on an even keel, but now she gave a sudden lurch to starboard.

"Reckon it's time to take them reefs in the fore-course," said Grandon to Larry, and soon the sailors were at work on the sheets, leaving just sufficient canvas up to make the schooner mind her helm. It was hard work, for the sudden gusts made the sail snap and crack like a whip.

So far it had not rained a drop, but now came a sudden downpour, the drops "as big as hen's eggs," to use Luke Striker's manner of describing them.

Then came a flash of lightning out of the western sky, followed by a rumble of thunder.

"This is going to be an old-time storm," was Larry's comment, as he met Luke Striker near the forecabin. "I'll have to get my oilskin out."

Luke already had his raincoat on and soon the young mate was similarly provided. Wind and rain were increasing, and presently there came a flash of lightning and a clap of thunder that made everybody jump. The thunder brought Captain Ponsberry to the deck in a hurry.

"Did that hit us?" he questioned, looking around anxiously.

"No, sir, but it was pretty close," replied Grandon.

"Is everything secure?" went on the commander, to Larry.

"Yes, sir."

It was difficult to converse further, for the wind was now whistling through the rigging, driving the rain in sheets across the deck. All had to hold fast for fear of being swept overboard. On every side the sea was lashing itself into a foam and the waves were growing higher and higher. At one instant the *Columbia* would seem to be riding on top of a mountain, the next she would sink down and down into the trough of the sea.

"Well, Larry, how do you like this?" questioned Captain Ponsberry, as he took a position beside the second mate.

"Oh, I don't mind it at all," was the cheery answer. "I used to mind the storms, but I've got used to them."

"This isn't a plaything we are getting."

"Oh, I know that—you can see it by the way the wind is driving us. But we are not near any land, are we?"

"No."

"Then we'll be sure to outride it. I feel I can bank on the old *Columbia* for almost anything."

At this Captain Ponsberry laid an affectionate hand on his second mate's shoulder.

"Reckon you love the old craft about as well as I do," he said.

"I don't know about that—you've been on board so many more years than myself. But to me she is a second home."

"I see. Well, let us hope we get through with this trip in safety."

"Don't you imagine we'll do it?" questioned Larry, quickly.

"Certainly. But you must remember that we may have trouble if we fall in with any Russian war-

ship." Captain Ponsberry lowered his voice. "Did you have trouble with Semmel?"

"A little. I ordered him to coil up some ropes and he didn't obey me right away. But he stowed them away afterwards."

Captain Ponsberry drew a long breath. "The more I see of that chap the less I like him."

"I never liked him from the start," answered Larry, frankly. "But you'll have to give him credit for being a good all-round sailor."

"There is no doubt but what he is that, Larry. But he has a bad eye."

"What do you think he could do to harm us?"

"Nothing—unless we fell in with a Russian warship. In that case, if he was a Russian sympathizer, he might expose the fact that while we are carrying a cargo for the Richmond Importing Company the goods are really meant for the Japanese Government."

"Does he know that?"

"I'm not sure, one way or the other. What I am afraid of is, that he may know a good bit more nor we suspect."

"I see." The young second mate mused for a moment. "I'll tell you what I'd do, if I thought he was going to play me foul—and we fell in with a

Russian warship. I'd clap him below decks, out of sight until the warship went on her way again."

"That's easily said; but I can't make him a prisoner unless I can prove something against him."

"You can lock him up if he is sulky and won't obey orders."

"Yes, that is true. Still—— Phew!"

The captain broke off short, for a vivid streak of lightning flared all over the upper masts of the ship. The thunder-clap was as sharp as it was deafening, and for the moment all on board thought the *Columbia* had surely been struck. Then came a down-pour which made even the boldest of the sailors seek shelter.

"That was closer than I like," was Larry's comment, after it was ascertained that the ship was unharmed.

"'Most knocked me overboard," came from Luke Striker. "Gosh! reckon my hair's singed," and he put up his hand and ran his fingers through his grayish locks. "Don't want another like thet no-how!"

A few minutes later came another flash of lightning, but this was to the eastward, showing that the center of the storm had passed them. The wind was apparently going down, but the sea was as angry as ever and would be for hours to come.

Luke had retired to the forecandle with several other sailors. Larry's watch on deck was also at an end, and he was just on the point of going below, when from the west came a curious humming sound which made the young second mate pause. The humming increased, and then of a sudden the *Columbia* was caught in a hurricane blast that threw her far over on her side.

"Help!" Larry heard, in the voice of Captain Ponsberry. "Somebody help me, quick, or I'll go overboard!"

CHAPTER III

LARRY LEARNS SOMETHING

THE accident which had happened to Captain Nat Ponsberry was certainly a curious one, although similar to that which once cost the life of a young officer in our navy.

When the hurricane blast reached the *Columbia*, the captain was in the act of slipping on a lined rain-coat,—a big affair, with long sleeves and an extra high collar. One arm was in the coat and the other was going down the sleeve when it caught in the lining. At that instant the shock threw the captain across the deck and almost over the railing. He caught at the railing with his free hand, but his other hand remained a prisoner in the coat sleeve, while the garment itself stuck in a bunch across his shoulders.

“Help!” he roared again. He tried to pull himself up, and to free the hand in the sleeve, but found both impossible.

Larry did not wait for a second cry for assistance. He knew the captain so well that he felt the officer

would only call when in dire peril. He ran out on the slippery deck in double-quick order.

"Hullo, where are you?" he yelled.

"Here! Help!"

The young second mate caught sight of the captain not a moment too soon. Another lurch of the *Columbia* had thrown him completely over the rail, and there he clung with one hand, while the spray was flying all over him.

Not waiting to count the possible cost, Larry slid rather than ran to the rail. Years before he had learned a trick which now stood him in good stead. He wound his legs around the under rail, catching the upper one with his left hand. Then he clutched Captain Ponsberry by the tangled-up arm.

"On deck there!" he yelled. "Throw a rope this way, and hurry up about it!"

"What's the trouble?" came from Tom Grandon, who had been in another part of the ship and had not heard the captain's cry.

"The captain is almost overboard. Throw us a rope."

Tom Grandon was quick to act. The rope came whizzing toward Larry, and in a twinkling he had it around his body and also around the captain.

"Haul in!" he called, and Grandon and two

sailors did so. Over the rail came Captain Ponsberry, still fighting to release the tangled-up arm. In a moment more all danger was past.

“Well, how in the world did this happen?” questioned Grandon.

“Tell ye—soon as I can git free o’ this consarned coat!” spluttered Captain Ponsberry, and he gave the garment a jerk that ripped one of the sleeves completely in half. “Did ye ever see sech foolishness?” he added. And then he told how the lurch of the ship had carried him over the rail just when he could use but one hand. “After this I reckon I’ll put on my coat afore I go on deck,” he concluded.

“It was a lucky thing that Larry heard you cry out,” said the first mate. “I was at the wheel, helping Groot.”

“That’s right, Tom.” The captain turned to the youth. “Larry, you’re a brave one, and always was. I ain’t going to forget this!”

“Oh, don’t say anything about it,” came from the young second mate, modestly. “I know you’d do as much for me, if I needed it.”

“Well, I would, an’ there’s my hand on it,” cried Captain Ponsberry, heartily, and gave Larry a grip that made him wince.

The storm kept up for the remainder of the day. But its worst fury was spent, and during the night

the wind went down to nothing more than a stiff breeze, which was just what was wanted. All of the sails were again set; and the schooner resumed her course as before.

Before leaving Manila Larry had purchased a number of newspapers printed in that city in English. So far he had had no chance to look the sheets over, but now came two days in which there was little to do, and he spent several hours in devouring the news, while he also let his friend Luke do some reading.

“Tell ye what, this 'ere war between Russia and Japan is goin' to be a big thing,” said Luke, after reading an account of the first fights on land and on sea. “It ain't goin' to be no such short affair as our little rumpus in Cuby.”

“You are right, Luke; this war is going to be a long and bitter one.”

“Who is goin' to win, do you think?”

“I'm sure I don't know. Russia is a vast country, with millions of people and with an immense army and navy. I suppose she can put five times as many men in the field as Japan can.”

“But them Japs know how to fight.”

“Indeed they do—they have proved that already. And what is to their advantage, they are closer to Korea and Manchuria than Russia is. They can get

on the fighting ground quicker,—which counts for a good deal.”

“How those Russians must have been astonished when the Japanese warships sailed into ’em at Port Arthur last February. I don’t believe they were expecting an attack.”

“Hardly, for war had just been declared. But you wouldn’t have caught Uncle Sam napping like that, Luke.”

“Right ye are, lad; it ain’t his style. An’ then to see how them Japs have been a-blowin’ up the Russian warships ever since. They must have a fine navy.”

“Yes, and good gunners, too. I was told in Nagasaki that quite a few American gunners were on their ships—fellows who served under Dewey at Manila and under Sampson and Schley off Cuba.”

“I believe you, lad. When a feller gits it in his bones to fight on a warship there ain’t no life on a merchantman goin’ to satisfy him. Some jackies would rather fight nor eat—you know thet as well as I do.”

“Well, I shouldn’t mind doing some fighting myself. You know I was on a stand about going with Ben and Gilbert Pennington.”

“Where do you reckon they are now?”

“In Manchuria, I suppose, fighting as hard as

they can. I thought I would get a letter from them before we left Manila, but nothing came."

"I suppose the mails are all upset, on account of the war," put in Cal Vincent, who sat nearby, sewing a button on his shirt. "If you'll remember, Nagasaki was in a big state of excitement while we were there last."

"Did they say anything about any Russian warships bein' in these parts?" questioned Luke.

"No."

"It would be strange if we did fall in with them."

"Which puts me in mind," came from the boatswain, and then he gazed around to see if any other persons were near. "Semmel says he ain't no Russian, but it's dollars to doughnuts he is," he continued, in a lowered tone.

"Have you discovered anything new?" demanded Larry.

"Yes and no. Last night I overheard him and Peterson talking in a suspicious kind of a way. I didn't catch much, for they talked partly in English and partly in a foreign language. But I am sure they are favoring Russia, and Semmel said something about doing something to harm Japan."

"I don't see how they could do anything on board of this ship," came from Luke.

"You didn't hear anything definite?"

"Can't say that I did," answered the boatswain.

"We had better watch them closer than ever."

"All right; I'll do my share," responded Vincent, and Luke Striker said the same.

That very afternoon Larry had another quarrel with the sailor with the long beard. Semmel had a bucket of dirty water which he was carrying to the ship's side. As Larry passed he pretended to stub his toe and allowed some of the dirty water to flow over the young second mate's foot.

"Semmel, what did you do that for?" cried Larry, indignantly.

"Canno help dat," said the sailor. "I slip."

"You did it on purpose!"

"Oh, no!" And the sailor grinned wickedly.

"I say you did. If you try anything like that again, I'll make it warm for you. Get a swab and clean the deck up at once!"

As Semmel sauntered off, and while Larry was stamping the water from his shoe, Captain Ponsberry came up. He had seen the trick played from a distance.

"What did you tell Semmel?" he questioned, sharply.

"Told him to swab the deck up. I think he slopped the dirty water over me on purpose."

"Just my idea of it. I'll tell him what I think of

it." And striding after the bearded sailor Captain Ponsberry gave him a lecture not to be readily forgotten.

"I won't have any of your dirty underhanded work aboard of my ship," he concluded. "Either you'll behave yourself, or I'll put you in irons."

"In irons!" ejaculated Semmel, scowling viciously.

"That is what I said and that is what I mean. Ever since you came on board you have been acting in this same dirty fashion and I want it stopped. Now swab up that deck, and see that you make a first-class job of it. For two pins I'd make you black Russell's shoes."

"No black nobody's shoes," growled Semmel, but in such a low tone that Captain Ponsberry could not hear him. He cleaned the deck in his own ugly, independent manner, muttering imprecations against both Larry and the captain in the meantime.

As a matter of fact, even though he had denied it to Captain Ponsberry and others, Ostag Semmel was really a Russian by birth, having been born and raised in the seaport of Kolaska. He had been drafted into the army, but not wishing to serve under a military rule which is unusually severe, he had run away to sea and become a sailor.

Life on the ocean suited Semmel very well and he

would have remained away from Russia had it not been for the fact that a rich uncle had died leaving him a property valued at two thousand dollars—a small fortune in the eyes of a man of this Russian's standing. He wished to go back to claim his inheritance, but feared to do so, for he knew that once on Russian soil he would be arrested for desertion, and might be sent to a military prison for a great number of years.

From a friend in Manila he had heard of something which interested him greatly. This was the news that another deserter from the Russian army had been pardoned for his offense because he had taken home with him important news concerning the movements of a certain Japanese warship.

"If I could only do as well," he told himself, over and over again, and then, when he signed articles for the *Columbia's* trip, he listened eagerly to some talk he overheard about the ship's cargo. When he began to suspect the truth—that the cargo was meant for the Japanese Government—his eyes glistened cunningly.

"If I can only let Russia know of this!" he reasoned. "All will go well with me. If I can only let Russia know!"

CHAPTER IV

THE RUSSIAN SAILOR'S PLOT

CAPTAIN PONSBERRY'S stern manner made Ostag Semmel wild with hatred, and when he went back to the forecandle after swabbing up the deck he was in a fit mental condition for almost any dark deed.

For a good half-hour he lay in his bunk in a corner, brooding over his ill-luck and wondering what he could do to revenge himself upon both the master of the schooner and Larry. Larry he especially disliked—the very open-heartedness of the young second mate made him long to do the lad harm.

At the end of the half-hour another sailor came in. It was Carl Peterson, his close friend. Peterson was a burly tar who had visited nearly every quarter of the globe. He loved to drink and carouse, and was ever ready to lend a hand in any excitement that offered. There was a rumor that he had once led a mutiny on a Danish merchant vessel, but this he denied, laying the blame entirely on others.

“Is that you, Peterson?” demanded Semmel, in

his native tongue, for he knew that the other could speak Russian fluently.

"Yes," came in a rough voice from Peterson. He gave a coarse laugh. "A fine job you made of it, to pour dirty water over Russell and then have to swab up the deck for it."

"Who told you of that?"

"Didn't I see it with my own eyes—and heard what the captain said, too."

"Bah! It makes me sick!" growled Semmel. "I am sick of the ship—the crew—everything!"

Peterson gave a short toss of his head, which was covered with a shock of fiery red hair. "What are you going to do about it? Even if the captain treats you like a dog, what shall you do, Ostag Semmel? He thinks we are all curs—door mats to wipe feet on!"

"He shall find out that I am neither a dog nor a door mat!" muttered the bearded Russian. "By my right hand I promise you that!"

"Talk is cheap—it takes wind to make the mill go," answered Peterson. To an outsider it would have been plain to see that he was leading Semmel on, in an endeavor to find out what was in his companion's mind.

"It will not end in talk."

"Bah! I have heard that before."

"I have been thinking," went on Ostag Semmel, slowly. "Can I trust you?"

"You know you can."

"You do not love the captain—do not love that Russell?"

"Do I act as if I did?"

"Good! Now, how many on board of this ship?"

"Fourteen men, counting in ourselves."

"You count fairly. Fourteen, how many are our friends?"

"Postnak and Conroy, at least."

"Then we are four, so far. Now, what of Groot and Shamhaven and Jack Wilbur?"

"Groot is a good fellow and a man who wishes to make money."

"And Shamhaven will do almost anything for money—he once told me so. He took a sailor suit from a store in Manila without paying for it."

"I know that too. The tailor was rich and didn't need the money," and Peterson gave another coarse laugh.

"Then we are six—to stand up for our rights. And Jack Wilbur will make seven—just half the number on the ship."

"How can we count that Wilbur in? He is a Yankee."

“He is a weakling and we can manage him,—and I think we can manage some others, too—when we get that far.”

“How far do you mean?” demanded Peterson, although he knew about what was coming.

“Is anybody else near here?”

“No,” and Peterson took a careful look around.

“Supposing we seize the ship—in the name of the Russian Government? They have a Japanese cargo on board, the captain cannot deny it. We can take the ship, sail her to some Russian port, and win both prize money and glory. Is it not a grand scheme?”

“Ha, that is fine!” Carl Peterson’s eyes glowed voraciously. “Ostag, you are a man after my own heart! We might become rich!”

“Then you like the plan?”

“Yes—providing we can make it work. But it is a big undertaking. If we were caught we might swing from a yardarm for it.”

“We can make it work—I have another plan for that. I have thought it out completely. We can—but more later,” and Ostag Semmel broke off abruptly, as several sailors entered the forecastle. A little later he began to complain in broken English to a sailor named Jack Wilbur that he was suffering from a severe stomach ache.

“Sorry to hear on it,” said Wilbur, who was a

very mild foremast hand. "Anything I can do for you?"

"I dink not," answered Semmel. "I dink de poor grub ve git mak me feel pad."

"Didn't notice that the grub was poor," answered Wilbur.

"Very poor—not so goot as py my las' ship," answered Semmel. "Some grub here not fit to eat."

It was soon noised around that Semmel was not feeling well and that he had complained that the food dealt out at noontime had made him sick. As soon as Captain Ponsberry heard of this he went to interview Jeff, the colored cook, who, as of old, was singing gayly to himself among the pots and pans of the ship's galley.

"Wasn't nuffin de mattah wid dat grub, Cap'n Ponsberry," exclaimed Jeff, after hearing what the commander of the ship had to say. "It was jess as good as we always has."

"Was it thoroughly cooked?"

"Yes, sah—I don't 'low nuffin to go from dis yere galley 'less it am well cooked."

"Are your pots and kettles clean?"

"Yes, sah—yo' can see fo' yourself, sah."

The captain did see, and moreover he knew that Jeff was usually a careful and conscientious culinary

artist who always gave the men the best his stock afforded.

“Well, be careful of what you cook and how you cook it after this,” said Captain Ponsberry.

“Would yo’ mind tellin’ me, sah, who is kicking, sah?” asked Jeff, respectfully.

“Semmel says he was made sick by what he ate.”

“Huh, dat scab!” grunted Jeff. “He ain’t no ’count at all, he ain’t!” And the cook turned away in disgust.

“It looks to me as if Semmel was trying to make trouble all around,” said Tom Grandon, when he and the captain and Larry talked the matter over.

“I never liked that man from the first time I clapped eyes on him,” came from Larry. “He’s a sneak—and worse.”

“I shall watch him pretty closely after this,” said Captain Ponsberry. “One discontented fellow like him can upset the whole ship if he sets out to do it.”

“They can’t complain of the grub,” went on the first mate. “It’s as good as on any merchantman, and better than the law requires.”

“I guess it was the deck-swabbing that gave him the stomach ache,” said Larry, and this made the captain and Grandon smile.

The next day when the sailors sat down to their

dinner two or three of them sniffed suspiciously at the food they were eating.

"This don't taste just right to me," said Shamhaven. "The meat tastes decayed."

"And the vegetables ain't much better," put in Conroy,—a sturdy Irish-American, who was one of the best seamen on the schooner.

"Dat dinner am fust-class," cried Jeff. "I ain't gwine to stand yere an' see you growlin' at it."

"It certainly tastes a bit off, Jeff," put in Jack Wilbur. "Taste it yourself."

The cook did so, and his face looked doubtful for a moment.

"Guess dat needs a little salt an' pepper," he said, slowly. It did not taste nearly as good as he had anticipated.

As there was nothing else to do, and they were hungry, the men ate the meal, grumbling to themselves as they did so. Luke said but little and ate sparingly, and his example was followed by Cal Vincent.

The captain, Grandon, and Larry ate in the cabin and the dinner served to them was first-class in every particular.

"Guess Jeff is spreading himself, just to show what he can do," remarked Larry to the first mate, after he had finished his repast.

"It's very good, Larry," answered Tom Grandon.

By the middle of the afternoon three of the men were complaining of feeling sick and all attributed their ailments to what they had eaten for dinner.

"Ha! vat I tole you?" cried Semmel. "Didn't I say de grub vos pad? Not maybe you belief me, hey?"

"I shan't stand for any more poor grub," came from Shamhaven. "If I can't get good stuff I'm going to the captain about it."

The sickness of the hands worried Captain Ponsberry greatly and he opened up his medicine chest and gave them such remedies as he thought were best.

At supper time Jeff was extra cautious in selecting and preparing the food. Nevertheless, the men who ate of it were suspicious and more than half the meal went to waste. The captain was very thoughtful, but said little or nothing.

On the following day the wind died down utterly and it was exceedingly warm. With nothing to do, the majority of the hands gathered at the bow to talk of matters in general, and the food in particular. Semmel and Peterson were of the number, and both did all in their power to magnify the outrage, as they termed it.

"Der captain don't haf any right to gif us such grub," said Semmel. "It vos against der law."

"On some ships there would be a mutiny over this," added Peterson.

Larry overheard a part of the conversation and it set him thinking. Luke Striker also grew suspicious.

"Unless I am mistaken, this is some of Semmel's work," said Larry to the old tar. "He is doing his level best to make trouble on the ship."

"Well, he better mind his business," grumbled Luke. "I don't reckon the captain will stand for any underhanded work."

Without appearing to do so, Larry continued to keep his eyes on Semmel, and about an hour before dinner he saw the bearded sailor approach the cook's galley and look inside. Jeff was below, getting a case of canned goods. With a swift movement, Semmel stepped into the galley, raised the lid of a big pot full of stew that was on the stove, and sprinkled something over the food. Then he hurried out and sneaked forward once more.

"The rascal!" murmured Larry. "So this is his game. I wonder what he put into that pot?"

For the moment the young second mate thought to confront Semmel and demand an explanation. Then he changed his mind and hurried for the cabin, to tell the news to Captain Ponsberry.

CHAPTER V

SIGNS OF A MUTINY

"I'VE found out something important, Captain Ponsberry," said Larry, as he entered the cabin. "I now know what's the matter with the grub." To all salt-water sailors food is grub and nothing else.

"Well, what is the matter with it?" questioned the master of the *Columbia*, quickly.

"It's being doctored, that's what's the matter."

"Doctored?"

"Yes, sir,—doctored by Semmel, too."

"Will you explain what you mean, Larry?" demanded the captain, intensely interested.

"I just saw that rascal go into the cook's galley. Jeff wasn't there, and Semmel took the lid off of a big pot on the stove and sprinkled something inside."

"What!" Captain Ponsberry leaped to his feet. "Are you certain of this?" he demanded.

"I am—for I saw it with my own eyes."

"What was that stuff he put into the pot?"

"I don't know."

"Did he touch anything else?"

"No. He was in a tremendous hurry and wasn't in the galley more than a minute at the most."

"The scoundrel!" Captain Ponsberry clenched his fists. "Larry, you are positive you are making no mistake?"

"I saw the thing done just as I told you. The stuff was in a bit of white paper. When he went forward he threw the paper overboard."

"Did anybody else see this?"

"I don't think so. But——"

At that moment came a knock on the cabin door and Luke Striker appeared.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, touching his cap. "But I've got something important to report."

"What is it, Striker?"

"I jess see that air Semmel go in and out o' the cook's galley."

"That is just what I am reporting!" cried Larry. "Did you see what he did, Luke?"

"No. He wasn't in there only a minit. It looked suspicious to me, though—with all hands gittin' sick from the grub."

"This is all the evidence I want," said Captain Ponsberry. "We'll soon make an end of this. Larry, send Semmel to me."

The young second mate left the cabin with Luke and both hurried toward the bow, where Semmel and Peterson were conversing in low tones.

"The captain wants to see you at once," said Larry to the bearded sailor.

His tone was so sharp it made Semmel start.

"Vat he wants?" he queried.

"Go and find out for yourself."

"Maybe you git me in droubles, hey?" and the bearded sailor scowled.

"I reckon as how you're gittin' yourself into trouble," drawled Luke, dryly.

"You keep your mouf shut!" cried Semmel. "I no talk to you, no!"

"The captain wants you to report; are you going to do so or not?" demanded Larry.

"Sure I go," answered Semmel, with a toss of his head, and he slouched toward the stern. His manner was so aggressive that Larry picked up a belaying pin before following him.

Captain Ponsberry had just appeared on deck. He had armed himself with a short club,—a sure sign to those who knew him that something unusual was in the wind. His face was stern and forbidding, and all hands gathered around to see what was the trouble.

"Semmel, I want to have a talk with you," he

said, in a loud voice, as the bearded sailor came up.

To this the sailor nodded but did not answer.

"I want to know what you were doing in the cook's galley a short while ago."

"De cook's galley?" The sailor acted as if he was puzzled. "I no go by de galley, captain."

"You were in the galley and you put something into the stew-pot. What was it?" thundered Captain Ponsberry. "Tell me the truth, or I may take it into my head to break every bone in your body!" And he shook his club in the sailor's face.

"I put noddings in de pot," cried Semmel. "I no go in de galley—I no been in de galley two, tree days. It is a lie!"

"I saw you go in," came from Luke.

"And so did I," added Larry. "And I saw you sprinkle something into the pot."

"What, did dat good-fo'-nuffin furiner put some't'ing in ma eatin'?" shrieked Jeff, who had come up. "Oh,—yo'—yo'——"

"Never mind, Jeff, I'll attend to this," interrupted the captain.

"Yes, sah, but dat monkey-faced——"

"Never mind now—fall back there," added the captain, and the cook fell back, but shook his fist at Semmel.

"I not in de galley," reiterated the bearded sailor.
"Russell an' Striker no tell de truth."

"It is true," cried Larry.

"Thet's so, an' you can't squirm out o' it," broke in Luke. "I saw ye as plain as day."

"I want to know what you put into that stew-pot?" continued Captain Ponsberry.

"I no go near de galley. I——"

"I know you went into the galley and I know you put something into the stew. For the last time I ask you, what was it?"

For reply Ostag Semmel simply shrugged his shoulders.

"Are you going to tell me the truth?"

"I reckon the truth ain't in him," grumbled Luke, under his breath.

"I say noddings more," came sourly from the bearded sailor.

"Put that man in irons," commanded Captain Ponsberry, turning quickly to Larry and Grandon. "If he won't talk now, perhaps he'll talk after he has spent a day in the brig."

"Vat! you put me in irons!" shrieked Semmel. "You no got right to do dat, no!"

"Haven't I?" answered Captain Ponsberry, in a voice that cut like a whip. "I'd like to see anybody dispute over it. Larry, Tom, do as I command."

"Yes, sir," answered Larry, and ran off to get a pair of handcuffs while Tom Grandon stationed himself beside Ostag Semmel, belaying pin in hand.

"You no mak me a prisoner!" fumed the bearded sailor. "You got no right!"

He continued to rave, saying that it was a plot against him, because he had been the first to complain about the vile food served to the hands; that he had not been near the galley and that the captain, Grandon, and Larry knew it. He even appealed to the other sailors to stand by him, and several came forward to argue with Captain Ponsberry. But the master of the schooner was obstinate and would not listen.

"I know what I am doing, men," he said, quickly but firmly. "He is a scoundrel and a spell in the brig will do him good. After this I reckon you'll find the grub all right."

"I no like——" began Peterson, once more.

"You shut up, Peterson, or I'll put you in the brig with Semmel," cut in the captain, and Peterson fell back with the rest, but with a brow that was dark and distrustful.

By this time Larry had returned with the handcuffs and despite the resistance he offered, Ostag Semmel was made a prisoner. Then the first and the second mates led him to the schooner's brig,—

a narrow, V-shaped room in the bow of the boat, usually used for storing lanterns and oil. The smell in the closet—for it was nothing else—was far from pleasant, and a day in the brig usually made a prisoner repent and promise to do better.

“I mak trouble for dis!” growled Semmel, as the door was closed and bolted on him. “I mak trouble, yes! You got no right to do dis, no!”

“And you haven’t any right to doctor the grub,” answered Larry, and then he and Grandon walked away.

“That fellow is a first-class villain, to my way of reasoning,” was the first mate’s comment. “I believe he’d do almost anything to get square for this.”

After Ostag Semmel had been placed in the brig Captain Ponsberry called all hands to him once more and related what Luke and Larry had seen. The stew was inspected, but nothing suspicious could be seen about it.

“If any of you want to try that stew you may do so,” said the captain. “Of course, if Semmel didn’t touch it there can be nothing in it that can hurt you.” But all, even to Peterson, declined to even taste the food. It was one thing to think Semmel innocent but quite another to run the risk of being made sick or poisoned. In the end the stew was dumped over-

board and Jeff prepared an entirely new dinner for all hands.

“You must keep close watch on all of the men,” said the captain to Larry and Grandon, when quietness had been restored. “Semmel was the worst of the lot, but I do not like the way Peterson and one or two others are acting.”

“I don’t see what they can do,” answered Larry.

“They might start a mutiny,” came from the first mate.

“Would they dare go as far as that?”

“Sometimes sailors get strange notions, and the old Harry himself can’t stop them,” said Captain Ponsberry. “A thing that in itself doesn’t amount to much will start them off, and they’ll imagine that everything is going wrong. When I was a lad, on board the *Mary Eliza*, Captain Snapper, we had a mutiny just because the coffee wasn’t right.”

“Yes, and I can remember that they had a mutiny on the old brig *Chesterfield* because Captain Roe’s wife brought a cross-eyed yellow cat on board,” added Grandon. “Not a man would hoist a sail until that feline was put ashore. And when, two months later, the brig lost her foremast in a gale, the sailors said it was on account of that same cat, she having scratched the mast before she was taken away!”

“Well, I hope we don’t have a mutiny,” said Larry. “I’d like to suggest something, Captain Ponsberry,” he went on, to the master of the *Columbia*.

“Fire ahead, Larry.”

“You know we can trust Luke Striker. Why not have him report just what the other hands are doing?”

“That’s an idea, and I will act on it. Yes, I’d trust Striker as quick as I’d trust you. If there is to be trouble we certainly want to know of it as soon as possible,” concluded the captain.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIGHT FOR THE SHIP

THE day to follow was Sunday, and contrary to expectations, it passed quietly. As there was hardly any wind, the old *Columbia* made slow progress, and the sailors had little or nothing to do. As was his usual habit, Larry read his Bible, and Captain Ponsberry held a short church service, which less than half the crew attended.

"It's plain to see that the men are sulky," said Tom Grandon, towards evening. "We are certain to hear something from them shortly."

Luke had been told to report anything unusual, but it was not until after dark that he sought out Captain Ponsberry.

"I ain't got much to say," said the old tar. "But to my mind Peterson, Groot, and Shamhaven are doin' a powerful lot of confabbin'. More'n that, I saw Peterson cleaning up a pistol he's got."

"Are any of the other hands armed?"

"I ain't seen no other shootin'-irons," answered Luke.

The captain had expected to interview Semmel once more, but found the fellow so surly he gave up the attempt. As the brig was so hot and uncomfortable, the master of the schooner had the door fixed so it could be left open several inches, with a chain at the bolt to keep it from going further.

At four o'clock Monday morning Peterson came on duty, followed by Shamhaven and some others. All made their way to the bow and began to talk in a low but earnest fashion. Then Peterson went below, to where Semmel was still confined in the brig.

"We are ready to move now," said he, in Russian. "What do you think?"

"Let me out and I will show you what I think," growled Ostag Semmel. "The captain is a dog—and Grandon and Russell are dogs, too!"

Peterson was prepared to unlock the chain which held the brig door and did so. Then he handed a pistol to the Russian.

"The captain and Russell are in their state-rooms," said Peterson. "Only Grandon is on deck, with Vincent and with the men we can trust to help us."

"We can't trust Vincent."

"I know that."

"Where is Striker?"

“Asleep in his berth.”

But on this score Carl Peterson was mistaken. Luke had pretended to go to sleep, but he was now in a corner on deck, watching with keen eyes all that was occurring. Presently he saw Semmel in company with Peterson hurry towards the bow, and he felt that the time for action had arrived.

“Hi, Mr. Grandon!” he called out, running up to the first mate.

“What is it, Striker?”

“They’ve released Semmel and they are arming themselves.”

“You don’t say!” Tom Grandon was stunned for the instant. “Tell the captain and Russell of this at once!”

“Aye, aye, sir!”

Rushing down the companionway, Luke entered the cabin and knocked on the door of Captain Ponsberry’s stateroom.

“Wake up, captain!” he called, loudly. “Wake up! There is going to be trouble putty quick, to my way o’ thinkin’!”

“What has gone wrong now?” demanded the master of the *Columbia*, as he hurried into his clothes and armed himself. “Where is Grandon?”

“On deck; he sent me to tell you. They have

set Semmel free and some of 'em are arming themselves."

"A mutiny!" roared Captain Ponsberry. "Striker, you'll stand by me, of course?"

"That I will, sir—to the end."

"Good. I know Vincent will do the same. Do you know anything about the others?"

"I think you can count on Jeff the cook."

"What of Wilbur?"

"He's so weak-kneed I don't know what he'll do," answered Striker.

By this time Larry was out of his stateroom. With his door ajar he had heard all that had been said.

"Oh, Luke, do you think they'll try to seize the ship?" he gasped.

"Don't know what they'll do. They're a plumb crazy lot," growled the old tar. "It was a mistake to take such fellers as Semmel and Peterson and Shamhaven aboard."

"That is true, but when Devine and Larson got sick and went to the hospital at Manila I had to get somebody," answered Captain Ponsberry. He brought out several pistols. "Here, Larry, take one of these, and a cutlass, too, and you, Striker, can arm yourself likewise."

There was no time to answer, for the master of

the schooner was already striding through the cabin in the direction of the companionway. An instant later came a yell from the deck, followed by heavy footsteps and then the report of a pistol.

"Drive dem to de cabin!" came in the voice of Semmel. "Drive dem along, kvick!" And then followed another yell and the sounds of half a dozen blows.

"Below there!" came in Tom Grandon's voice. "Help! help!"

"I'm coming!" called up Captain Ponsberry.

"Don't you dare to step on deck, captain!" yelled down the voice of Shamhaven. "Don't you dare to do it!" And the sailor appeared, pistol in hand, at the top of the companionway.

"Shamhaven, what does this mean?" demanded the master of the *Columbia*.

"It means that we have taken possession of the ship, that's what it means," came from Groot.

"Of you come up here, you maybe git killed," put in Ostag Semmel. "You stay down dare, you hear?" And then, as the captain started to mount the stairs, he threw down a belaying pin. In the semi-darkness the captain did not see the object, and it struck him on the top of the head, rendering him partly unconscious.

Larry and Luke were close behind their leader and

both were alarmed to see him go down, uttering a deep groan as he did so.

"Is he killed?" questioned the young second mate.

"I don't know," was the old tar's response.

"Shall we go up?"

"Keep back there!" was the call from above.

"Put a step on those stairs and it will be the worse for you!"

At that moment came a cry from Cal Vincent. The boatswain had been attacked from behind and was given no chance to defend himself. Then came a roar from Jeff, who came rushing toward the companionway as if all the demons of the deep were behind him.

"Sabe me! sabe me!" he screamed. "Da is gwine to pirate de ship! Sabe me!" And then he came plunging down headlong, directly on top of Larry, Luke, and the prostrate captain.

This unexpected coming of Jeff sent the young second mate and the old tar flat on Captain Ponsberry, and for the moment there was a struggle all around. In the meantime some sailors on the deck began to drag a heavy hatch toward the stairs. Soon this was placed in position, and then those below were virtually prisoners.

"Oh my, sabe me!" groaned Jeff once more, as he managed to get on his feet in the cabin, followed

by Larry and Luke. "Don't you let dem swing me from de yardarm!"

"Jeff, where are Grandon and Vincent?" demanded Larry.

"I dunno, sah—dead, I guess," answered the cook. "Oh, dis am de awfulest t'ing wot I eber heard tell ob!" he added, woefully, and wrung his hands.

The lantern in the cabin was turned up and Larry gave his attention once more to Captain Ponsberry, who was now opening his eyes.

"Oh, my head!" came with a shiver. "My head!"

"I'm glad they didn't kill you," said Larry, kindly. "Luke, help me carry him into the cabin. We'll put him on the couch."

This was done, and they did what they could to make the master of the schooner comfortable. But it was a good half-hour before Captain Ponsberry could sit up and do any rational thinking.

On deck all had become suddenly quiet. Occasionally those below could hear a footstep near the companionway, showing that one or more of the mutineers were on guard. The hatch shut off the view on deck, and the windows in the ceiling of the cabin were also boarded over from the outside.

"They have us like rats in a trap," said Larry, bitterly.

"And for all we know Vincent and Grandon are both dead," returned Luke Striker, soberly. "I must say, lad, we seem to be in a bad way and no mistake."

"Dey'll throw us overboard, I know dey will!" groaned Jeff, who was almost white with terror. "I neber see sech goin's-on in all ma life!"

To fight the mutineers further was, just then, out of the question, and Larry turned his attention again to Captain Ponsberry. At last the captain seemed fully to comprehend what had occurred. He once more moved toward the companionway, pistol in hand.

"You can't get out that way, sir," said Larry. "They have placed the fore hatch over the stairs."

"And they are armed, too," put in Luke. "Be careful, sir, or they'll shoot you down."

"And this on my own ship!" came bitterly from the master of the *Columbia*. "That is what I get for treating the dogs better than they deserve. Where are Grandon and Vincent?"

"Either shot down or taken prisoners. They called for help, and that was the last we heard of them."

"And are all the others in this dastardly plot?"

"I reckon they are," answered Luke. "Them foreigners, Semmel an' Peterson, must have stirred 'em up powerfully."

Still weak from the blow received, Captain Ponsberry sank down once more on the cabin couch. There was a lump as big as a walnut on the top of his head, and he had Jeff bathe it with water and then with witch-hazel, which made it a trifle more comfortable.

A short while later came a sudden wild song from the deck of the schooner, followed by a clinking of glasses.

"They are treating themselves to grog," said Luke. "I suppose, now they have the run of things, they'll drink all they want of the stuff."

"More than likely," returned the captain. "Well, it is their turn just now—perhaps before long it will be my turn!" And he smiled significantly.

CHAPTER VII

THE MUTINEERS IN POSSESSION

As my old readers know, both Captain Ponsberry and Luke Striker were Yankees to the backbone, and it galled them exceedingly to see the schooner in the hands of a number of mutineers, and especially foreigners.

"We've got to git the ship back, no two ways on it," growled the old tar. "Captain, I'm willin' to fight to the end, if ye give the word."

"And I'll fight, too," said Larry, promptly.

"Don't you go fo' to fight dem rascallions!" whined Jeff. "Yo' will all be killed suah!"

"I would like to know what has become of Grandon and Vincent," came from Captain Ponsberry. "As we stand now, we are but four to seven or eight. If we could get Grandon and Vincent to aid us we would be six against them."

"Perhaps all the hands are not in the mutiny," suggested Larry. "Why not try to sound them?"

"I was thinking of doing that."

A little later Captain Ponsberry called up the companionway. At first nobody paid any attention to him, but presently the hatch was shoved aside a few inches and Ostag Semmel looked down. Behind him was Shamhaven.

"Semmel, what does this mean?" asked the captain, as calmly as he could.

"It means dat ve haf de ship," replied the Russian, with a grin.

"You are carrying matters with a very high hand. Where are Grandon and Vincent?"

"I not tell you dat."

"We had a right to mutiny," said Shamhaven. "The grub wasn't fit to eat and was getting worse every day."

"That's a tale gotten up for the occasion, Shamhaven, and you know it. Semmel doctored the food to make you dissatisfied."

"Well, we don't think so," grumbled the sailor. "I don't think so, and Groot and the others don't either."

"Has Jack Wilbur joined you?"

"Certainly he has," was Shamhaven's ready reply, but his look belied his words.

"Ve are all pount to stick togedder," said Semmel. "You might as vell gif up—der sooner der petter for you!"

"I don't propose to give up, you rascal."

"Ton't you call me a rascals, no!" shouted Ostag Semmel. "I vos now der captains, yes, do you hear? Captain Semmel!"

"Bosh!" put in Luke Striker, in disgust. "Why ye ain't fit to be the skipper 'f a canal-boat!"

"If you try to navigate the ship you'll sink her on the rocks," put in Larry.

"You had better consider what you are doing, Shamhaven," went on the master of the *Columbia*. "Remember, if I regain possession of the schooner I can make it go hard with you."

"You no get dare schooner again, not much!" came from Peterson, who had just come up, followed by Jack Wilbur.

"Wilbur, are you in this?" demanded the captain. "If you are, I must confess I didn't think it of you."

"I ain't goin' to eat poor grub," answered Wilbur, lamely.

"The grub is all right and you know it. It was doctored up by Semmel, and I——"

"You stop dat talk!" roared Semmel, and then he added: "Maybe you gif in after you are goot an' hungry, hey?"

"What, do you want to starve us out?" cried Larry.

"You see—chust vait!" answered the Russian, and with this the hatch was again put in place and the conference came to an end.

Captain Ponsberry was fairly boiling with wrath, but even so he realized that prudence is often the better part of valor.

"There is no use of trying a rush to the deck," he said. "Those rascals would surely shoot us down. Just now some of them are in the humor for anything."

"Perhaps we can do something to-night," suggested Larry.

"They talk about starving us out," said Luke. "Ain't there nothin' to eat here?"

An inspection was made of the cabin pantry, which brought to light some preserves, some pickles, a pot of cheese, and a tin of fancy crackers.

"About enough for one meal," said Captain Ponsberry, grimly.

"And a pretty slim one at that," added Larry. "But I say, captain," he added, suddenly, "isn't there a door leading from the back of the pantry down into the hold?"

"There was once—but I had it nailed up years ago, for we never used it."

"If we can open that, we might get something from the hold."

“Going to eat machinery?” demanded Luke.

“No—canned goods, Luke; I know Jeff had some placed there, for he didn’t have room in his store-room.”

“Dat am a fac’,” put in the cook. “I’s e got lots ob t’ings in dat dar hold.”

“Then that settles the starving question,” said Captain Ponsberry. “I’ve got a small saw and a hammer down here somewhere. We can use them on the door.”

“And that gives me another idea,” went on Larry. “The hatch covering over the companionway belongs to the fore hatch. If we can reach that opening from here, why can’t we steal on deck when we get the chance and try to make the mutineers prisoners?”

“Eureka!” shouted Luke. “That’s the talk, Larry. Fer your years you’ve got a wonderfully long head on ye. We’ll make ’em prisoners or chuck ’em overboard!”

“The idea is worth considering,” said the captain. “But we must be careful.”

A search was made and the hammer, small saw, and also a chisel were found. Then they cleaned out the pantry, took down several shelves, and thus uncovered the small door which had been nailed up.

“Don’t make any noise, or they’ll suspect that we are up to something,” said Captain Ponsberry.

“Let Jeff rattle some dishes,” said Larry, and while he and Luke worked on the door, the cook began to handle the dishes in such a rough manner that several were broken. He also tried to sing a couple of verses of his favorite song, “My Gal Susannah!” but his voice was so shaky that the effort was, artistically, a failure, although it added to the noise, which was all that was desired.

“They’re pretty happy down there,” said Wilbur to Shamhaven, as he listened to the sounds.

“Oh, they’re putting on a front,” growled Shamhaven. “They’ll sing a different tune when their stomachs are empty.”

“I don’t know about this mutiny,” went on the weak-kneed sailor, nervously.

“Oh, it’s all right and you needn’t to worry, Wilbur. If we stick together we’ll make a couple of thousand apiece out of this game.”

“But what shall we do if we fall in with a Russian warship?”

“Semmel has that all fixed. He’ll expose the captain and state that the *Columbia* is carrying a cargo for the Japanese Government, and that he

took possession in the name of the Czar. With this war on they won't ask too many questions so long as they can give the Japs a black eye."

"I see. But supposing we fall in with a Japanese warship?"

"Then Semmel is going to turn the command over to me and I'll tell them that the cargo was really meant for the Japanese Government but that Captain Ponsberry, just before we left Manila, sold out to the Russian agents and was going to Vladivostok. I'll add that we refused to go to the Russian port after signing for Nagasaki, and all of the men can back me up. That will put the captain and his friends in limbo and give us some prize money. Oh, we'll come out ahead, don't you worry," concluded Shamhaven, confidently.

The day passed slowly and the mutineers held several meetings, to settle upon just what they were going to do. But all had been drinking more than was good for them and the conferences ended in nothing but talk. Semmel was the accepted leader, but it was plain to see that Shamhaven objected strongly to playing a secondary part, and Peterson also wanted a large "finger in the pie."

As they worked with care, it was a good hour and a half before Larry and Luke managed to take down the door leading into the hold. Even when this was

done they found on the other side several heavy cases of machinery almost impossible to budge.

"We can pry those out of the way," said the captain.

"A foot or so will do it," returned Larry. "Then I think I can crawl over the top."

They continued the work, and a little later the young second mate was able to squeeze his way to the top of the cargo in that vicinity.

"Be careful, Larry," warned the captain. "If a case should shift with the ship you might get a crushed leg. You had better take a candle along."

"I will, sir."

Luke was as anxious to get into the hold as the young second mate, and he too squeezed his tall, lank form through the opening. Guided by the faint light of the candle, they crawled over a number of cases of machinery and war goods until they drew close to the middle of the ship.

"Here we are!" cried Larry, in a low voice, and pointed to some cases of canned goods. "Beans, corn, tomatoes, salt pork, condensed milk—we won't starve just yet, Luke."

"An' here are some barrels o' flour," added the old tar. "No, they can't starve us nohow now."

They had brought the chisel and hammer along,

and with extra caution opened some of the cases. Taking with them all the goods they could carry, they returned to the cabin.

"This is splendid!" cried Captain Ponsberry. "With this stuff on hand we can hold the cabin indefinitely."

"How is I gwine to cook?" questioned Jeff.

"Over the two lanterns, Jeff. It will be slow work, but our time is our own. Luckily there are pots and tins in the pantry."

"All right, sah."

"Of course, I am hoping that we shall not have to stay here long," went on the captain. "But it is best to be prepared."

That those on deck might not see the cooking going on, one of the staterooms was cleaned out and Jeff went to work in this. In the meantime Semmel called down the companionway once more.

"Are you gettin' hungry?" he asked.

"Tell him yes," whispered Larry.

"Why?" questioned the captain, in an equally low tone.

"Then he'll think we are getting ready to come to terms and he won't watch us so closely."

"I see." Captain Ponsberry raised his voice.

"Yes, we are hungry," he called up. "What are you going to send us, something good?"

"Ve send noddings. Maybe you talk business soon, hey?" continued the rascally Russian.

"Perhaps."

"How soon?"

"Well, perhaps to-morrow morning."

"Not before dot, hey?"

"No."

"All right den; you can go on an' starve so long!" growled Ostag Semmel, and went away. A moment later he met Shamhaven.

"What did he say?" asked the latter, anxiously.

"He comes to terms to-morrow!" answered the Russian, triumphantly.

CHAPTER VIII

TURNING THE TABLES

THE meal which Jeff prepared put all in the cabin in better humor, and as soon as it was over a council of war was held.

It was decided to wait until darkness had set in, and then try to gain the deck of the ship by way of the fore hatch. In the meantime the door to the companionway was to be locked and barred, so that the mutineers could not attack them very well from that direction, should a running fight ensue.

As Jeff would be of no use in a struggle he was delegated to remain in the cabin, to make as much noise as possible, singing and talking to himself, so that the mutineers might not suspect what was taking place.

Each member of the party armed himself both with a pistol and a cutlass, and Larry led the way as before, candle in hand. It was easy for Luke to follow him, but rather difficult for the captain, who was more portly.

“ Reckon as how ye shouldn’t have eaten so much,

captain," chuckled the old tar, as he helped Captain Ponsberry through a particularly narrow place.

"True, Striker," was the answer. "But you be careful that you don't slip into some slit between the cases and go out of sight."

They soon gained the spot where the canned goods had been found. They had now to climb over some machinery that reached nearly to the top of the hold, and then over a varied collection of boxes and barrels and bags. On the bags lay some of the old sails of the ship and several coils of discarded rope.

They were just approaching the open fore hatch when they saw a rope ladder let down. Instantly Larry uttered a warning and put out the light.

"Somebody is coming down," he whispered.

It was the sailor Wilbur, who had been sent to get some canned goods for cooking purposes. He came down the rope ladder with a lantern slung over one arm.

"We'll make him a prisoner!" cried Captain Ponsberry. "And let us do it as quietly as we can, so as not to disturb those on deck."

The others understood and crouched back in the darkness. Then, as Wilbur passed them, the captain caught him from the back and Larry clapped a hand over the fellow's mouth.

"Oh!" spluttered Wilbur, but that was as far as he got.

"Not a word! Not a sound, Wilbur!" said Captain Ponsberry, earnestly.

The sailor understood, and being a craven at heart he almost collapsed. It was an easy matter to take one of the old ropes and tie his hands behind him. Then Captain Ponsberry confronted the mutineer, making a liberal exhibition of his pistol as he did so.

"Wilbur, answer me truthfully," said the master of the *Columbia*. "Are you all in this mutiny or not? Don't speak above a whisper."

"I ain't in it!" whined Wilbur. "They dragged me in, they did. I ain't kicking about grub, or nothing!"

"Are all the others in it?"

"Kind of, yes. Groot didn't care much to go in. Guess he wish he was out of it now."

"What has become of Grandon and Vincent?"

"Both of 'em are prisoners in the brig."

"Are they wounded?"

"Not much. Grandon had his thumb cut and Vincent got a kick in the back that lamed him."

"Is anybody guarding them?"

"I guess not. All of 'em have got to drinking again. Say, captain, let me out of this fix and I'll

never go against you again, never," continued Wilbur, earnestly.

"We'll see about that later," was the grim reply.

"Captain Ponsberry, I have a scheme," put in Larry, and he drew the master of the ship to one side. "Wilbur is about the same build as myself. Let me take his coat and cap and go on deck and down to the brig. If I can release Grandon and Vincent we'll be sure to knock out the mutiny in no time."

"It's a dangerous game, Larry."

"Oh, please let me do it!" pleaded the young second mate. The hazard was one which appealed to him strongly.

The matter was talked over for a few minutes and it was decided to let Larry have his way. Wilbur was soon stripped of his coat and the young second mate donned the garment. Then he took the mutineer's cap and pulled it as far over his brow as possible and turned up the coat collar.

"I'll leave the lantern here," he said, and a second later was mounting the rope ladder slowly and cautiously.

With his head on a level with the deck Larry paused to reconnoiter the situation. He knew exactly how dangerous his mission was and that he

was running the risk of being shot. But his life in our navy had made him bold, and seeing nobody in sight, he leaped out on deck, and hurried with all speed to the ladder leading to the brig. Soon he was in front of the barred door.

"Grandon! Vincent!" he called, softly.

"Hullo, who's that?" came in the voice of the first mate.

"It is I, Larry. Is Vincent there?"

"Yes. Where did you come from?"

"The cabin." Larry unbarred the door. "Are you hurt?"

"Not much. How are you?"

"I am all right, and so are the captain and Luke Striker. They are in the hold, ready to come on deck. We have made Wilbur a prisoner."

"Good enough," came from the boatswain. "The rascals! They ought all to walk the plank!" he added, vehemently.

The two men had their hands tied behind them, but it was an easy matter for Larry to liberate them. Then each provided himself with a belaying pin, and all three of the party stole to the deck.

From the forecastle and the cook's galley came loud talking, showing that the mutineers were making themselves at home. One man was trying to do some cooking.

“What’s keeping Wilbur so long?” he demanded of the others.

Nobody knew, and one of the crowd, the sailor named Groot, volunteered to look the missing one up.

“Let us follow him to the hatch,” whispered Larry. “Perhaps we can make him a prisoner.”

“Right you are,” answered Tom Grandon.

With caution they came up behind the man, and just as Groot leaned over the open hatchway, they caught him tightly.

“Keep silent, Groot!” said Grandon. “Keep silent, or we’ll throw you overboard.”

“Stop!” roared the mutineer. “Help! hel——”

He got no further, for raising his belaying pin, Vincent brought it down on the mutineer’s head. Groot had been the one to lame the boatswain’s back and the latter had not forgotten it. Over went the fellow and sank down as if dead.

“Drop him into the hold,” ordered Grandon, and this was done just as Captain Ponsberry and Luke Striker appeared at the foot of the rope ladder.

“Another, eh?” said the master of the *Columbia*. “Good enough! How are you, Tom? How are you, Vincent?”

“We’re ready to fight ’em,” answered the first

mate. "Come on! They've got so much liquor aboard they can't do much to us!"

"Be careful, I don't want anybody shot if it can be avoided," responded Captain Ponsberry.

"I think it would be a good plan to dump them all into the hold," said Larry. "Then we could nail up that pantry door, put the hatch into place, and keep them at our mercy."

"If the plan will work, it's a good one," answered the captain.

One after another they came out on deck, leaving Wilbur and Groot in the hold. They found the mutineers equally divided between the galley and the forecastle. The only man in charge of the schooner was Conroy, who was at the wheel.

As they advanced upon the forecastle they saw Semmel come out, accompanied by Peterson.

"There are the ringleaders!" cried Captain Ponsberry, and rushing up to them he exclaimed: "Surrender, you rascals!" And he aimed his pistol, while the others also raised their weapons.

The Russian and his companion were taken completely by surprise, and before they could draw any weapons of their own it was too late. Grandon tripped one up and fell upon him, and then Vincent and Larry tripped up the other. There was a brief scuffle, the exchange of several blows which did little

damage, and in a trice Semmel and Peterson were thrown down into the hold bodily, and the ladder was hauled up out of their reach.

“Put that hatch over the opening,” cried Captain Ponsberry to Larry. “And then go into the cabin pantry and nail up that door. Be quick about it, or they may get out!”

“Aye, aye, sir!” cried the young second mate, and ran off with all speed. The hatch was large and heavy, but the excitement lent him strength and he dragged it forward and threw it over the hatchway.

“Stop dat!” roared Semmel, in a drunken voice, but Larry paid no attention. His next movement was toward the cabin.

“Don’t yo’ tech me!” roared Jeff, in alarm. “Oh, it am yo’!” he added, as he recognized Larry. “How am de battle gwine?”

“We’ve got ’em on the run—four are prisoners in the hold,” was Larry’s reply. “Get me that box of nails, Jeff—I must put that door back as it was!”

“Yes, sah; yes, sah!” answered the cook, eagerly, and brought forth the nails in question. Then he helped to put the door into place, and held it while Larry nailed the barrier. The job was just completed when the young second mate heard voices from the hold.

"Hi, dare, you let us out," came from Peterson. "Ve vill mak it right, yes!"

"You keep quiet," ordered Larry, and would say no more. Against the door he and Jeff placed several trunks and boxes taken from the staterooms opening off of the cabin.

During this time the party led by Captain Ponsberry had attacked the balance of the mutineers. There was a brief fight and Shamhaven got a cutlass cut on the knee. But then the men surrendered, and one after another was made to drop down into the hold, and the hatch was shut and battened down.

The only man who was not thus made a prisoner was Conroy, who begged at once to be forgiven.

"They got me to drink, captain," he pleaded. "I didn't know what I was doing. Forgive it, and I'll be the best man you ever had on board."

"Can I depend upon you, Conroy?" asked Captain Ponsberry, sternly.

"You can, sir—I give you my word on it."

"You won't try to help the mutineers?"

"No, sir; no, sir!"

"Very well then, I'll try you. But, remember, if you try any dirty work it will go hard with you. Now tell me, was Wilbur in favor of this mutiny?"

"No, sir, he was not. Semmel forced him into it."

“What of the others. Who were the ring-leaders?”

“Semmel and Peterson and Shamhaven. The others didn't want to do anything but complain about the grub,” answered Conroy, and then told the particulars of the mutiny from beginning to end.

CHAPTER IX

CLOSE TO A WATERSPOUT

It was decided to leave the mutineers in the hold undisturbed until morning. This done, those who had been hurt in the scrimmage had their wounds attended to, and then Jeff was set to work to prepare a good meal for all the loyal party. The galley was in a state of disorder, but this counted for nothing, and Jeff soon had matters straightened out.

After so much excitement nobody thought of retiring. Luke was stationed over the fore hatch, to give warning of any attempt on the part of the mutineers to regain their liberty. He was armed and he threatened to "blow the hull head off" of anybody who dared to show himself or make a noise. As a consequence the mutineers did nothing. Two made their way to the nailed-up door, but finding they could not open it, gave up the attempt as a bad job.

As a punishment for his misdeeds Conroy was kept at the wheel during the whole of the night. He

was willing enough to do the extra work if only the captain would forgive him for his actions. The master of the ship questioned him closely, and in the end reached the conclusion that only Semmel, Peterson, and Shamhaven were the leaders in the attempt to seize the ship and that the others had followed after them like so many sheep.

"I am glad to hear this," he said to Grandon and Larry. "I think after I read them a strong lecture they'll behave themselves."

"But we shall have to watch 'em closely," said the first mate.

"What will you do with Semmel, Peterson, and Shamhaven?" asked Larry.

"Put them in irons and keep them there until the end of the trip. When we reach Nagasaki they can take their choice of leaving or of being kicked off the ship. If they raise a row I'll hand them over to the authorities."

"You ought to have them locked up."

"True, lad; but with this war on hand the courts won't want to bother with such a case."

It was not until nine o'clock in the morning that Captain Ponsberry had the forward hatch raised once more. Those below were almost dying for fresh air and water.

"I want Wilbur to come up," he said.

“Can’t we have some water?” demanded Shamhaven.

“Yes, if you’ll behave yourselves,” was the short answer.

There was a babble of voices, but the master of the ship paid no attention. Each man who had been thrown below was unarmed, so there was no danger of any shooting. Presently Wilbur came up the rope ladder thrown to him, looking sheepish enough.

“What have you to say for yourself?” demanded the captain, when Wilbur threw himself on his knees.

“Don’t count it against me, cap’!” he groaned. “I didn’t want to go into it, I tell you! I didn’t want to go in!”

“If I forgive you, will you give me your word to behave yourself?”

“Yes, sir!”

“You won’t do any more underhanded work?”

“You can shoot me if I do, captain.”

“Very well; I’ll remember that. Now go forward and help put the ship in good order. Larry, set him to work, and see that he does just what you tell him.” And Wilbur went off, with the young second mate following, thanking his stars that he

had not been swung to the yardarm, for mutiny on the high seas is a capital offense.

One by one the mutineers were allowed to come on deck, until only Semmel, Peterson, and Shamhaven remained below. Those to come up pleaded to be forgiven and promised to obey orders in the future and let the captain run the ship to suit himself.

During the night, Groot had had a bitter quarrel with Semmel, and the Russian appeared presently with a black eye and two of his front teeth loose. He was promptly put in irons, and the handcuffing of Peterson and Shamhaven followed.

"I have allowed the other men their liberty because you three led them into this affair," said Captain Ponsberry to the trio of rascals. "I intend to keep you in irons until the end of the trip."

At this there was a loud complaint, and the three made all manner of protestations, but the master of the *Columbia* was obdurate, and at last threatened to throw them into the hold again. This quieted them for the time being, and after being given a square meal and a drink of water, they were marched off to the brig, which was cleaned of everything else for their accommodation.

Fortunately for the *Columbia* the weather re-

mained fair, so that the loss of the prisoners was not felt when it came to handling the schooner. Those who had mutinied were only too glad to get back into Captain Ponsberry's good graces and they did whatever was required with an alacrity which was as astonishing as it was gratifying. They ate whatever was set before them, and soon reached the conclusion that the food was really better than they deserved.

"We were fools to follow Semmel," said Wilbur; and Conroy and some others fully agreed with him.

But though it now looked as if the men could be trusted, Captain Ponsberry determined to keep his eyes on them. Vincent was placed at the head of one watch and Luke at the head of the other, so that, with one or the other of the mates, the deck was always guarded by at least two persons that could be depended upon.

The captain had hoped for favorable breezes following the heavy storm, but these did not come, and day after day passed with the old *Columbia* making slow progress toward Nagasaki. Formosa was passed during a bit of thick weather, so that nothing was seen of that island. Then the sun came out again, hotter than ever, so that Larry was glad to keep in the shade as much as possible.

"It's not so exciting as it was a few days ago,"

remarked Luke to Larry one day, when both were seated in the shade of the fore-castle.

"I am glad that mutiny is at an end," answered Larry. "It's a great wonder that somebody wasn't killed or seriously wounded."

"The men didn't have their hearts in the rumpus, that's why, Larry. If they had really meant business—well, I reckon some on us wouldn't be here now to tell the tale."

"I think Semmel meant business."

"Yes, he's a heap sight worse nor any o' the others."

"It was a mistake to take him on board. I tell you, a captain can't be too careful who he puts in his fore-castle."

"Well, you know the reason—those other hands gettin' sick at Manila. But I can tell you, I'd rather have a crew of Americans any day."

"They are hard to get."

"True fer you." The old Yankee tar heaved a sigh. "The old days are gone, sure enough. My! my! what times we used to have, when we'd go out; every man a-knowin' every other man on the ship, an' all about him, too! Then it was like a big family settin' sail. Now, if you go on a new ship ye don't know nobody an' nobody knows nobody else."

"I guess you expect to live and die a sailor, don't you, Luke?"

"Don't know but what I do, unless somebody leaves me money enough to live like a millionaire," and the old tar grinned.

Day after day passed and the *Columbia* kept on her course, making as straight a passage for Nagasaki as possible. One day there would be a fair breeze and the next a dead calm.

"This is unusual weather for this quarter of the globe," said Captain Ponsberry to Larry. "Like as not it will end in another hurricane."

"In that case what will you do, release Semmel and the others?"

"I may release Peterson and Shamhaven, but not Semmel, for he was the real ringleader."

There were strong signs of a storm in the air that night, but they brought forth nothing, and on the following morning the sun came up as full and bright as before. The breeze came by fits and starts, from first one direction and then another, and the man at the wheel had all he could do to keep the schooner to her course. Sails were shifted half a dozen times, but without making any improvement.

"The weather is certainly queer," said Grandon. "Puts me in mind of the time I was caught in a

tidal wave in the South Seas. Before the wave struck us we had just such cuttings-up."

"I trust we don't strike a tidal wave," answered Larry. "If it was high enough it might swamp us."

"True; but when you're on the deep blue sea, lad, you've got to take whatever comes," replied the first mate, solemnly.

Dinner was a quiet affair for all on board, and shortly after the repast Larry went to the forward deck, to have another chat with Luke. While the two were talking they were joined by Captain Ponsberry; and soon the three were conversing about old times once more.

"Do you remember the swim we once took in the Pacific?" said Larry to Luke. "The time the sawfish smashed the boat and came after us?"

"Reckon I do," was the Yankee tar's response. "We had a lively swim fer it, didn't we?"

"And the time we visited the island and you turned the turtles?" went on Larry. "And do you remember that snake that chased us into the water?"

"I do, Larry. Tell you what, we've had our share of adventures. When Admiral Dewey—What is it, captain?"

Luke broke off short and looked at Captain Ponsberry inquiringly. The master of the *Columbia* was

gazing over the port bow in an earnest, puzzled fashion.

“Do you see that little black cloud, Striker?”

“I do, sir!” And now Luke became all attention and so did Larry. “Kind o’ funny lookin’, ain’t it?”

“It is odd,” answered the captain. “Do you see how it seems to be dancing around in the sky?”

“Is it a cloud?” questioned Larry. “If so, I never saw its like before.”

“I’ll take a look at it through my glass,” went on the captain, and sent a sailor for the article.

The cloud came swiftly closer and they heard a most unusual roaring and hissing. Then of a sudden the cloud seemed to dip down into the sea. When it came up, the waters of the ocean followed, and there loomed up before those on the ship a waterspout ten or fifteen feet thick.

“A waterspout!” cried half a dozen in concert.

“And a mighty powerful one, too,” said the captain. “I trust it don’t come this way.”

“It is coming this way!” yelled Larry. “Look! look!”

The young second mate was right, the waterspout appeared to be headed directly for the schooner. But then it shot off to the westward, churning the water into a foam behind it.

"It's going away," murmured Luke, when once more the waterspout made a curve and then shot directly toward them. It was off the port bow and less than a hundred feet away. It looked as if the old *Columbia* was surely doomed!

CHAPTER X

SOMETHING ABOUT WAR AND FIGHTING SHIPS

"It's going to strike the ship!"

"It will cut us to pieces!"

"Throw the schooner over on the other tack!"

These and several other cries rang out on the deck of the *Columbia*. All felt their hearts come up into their throats as the roaring, swirling mass of water came closer and closer, until the spray drenched them completely. The ocean was churned into a white foam and the wind seemed to suck and blow in all directions at once.

But, just as it looked as if the schooner would be buried beneath a veritable mountain of water, the waterspout took another curve and slid away, along the side of the ship and off the stern. The man at the wheel came close to being carried overboard by the deluge he received and the *Columbia* bobbed up and down like a cork. But in another moment the waterspout was an eighth of a mile distant.

"What a—a narrow escape," faltered Larry,

when he felt able to speak. "I thought we were bound for the bottom sure!"

"That's the closest I ever was to any waterspout," came from Luke, as he wiped his wet brow. "Reckon we can thank Providence we ain't in Davy Jones' locker this minit!"

Captain Ponsberry did not say much, but kept his eyes fixed on the waterspout, which was making fantastic curves across the bosom of the Pacific. At times it was close by and then it would go half a mile or more away. It was a fascinating scene, full of dread, and gave more than one onlooker a chill down his backbone.

"I wish it would go away completely," went on Larry.

But this was not to be. The waterspout kept within sight for a good half-hour, although it did not come near them again. At last it grew less and less, off to the southwestward, and finally vanished altogether. The glass was used in that direction, but nothing save a clear horizon could be located.

"We are clear of it at last," said Captain Ponsberry, and breathed a long sigh of relief.

"Waterspouts are mighty dangerous things," said Grandon, after the scare was over. "When I was on board of the brig *Ben Franklin* we ran into a spout off the coast of Brazil, and it knocked off

the bow and the forward rail and nearly sank us."

"I met one once, off the coast of Cuba," said the captain. "That went ashore and tore up the trees like so many weeds for a hundred feet around. A waterspout is nothing to be fooled with, I can tell you."

On the day following the appearance of the waterspout the weather changed. There was a slight storm and then a stiff breeze sprang up which was cheering to all on board. Every stitch of canvas on the *Columbia* was spread and the schooner bowled along right merrily.

"I'd like to know how this war is going on, and how Ben and Gilbert are faring," said Larry to Captain Ponsberry. "A whole lot may have happened since we left Manila."

"Well, you'll probably get word from your brother when you reach Nagasaki, lad; and we'll get word from Captain Pennington, too."

"I hope neither of them has been wounded."

"So do I; but when one goes to the front he has got to put up with the fortunes of war. Being a soldier of fortune, as it is called, is no baby business."

"Do you suppose the Japs are continuing to bombard Port Arthur?"

“More than likely—if the place hasn’t fallen into their hands. They want to make sure of their footing in lower Manchuria, and they can never do that so long as the Russians hold a single seaport down there.”

“I suppose Russia has a pretty good-sized navy as well as an army?”

“Yes, Larry, one of the largest navies in the world. But their fighting ships are no better than the ships of Japan. You see, the Japanese navy is not near as old as the navy of Russia. Almost all of the ships are of the up-to-date types. Most of them have been built since the war between Japan and China in 1894 and 1895.”

“That would make them only about ten years old.”

“Exactly, and I’ve been told that some of the ships in the Russian navy are twenty and thirty years old. More than this, all of the Japanese guns are of the latest pattern—just as they are on our new warships.”

“I’d like to go aboard of a Japanese warship,” cried the young second mate, enthusiastically.

“Want to see if it’s as good as it was aboard of the *Olympia*, eh?”

“Yes, sir. Of course the *Olympia* was old, espe-

cially alongside of the *Brooklyn*, on which my brother Walter served in Cuban waters, but even so she was a bang-up fighting machine. If she hadn't been she wouldn't have done her share in sinking that Spanish fleet in Manila Bay."

"Well, you may have a chance to go aboard of a Japanese ship while we stop at Nagasaki. There must be a number of them at that port, coaling up and taking war supplies aboard."

"How long do you think it will be before we reach that port?"

"That will depend entirely upon the wind, as you know. If we get just what we need we may reach there inside of four or five days," answered Captain Ponsberry.

As Peterson and Shamhaven were now behaving themselves they were allowed to come out of the brig and do some work on the deck every morning and afternoon. Both begged the captain to forgive them, but the master of the *Columbia* would promise nothing.

"You went into this with your eyes wide open," he said. "Now you can line up and take your medicine."

Semmel was exceedingly bitter at not being allowed his liberty for at least a few hours a day and said he would denounce the captain at the first op-

portunity. But Captain Ponsberry soon cut him short.

"You keep a civil tongue in your head," he said, sternly. "Unless you do, I'll put you down on hard-tack and water." And thereupon Semmel became sullenly silent.

Towards evening of the day upon which Larry had the conversation about warships with Captain Ponsberry a Chinese junk, heavily laden with grass-covered boxes, was passed. Nobody on board could speak English, so the hail that was sent over the water brought no results.

"We are getting closer to the coast shipping," said the master of the *Columbia*. "I suppose we'll meet quite a few vessels from now on."

During the night an unexpected gale came up and the schooner was blown far out of her course. The gale came from the westward, so the vessel was blown to the east.

"This will make the trip a day or two longer," grumbled Grandon, after the gale had spent itself.

"Yes, but as we didn't lose a spar or a rag of canvas we can be thankful that it is no worse," responded Larry, who was always ready to look on the bright side.

The gale subsided after a blow of twenty-four hours and then the bow of the *Columbia* was once

more set towards her destination. Only a few knots had been covered when the lookout reported a vessel in sight.

"It's a steamer!" cried Larry, for the smoke from the craft's funnels was plainly to be seen.

"Maybe she's a warship," returned Tom Grandon, who was beside him. "If so, I hope she's a Japanese."

The steamer was coming along at a good rate of speed and soon they made her out to be a British vessel. She was a "tramp," that is, a vessel going from port to port, picking up whatever cargo can be found.

"Ahoy, there!" cried Captain Ponsberry, as the tramp slowed up. "What ship is that?"

"The *Lord Duffield*," was the answer. "What ship is that?"

"The *Columbia*."

"Where are you bound?"

"For Nagasaki. And you?"

"For Hong-Kong."

A little more talk followed, and the captain of the *Lord Duffield* vouchsafed the information that he had sighted a Russian warship the day before.

"A warship!" murmured Larry.

"Which way was she bound?" asked Captain Ponsberry, anxiously.

"I can't tell you. She stopped us and asked a few questions and then slipped away in the darkness."

"What warship was she?"

"The *Pocastro*, from Vladivostok. I think she used to be in the merchant service and was built over for the navy."

The captain of the British steamer could give no further information, and so resumed his course, and the master of the *Columbia* did likewise.

"Ain't very nice news, is it?" said Tom Grandon.

"It's very unpleasant news," returned Captain Ponsberry, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"What are you going to do about it?"

"What can we do, Tom? Trust to luck that we get into Nagasaki harbor, or some other port, in safety."

"We'll have to keep a sharp lookout for anything that looks like a warship, unless, of course, she flies a Japanese flag."

Word was passed around to those who could be trusted, and all day long one of the mates and a foremast hand were kept on the lookout, taking turns at looking through the best glass the schooner possessed.

"This is almost as exciting as being in a war," said Larry, when he was on duty with Luke.

“Don't you know how we looked for the Spanish ships?”

“Yes, lad; but if we sight a Russian warship it will be small fighting we'll do, to my way of thinking.”

“Oh, we won't be able to fight at all. We'll simply have to rely on our wits to keep us out of being gobbled up as a prize of war,” responded the young second mate.

CHAPTER XI

AN ORDER TO LAY-TO

WHEN taking on his cargo at Manila, Captain Ponsberry had considered the possibility of being captured by a Russian warship, and had talked the matter over with the agents of the Richmond Importing Company and with a Japanese official who was doing business on the sly in the Philippines.

The Japanese Government was willing to pay for the cargo, whether it was delivered or not—presuming it was “gobbled up” by the Russians, but was not willing to pay for the ship if the vessel was taken as a prize of war.

“That is a risk you must take yourself,” said the Japanese official. “We are willing to pay a high price for the cargo—we cannot do more.” And so the risk—so far as the schooner went—was divided equally between the Richmond Importing Company and Captain Ponsberry and the other owners of the *Columbia*.

As nearly the captain's whole wealth was tied up in his share of the schooner, he was naturally anx-

ious to make a safe trip, and he often came on deck to aid the lookouts in watching for the possible appearance of an enemy.

“If you see the least thing that looks suspicious, tell me at once,” was his order, and it was strictly obeyed. As a consequence they ran away from two steamers that afternoon and another steamer the next morning—all too far off to show exactly what they were.

“This isn’t bringing us much nearer to port,” said Larry to Cal Vincent, who was using the glass at the time. “I don’t believe we have made a dozen knots since yesterday.”

“Well, the old man is a bit nervous,” responded the boatswain, in a low voice. “And I don’t blame him. It’s no small matter to lose your craft and be thrown into prison in the bargain.”

“Would they dare to throw us into prison?”

“To be sure,—if they could prove that we were aiding the Japs.”

“Well, they’ll have hard work proving that.”

An hour went by and it began to grow misty. Then came a call from the bow.

“Sail in sight!”

“What is it?” demanded the captain instantly.

“A big steamer o’ some sort.”

Captain Ponsberry ran forward and took the glass.

For fully two minutes he did not speak and then he drew a long breath and put down the glass.

"I'm afraid she's a warship," he exclaimed, and his voice sounded unnatural.

"A warship!" echoed Larry. "Will you let me look?"

He did so, and it was not long before he could make out the approaching craft quite clearly.

"Well?" demanded Grandon, who knew that Larry's eyes were unusually strong.

"I reckon the captain is right."

"A warship?"

"Yes, not a very large affair, but still a warship. I shouldn't be surprised if she was the converted vessel the *Lord Duffield* sighted."

"Just what I think," put in Captain Ponsberry. "We've got to do our best to show her a clean pair of heels."

"The mist may help us to run away," suggested Grandon.

"Let us hope so."

Necessary orders were given, and soon the *Columbia* swung around on another tack, so that she had the large vessel on her starboard quarter. But this movement was evidently noted by the stranger, and the latter headed directly for the schooner once more.

"She is after us, that is positive," said Captain Ponsberry.

"There is a bank of mist over to the northward," returned Larry. "Why not run into that?"

"Well spoken, lad; we'll do it, and as soon as the mist hides us we can go over on the other tack and throw her off the scent."

The mist the young second mate had mentioned was nearly a quarter of a mile away and it was a question whether they could reach it before the stranger came up. But fortune favored those on the schooner. The mist rolled toward them, and in less than two minutes they were hidden as completely as could be desired.

"Now to get entirely out of the way," exclaimed Captain Ponsberry, and lost not a moment in having the sails shifted and a new course set. Through the mist they heard the other vessel steaming around noisily and did their best to keep as far away as possible from the sound.

All during that evening and the night to follow the *Columbia* kept to her new course. This was taking her away from Nagasaki, but this could not be helped. The captain said if it became absolutely necessary he would run into some other Japanese port.

When daybreak came the mist was as thick as

ever. But there were signs that it would not last much longer, and by nine o'clock the sun was struggling to come through the clouds. Nearly everybody was on deck, for they realized that a fatal moment might be at hand.

"There she is!"

The cry came from half a dozen throats simultaneously. There, on the port bow, loomed up the stranger, not an eighth of a mile away. That she was a warship there was no longer any doubt, for her forward guns were plainly to be seen.

"We're caught now!" muttered Tom Grandon.

"Not yet!" cried the captain, and gave orders to throw the *Columbia* over on a new course. But scarcely had this movement been made when there was a puff of smoke from the warship, a report, and a shot flew in front of the schooner's bow.

"There's our order to lay-to!" ejaculated Larry. "Whoever she is, she means business."

As the *Columbia* did not stop, another shot was fired, this time just grazing the bow. Seeing there was no help for it, Captain Ponsberry gave the necessary orders, and down came one sail after another.

As this was done the warship swung around and then those on the schooner saw that she flew the flag of Russia.

“A Russian warship!” ejaculated half a dozen.

“This looks to me as if the jig was up,” murmured Tom Grandon.

As quickly as it could be done, Captain Ponsberry assembled his men on deck.

“Men,” he said, briefly, “the officers on board of that warship wish to find out what they can about us. If you are asked questions say nothing more than that you shipped for the voyage to Nagasaki and San Francisco, and that you know nothing about the cargo. Do you understand?”

“Aye, aye, sir,” came from those who were listening.

“I must depend upon you to help save the ship. If the *Columbia* is suspected of being in the employ of the Japanese Government, or of carrying a cargo for that nation, she will be taken as a prize of war and we’ll go to a Russian prison most likely.”

“I don’t want to go to no Russian prison!” cried out Wilbur, his face turning pale. “I ain’t done nothing wrong!”

“Then keep your tongue from wagging too much, Wilbur,” answered the master of the schooner, grimly.

“There ain’t no use o’ fighting, is there?” asked Groot.

“Fighting?” came from Tom Grandon. “What

could the old *Columbia* do against a man-o'-war? Why, they'd blow us sky high in no time!"

"No, there is absolutely no use of attempting to fight," answered Captain Ponsberry. "Our only hope lays in convincing them that they have no right to stop us."

The hands were dismissed and sent forward, and Captain Ponsberry hurried below, to burn certain papers and secrete others. This was in accordance with the orders received from the agents of the Richmond Importing Company at Manila.

In the meantime the Russian warship had come to a stop in mid-ocean and now a small boat was lowered, containing a small crew, a coxswain, and a Russian naval officer. At the same time a signal was hoisted which meant that the officer was coming on board of the schooner.

"Unless I miss my guess, this looks rather black for us," said Larry, to Tom Grandon.

"I agree with you, Larry," responded the first mate. "But we've got to take our medicine, no matter how bitter it is."

"If only that mist had held on to-day! We might have slipped by that warship nicely."

"I only hope the old man fixes up his papers so that he can show a clean bill of health," went on Grandon. "You see, if they can't actually prove

something against us, they won't dare to touch us. They know what Old Glory means, and Russia has no desire just now to get into trouble with Uncle Sam."

"The worst of it is, our cargo may look too suspicious to them. Under ordinary circumstances they know that the *Columbia* wouldn't be carrying such a line of goods in these waters."

"That's true, too."

"Besides that, they may have had an agent at Nagasaki and at Manila spying on us. They may know just what is being done. The Czar's followers are mighty slick, I can tell you."

Captain Ponsberry now came on deck and gave quick orders that the sailors should be lined up, to receive the visitor in a befitting manner.

"A little goose grease may help," he drawled, with a knowing glance at Grandon and Larry.

The foremast hands did not know much about lining up, but took the places assigned to them, on the forward deck. Over the side a rope ladder was thrown, and then Captain Ponsberry, Tom Grandon, and Larry awaited the arrival of the Russian naval officer with keen interest.

CHAPTER XII

TAKEN AS A PRIZE OF WAR

SLOWLY but surely the small boat came closer to the schooner. She rode the long swells of the Pacific with full grace, and Larry could not help but admire the long, sturdy strokes of the jackies, as they bent to their task.

"I don't know but that they can handle a small boat as well as our own jackies," said Larry.

"Why shouldn't they? Russian naval training ought to be first-class," answered Tom Grandon. "They have been at it longer than Uncle Sam."

"True, but that doesn't always count. Spain had been at it longer than we had, too, but when it came to war we beat her in double-quick order."

As the small boat came closer they saw that the jackies were mostly men of middle age. But the coxswain was younger and so was the naval officer, who was gazing rather anxiously toward the schooner, as if wondering what the result of his mission would be.

"Wonder if that chap can talk English?" queried

the first mate. "If he can't the old man will be up a tree, for none of us can talk Russian."

"I reckon Peterson and Semmel can talk it," answered Larry. "But we don't want either of those rascals to open his mouth."

At last the small boat came up alongside of the *Columbia*. It was no easy matter to catch the rope ladder without getting bumped, but it was successfully accomplished, and then the Russian officer lost no time in coming on board. He at once saluted, and Captain Ponsberry and his mates did the same, and the sailors in the background did likewise.

"What ship is this?" asked the Russian naval officer, after a few necessary formalities were at an end.

"The American schooner *Columbia*," answered Captain Ponsberry.

"Would you mind telling me for what port you are bound?" went on the naval officer, who could speak fairly good English.

"We are bound for San Francisco, with a stop-over at Nagasaki."

"Ah! What sort of a cargo are you carrying to Nagasaki?"

"One belonging to the firm for which the *Columbia* is in commission."

"The name of the firm, please?"

"The Richmond Importing Company."

"Ah!" said the naval officer again, and looked slightly displeased. As it happened he had a brother in the army at Port Arthur, and had heard of the doings of Gilbert Pennington at that place, and of how the young American had accused certain Russians of trying to cheat the company he represented.

"What warship do you come from?" demanded Captain Ponsberry, feeling that he had an equal right to ask questions.

"The auxiliary cruiser, *Pocastra*, of the Russian navy," answered the naval officer, politely.

"And where are you bound?" went on Captain Ponsberry, bluntly.

"That, sir, is a question only our commander, Captain Titorsky, can answer."

"It's queer you are steaming around in Japanese waters."

"Perhaps so." The Russian naval officer smiled in a knowing way. "Captain Ponsberry, I am sorry, but I think I shall have to inspect your papers."

Captain Ponsberry drew himself up, resolved to put on as bold a front as possible.

"This is an American ship, sir."

"Granted, but I have my orders," returned the naval officer, coldly.

“If I refuse to let you inspect the papers?”

The young Russian officer shrugged his shoulders.

“We shall be under the painful necessity of compelling you to show them.”

“You threaten me—an American captain!”

“There is no help for it—I am simply obeying orders. We inspect all ships that we find in this vicinity.”

“Do you know I can make you pay dearly for this outrage?”

“You cannot call it an outrage. You are in Japanese waters, Japan and Russia are at war. You knew that before you came into these waters. Am I to see the papers or not?”

The commander of the *Columbia* knew that the Russian naval officer spoke the truth. Yet he made one more effort.

“Very well; I will show my papers, but I shall insist upon you signing a paper that your ship held us up.”

“You can send the paper to my ship for such a signature from my captain,” said the Russian, evasively.

By this time four of the jackies of the small boat had come on board. All were armed and they lined up at the rail, close to the rope ladder. They were good-natured sailors and grinned broadly at the

hands on the *Columbia*. Not one could speak a word of English, so conversation with them was impossible.

Captain Ponsberry led the way to the cabin of the *Columbia* and the young Russian officer followed. Getting out such papers as had been prepared for the occasion, the master of the schooner passed them over.

"These are correct so far as they go," said the Russian, after an examination lasting ten minutes had been made. "But——" he paused. "You have no further papers?"

"Those are my papers, sir," answered Captain Ponsberry, briefly.

"Then I will look at a specified list of your cargo."

"I haven't such a list," was the answer, which was true, as the list had been burnt up just a short while before.

At this statement the young Russian frowned. "Every ship carries such a list."

"Still, I haven't any."

"In that case, I shall have to order an inspection of the cargo."

"Sir, you are going too far!" said Captain Ponsberry, sternly, yet he knew he had no right to expect anything else.

"If I am going too far, I am able to take the consequences," returned the Russian, who was acting strictly under orders.

"Very well, sir; you can look the cargo over," answered Captain Ponsberry. "But I shall hold Russia accountable for the outrage."

The Russian naval officer bowed and hastened up to the deck. He spoke in his native tongue to one of the jackies who carried several small flags under his arm. At once the jackie began to wig-wag to the warship for further instructions.

"Search the ship," came back the order, and in a few minutes more another small boat left the side of the *Pocastra*, containing an officer and a crew of eight.

"We are in for it now, that is certain," observed Larry. "They are not going to let us go until they are sure we are O. K."

The second boat was soon alongside of the schooner, and the officer in charge and four men came up on the deck and joined the other Russians already there. An earnest conversation was held between the two officers.

"We'll take a general look at the cargo," said the one who had just arrived. "It will not do to go too far—in case we find everything as it should be. We want no trouble with the Yankee government."

Captain Ponsberry was asked to have the mizzen hatch opened, and this work was done by Luke Striker and several others. Then two of the Russian sailors were sent below, and one of the officers went along.

In the meantime, Peterson, unknown to anybody on board, had slipped off to the brig. Here he found Ostag Semmel in solitary confinement.

"Semmel, a Russian warship is close at hand," he said, hurriedly. "An officer and some men have just boarded us."

"Release me, Peterson!" returned the Russian sailor. "Release me and I will show Captain Ponsberry what I can do!"

"You will not get me into trouble?" questioned Peterson, anxiously.

"No. Quick—I am sure we can make money out of this."

With an iron bar, Peterson pried off the lock which had been put on the door of the brig, and drew back the bolt. Then Semmel came out of his prison, with his hands linked together.

As he was making his way to the stern deck Larry caught sight of him.

"Stop!" he called out, in alarm, realizing what Semmel might do. "Stop, Semmel!" and he ran to capture the rascal.

“Get out da vay!” roared the Russian and aimed a blow at Larry’s head. But the young second mate dodged and then caught the Russian by the legs, hurling him flat on his breast. But now Peterson came behind and gave Larry a vicious kick in the side, which made the youth let go his hold.

“What’s the row there?” called out Captain Ponsberry, and looked much disturbed to see the escaped prisoner. “Put him back where he came from!”

“Help!” yelled Semmel, in Russian. “Help, in the name of the Czar! I am a Russian subject! This ship is in the employ of the Japanese Government!”

“He speaks the truth!” called out Peterson, also in Russian. “Help us and protect us and we will prove it!” And he ran forward to where the Russian officer on deck was standing.

“You are Russians?” asked the officer, quickly.

“We are.”

“Then I shall certainly assist you.” He raised his voice. “Let that man go!” And he pointed at Semmel, now surrounded by Larry, Luke, and Cal Vincent.

The latter words were uttered in English, so all of our friends understood them. The two sailors looked inquiringly at the young second mate.

"He is nothing but a mutineer," said Larry. "We locked him up for it. He ought to have been strung up on the yardarm," he added, bitterly.

By this time Captain Ponsberry was on the scene, and those who had gone below were summoned on deck once more. The captain glared at Semmel, who lost no time in shrinking behind the Russian officers for protection.

"I can prove the cargo on this ship belongs to the Japanese Government," said Ostag Semmel. "My friend can prove it, too," he added, pointing to Peterson. "It is true we tried to seize the ship—to take her to Vladivostok, or some other Russian port, as a prize."

"This is assuredly interesting," said the leading Russian officer. "Tell me your tale in full."

Despite Captain Ponsberry's protests Semmel told his story in his own way, and Peterson corroborated it in every detail. Then Shamhaven, thinking to curry favor, came forward.

"They tell the strict truth," he said. "I worked with them. We did what we could for the benefit of the Russian Government. Every bit of cargo on this ship belongs to the Japanese Government and was to be taken ashore at Nagasaki. The last cargo of the *Columbia* was also sold at Nagasaki to the Japanese Government."

"When was this?"

"About two months ago."

More questions were put to Semmel, Peterson, and Shamhaven, and at last the Russian naval officer turned grimly to Captain Ponsberry.

"I have heard their story, and it will be unnecessary to make an inspection of your cargo, since they have told me of what it consists. In the name of Russia I claim this ship as a prize of war, and you and your crew must consider yourselves prisoners."

CHAPTER XIII

PRISONERS ON THE "POCASTRA"

CAPTAIN PONSBERRY had feared the result ever since the unexpected appearance of Ostag Semmel, so he was not very much surprised when the Russian naval officer stated that he should consider the *Columbia* as a war prize and place those on board under arrest as prisoners of war.

"This is a high-handed proceeding," said he, as calmly as possible, although his mind was in a whirl.

"I do not think so," answered the Russian officer. "Do you submit or not?"

"Since it would be useless to fight, we shall have to submit," answered the master of the schooner. "But, remember, I shall hold you and the Russian Government responsible for all you do."

"As you have said that before, there is no use of repeating it, Captain Ponsberry. We will take command of the vessel at once."

"What are we going to do?" whispered Larry to Tom Grandon.

"I don't know—follow the old man, I reckon," answered the first mate.

"We shall place a prize crew on this ship," went on the Russian officer. "These men"—pointing to Semmel, Peterson, and Shamhaven—"can remain on board. The remainder of the crew and the officers, will be transferred to the *Pocastro*. I will give you a quarter of an hour in which to attend to your luggage. Please take no more along than is necessary."

"This is certainly high-handed!" cried Larry.

"So we've got to go over to that old coal box, eh?" grumbled Luke, when he heard the news.

"It's hard luck, Larry."

"You're right, Luke, but it can't be helped."

"What will they do with us?"

"I haven't the least idea."

"Will they take us to Russia?"

"I suppose so—or stow us away in one of those cold and dirty Siberian prisons until we can get Uncle Sam to make them release us."

When it came time to depart from the *Columbia* Larry was allowed to take only a bundle of clothing along, and Grandon and the common sailors were treated no better. The captain was allowed a trunk and a suit case. In the meantime Semmel was questioned once more, and what he had

to tell made the Russians look darkly at our friends.

"He is pumping all sorts of falsehoods into them, I suppose," said Larry to Luke, and he was right. Semmel made it appear that Captain Ponsberry was really an agent of the Japanese Government and that he (Semmel) had done his best to gain possession of the ship wholly for the benefit of his own country.

"If you really did this, it is very worthy of you," said one of the officers. "But we shall have to investigate before we accept your story in full." This was not so encouraging, but with it Ostag Semmel had to be content.

Fearing that a Japanese warship might put in an appearance at any moment, the Russians lost no time in transferring the officers and men of the *Columbia* to the *Pocastro* and at the same time a prize crew of two officers and ten men were taken from the warship to the schooner. Then the sails of the *Columbia* were hoisted and off she set to the eastward, and the warship moved in the same direction.

When placed aboard the *Pocastro* Captain Ponsberry was treated politely and given a small room of his own. But the mates and the ordinary seamen were not so fortunate. Grandon, Larry, and Luke Striker were hustled off to a prison pen on one deck

of the auxiliary cruiser, and the others to another pen below, which was even worse.

"This is certainly hard luck," said Larry, as he threw his bundle into a corner and sat down on an iron bench, while Grandon and Luke did the same. "And after we had almost reached Nagasaki, too!"

"Well, there ain't no use to cry over spilt milk," came from Luke. "We're prisoners o' war, an' I reckon as how we have got to make the best o' it. Ain't the first time we've been in sech a fix."

"That is true, Luke, but it doesn't help the matter any. I guess we have seen the last of the old *Columbia*."

"I was afraid of this sort of thing happening ever since we left Manila," came from Grandon. "I told the old man to be careful, that——"

"Hush!" whispered Larry. "They may be listening—to make sure that they have caught the right parties."

"True for you, Larry; I won't say another word about that. But it looks dismal, no two ways on't," and the first mate drew a mountainous sigh.

The prison pen into which they had been placed was an iron structure, reaching from floor to ceiling, and was not over ten feet square. It had a solid back and the remaining three sides were built up of stout iron bars, only a couple of inches apart.

There was a door which was doubly locked, the key being held by a petty officer who could speak broken English and who rejoiced in the simple name of Rosenvischpoff. For short Luke nicknamed him Rosey and this name stuck to him.

"Doesn't look as if a fellow could break out of here very easily," said Larry, after an inspection of their prison. "This is a regular bank vault."

"Wouldn't do you any good to break out," returned Grandon. "As we are on the ocean, where would you go to?"

"We might hide until the vessel made a landing."

"Humph, and that would be in some Russian port, so you'd be just as bad off."

"Well, I'm not trying to escape just now. I want to get the lay of the land first, and try to find out what they are going to do with us."

From Rosenvischpoff they learned that the *Pocastro* was one of a large number of steamers of various Russian lines which had been lately pressed into the service of the national navy. She had been rushed through at one of the Russian navy yards and provided with a battery of four small and four large guns, none, however, over eight inches. She carried a crew of one hundred and eighty men, drafted principally from other warships. She had an advertised speed of twenty knots an hour but

rarely made over seventeen or eighteen. She was old and her engines were constantly in need of repair, much to the disgust of Captain Titorsky, her commander.

"Well, Rosey, how goes this war?" asked Luke, pleasantly, as the petty officer came around to give them something to eat.

"Big fight all der dime," answered Rosenvischpoff. "Russians kill all der Japs—sink all der Jap ships, yes!"

"You're winning right along, eh?"

"Yes, Russians win—Japs no do noddings, no!" And the petty officer left the food on the bench and hurried away again.

"Do you believe that?" asked Larry.

"No, I don't," came from Grandon. "He told us that simply to scare us, or else he doesn't know the real truth."

"Exactly what I think."

"These Russians are a lot of blowers," growled Luke. "Just look at Semmel. He was forever tooting his horn, and yet he couldn't do much of anything."

"He got us into trouble," said Larry, quickly.

"That's true, but he had to have this warship with all on board to help him."

The food which had been brought to them con-

sisted of a big bowl of stew, with three spoons, and three chunks of black bread.

"They are going to treat us to the best," said Grandon, sarcastically. He lifted one of the spoons and tasted the stew. "Phew, it's hot enough! Pepper, garlic, and hot water!"

"Does beat all how these fureigners do love their garlic," grumbled Luke. "'Twas the same way with them Spaniards in the Philippines."

"Garlic and grease," added Larry. "And this bread is hard enough to build a wall with," he continued. "However, we have got to eat or go hungry." And he partook of just enough to stay his stomach. Luke and Grandon were not so particular and despite their grumbling managed to make away with all that remained.

They saw nothing of the captain, or of the sailors who had been taken below, and the time hung heavily on their hands. At night they were given three hammocks and these they slung from one side of the prison to the other and rested as well as could be expected. The Russian sailors often came to the pen to gaze at them, but they had been warned not to attempt to converse with the prisoners, so nothing was said.

On the afternoon of the third day aboard of the *Pocastro*, those in the pen heard a loud shouting on

deck, followed by a rush of feet. Larry, who was resting in the corner for the want of something better to do, leaped up.

"Something is doing!" he cried to his companions.

"Here comes Captain Ponsberry," ejaculated Tom Grandon.

He was right, the captain was coming up in company with Rosenvischpoff and two sailors. The Russian petty officer opened the door of the pen and Captain Ponsberry was thrust inside. Then the door was locked as before.

"How are you, boys?" cried the captain, cordially. "All well, I hope."

"We are," answered Grandon. "And you?"

"I'm well enough, but still angry to think that we lost the *Columbia*."

"So are we angry," said Larry. "But we've got to stand it. What's that noise?"

"They have sighted a Chinese junk, and I reckon they are going to treat her as they did our vessel," answered the captain.

The noise on deck continued, followed by quarter of an hour of silence. Then came a shot, followed by a second and a third.

"Another order to lay-to," said Larry. "Wonder if the Chinamen will give in as we did?"

"They will if they are wise," said Grandon.

But the Chinamen did not believe in surrendering thus easily. They were carrying rice for the Japanese army, and thought that this was known to the enemy. Consequently they did their best to sail away.

Hardly had the craft started on a new course when the *Pocastro* opened a direct fire upon her. The noise below decks was deafening and fairly shook the iron pen in which our friends were confined.

"Hullo, that sounds like real war!" cried Larry. "They mean business now."

One broadside was followed by another, and the Chinese junk was raked from end to end with such a deadly fire that more than a sixth of the sailors and officers were killed. Then the captain flung a white flag to the breeze in token of surrender.

"We have won!" cried those on the *Pocastro*, and it was not long before our friends understood. Small boats were put out, and presently half a dozen Chinese officers from the junk were brought on board as prisoners. A fire that had started on the prize ship was put out after some hard work; and then a temporary crew was put on board, and the junk followed in the wake of the old *Columbia*, with the warship keeping guard over both.

CHAPTER XIV

PROGRESS OF THE WAR

AN hour after the capture of the Chinese junk one of the officers of the ill-fated craft was thrust into the prison pen with our friends.

He was a small sallow-eyed Celestial rejoicing in the name of Won Lung, and it was soon learned that he could speak a little English, he having once paid a visit to San Francisco.

“All go up spout!” said he, referring to his own ship. “T’ink we safe when Russian gunboat come, den all up spout!”

“Did they sink your ship?” asked Captain Ponsberry.

“No sink—shoot holes, back, front, side—all up spout. No fightee no more den—all up spout!” The latter was his pet phrase and he used it over and over again.

“You were in the Japanese trade?”

“Yes—carry rice. Now Russians got rice, got junk—all Won Lung’s money gone up spout!” And the Celestial made an odd little grimace.

“ Well, they took my ship, too.”

“ Big schooner your shipee? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Won Lung weep for you—all ship gone up spout, samee like Won Lung’s ship gone up spout! ”

“ Well, we haven’t gone up the spout yet,” put in Larry, with a laugh. “ Let us thank fortune that we are alive and well.”

“ Dat so—Won Lung lose fliends on junk—six, seven, ten—don’t know how many yet,” and the Chinese officer shook his head sadly. “ Bad war, bad! ”

“ Can you tell us how the war is going? ” asked Tom Grandon. “ These Russians say everything is a Russian victory.”

“ Russians sayee dat? ”

“ Yes—they pretend to say they have the Japs about beaten.”

At this Won Lung screwed up his eyes into mere slits.

“ Big lie dat. Japanese win everyt’ing allee timee. Russian warships gone up spout—Russian army run like—like—up spout! ”

After that Won Lung told them all he knew. It was hard to understand him, yet they gathered that there had been another sea fight in the vicinity of Port Arthur, in which the Russian navy had come off second best, and that the Japanese army that had

landed in Korea had driven the enemy to the northwestward, over the Yalu River, and was now forcing them back upon Liao-Yang.

“If this news about the army is true, Ben and Gilbert must be having a hot time of it,” was Larry’s comment. “I must say, I am mighty glad they are on the winning side.”

“Didn’t I tell ye them Russians are a lot o’ blowers?” came from Luke. “The truth ain’t in ’em half the time.”

“Perhaps they do not get the correct news from the front,” came from Captain Ponsberry. “The censors may keep the bad news back, for fear of disheartening the rest of the men in the army and navy.”

“They tell me the Russians are very strict about sending out news,” rejoined Larry.

“It is true, Larry; no country on the globe is stricter. No telegram can be sent without it is inspected, and the newspapers cannot print a single scrap of news, or a single editorial, until after the press censor has passed upon it.”

“If that’s the case, I don’t wonder that some of the people want to be free.”

“Russia is more free to-day than she ever was before, and freedom is bound to come sooner or later—that is, I mean, not such freedom as we have in the

United States, but such freedom as they have in England and Germany—where, at least, a man can call his soul his own.”

“It’s a wonder the Russians will fight for their country, if they are so ground down.”

“They know nothing better, and besides, they are really patriotic. If the Czar would only treat them a little better, and give them a little more liberty, they would be the most faithful of subjects. But when a man can’t do at all as he wants to do, and can’t open his mouth about it either, he is apt to grow sullen and ugly.”

As day after day went by life on the Russian warship became almost unendurable for Larry and the others. They suffered greatly for the want of fresh air, and at last made a vigorous protest to the captain of the ship, when he happened to be passing the pen. As a result orders were given that they should be allowed three hours on deck each day, one in the morning and two after dinner.

“This is a little like,” said Larry, when coming on deck for the first time. “Oh, how good it feels to breathe fresh air once more!” And he filled his lungs to their fullest capacity.

For their daily exercise Larry and Luke were chained together, and the pair inspected with great curiosity as much of the warship as was allowed.

“It’s not so very different from some of our own auxiliary cruisers,” said Larry. “But, after all, I like ours better.”

“That’s right, lad; stick up fer your own country every trip.”

“Well, what do you say, Luke?”

“I say I’d rather be on one of Uncle Sam’s ships than on any other in the world.”

While allowed to roam around on deck, Larry often looked eagerly for the *Columbia*, but the schooner and the Chinese junk were too far off to be distinguished with the naked eye.

“We’d give a good deal to be back on her deck, wouldn’t we, Luke?” said he.

“Don’t mention it, lad; it makes me sick,” grumbled the Yankee tar.

“I wish I knew just what was being done on land, don’t you? Perhaps this war will end soon, and then we’ll be set free.”

“It won’t end yet awhile, Larry, mark my words on that,” answered Luke.

The old Yankee sailor was right—the war was far from ended, and here it may be well to note briefly what was taking place on the sea between Russia and Japan, while the army of the Mikado was pushing through Manchuria in the direction of Liao-Yang.

The loss of the great battleship *Petropavlovsk* has already been recorded in "Under the Mikado's Flag." This vessel was sunk by a mine in Port Arthur harbor, April 13, 1904, and carried down with her Admiral Makaroff and about five hundred officers and men. At the same time the battleship *Pobieda* was also injured by a mine.

The loss of the admiral's flag-ship was a great blow to Russia, and while she was trying to recover, Port Arthur was vigorously shelled by the Japanese fleet, and many buildings were more or less damaged. Some warehouses were set on fire, but the local fire department, aided by the Russian garrison, succeeded in putting out the conflagration.

While the Japanese fleet was hammering at the city and the ships from beyond the harbor, the Japanese army encircled Port Arthur on land, taking possession of every available hill beyond the Russian line of defenses. As a consequence, by the middle of May the city was in a complete state of siege, nearly all communication with the outside world being cut off.

But now came a turn in affairs which, for a short while, made matters look favorable for Russia. While the fleet of Admiral Togo was patrolling the whole of the southeastern coast of Manchuria and protecting the Japanese transports which were pour-

ing troops into the country, occurred a catastrophe as appalling as it was unexpected.

On the same day, May 15, the magnificent battleship *Hatsuse*, of the Japanese navy, was blown up by mines and sunk, and the protected cruiser, *Yoshino*, also of Admiral Togo's fleet, collided in the fog with a sister ship, and was a total loss. It is estimated that by these two disasters seven hundred men were lost. Among the officers who met their fate were men of marked ability which Japan at this crisis could ill afford to lose.

The loss of the *Hatsuse* is worth relating in detail. She had been along the coast during a heavy fog, but this had cleared off and the sun was shining brightly. Not an enemy was in sight, and all was quiet on the great battleship when, without warning, a terrific explosion was felt near the stern and a portion of the steering gear was damaged.

"We have struck a mine!" cried some one on board, and without delay signals were hoisted for the other vessels in sight to stand by. The battleship was drifting and the locality was full of mines. It was a moment of terrible suspense. Then came another explosion, greater than the first, which ripped large holes through her heavy plates. At once the battleship began to fill, and presently she sank like a stone to the bottom of the sea. The

other warships put out their small boats with all speed, and succeeded in rescuing about three hundred officers and men out of a total of nearly eight hundred. Among those lost were Rear-Admiral Nashiba and Captain Nakao, the commander of the warship.

The *Yoshino* was lost while steaming slowly southward, after a night's vigil near the entrance to Port Arthur harbor. Other vessels of the blockading fleet were close by, so each ship had to advance with extreme caution. But the fog, instead of lifting, became thicker, and at a little before two o'clock in the afternoon the cruiser was rammed by the *Kasuga*, another vessel of the fleet. A large hole was torn in the hull of the *Yoshino*.

"Out with the collision mats!" cried the commander of the cruiser, and the mats were brought out without delay and placed over the side. But the hole was too great to be stopped in that manner. Then the captain called the entire crew on deck, and ordered the small boats to be lowered, five on the starboard side and one on the port. Before the boats could be gotten away, the *Yoshino* listed heavily to starboard and went down, smashing the five small boats under her. The other boat managed to get away, with only a handful of jackies and a couple of officers. The captain remained on the bridge

and went down with his ship. As soon as possible the *Kasuga* put out her boats and succeeded in rescuing about ninety men, out of a total of over two hundred and fifty.

It was a great blow to Japan and the Russians were correspondingly elated. Feeling that Admiral Togo's grip on the sea was now weakened, the Russian squadron at Vladivostok sailed forth and did much damage to the shipping on the northern coast of Japan, sinking several merchantmen and taking a number of others as prizes. The Russian squadron also met the Japanese transport *Kinshiu Maru*, having on board the 37th regiment of Japanese infantry.

"Surrender, or we will sink you!" signaled the Russian commander. The Japanese refused, and were given exactly an hour in which to think it over. As they still refused, a torpedo was discharged against the doomed ship. As she began to sink the Japanese soldiers opened fire with their rifles, and then the Russians answered with their machine guns, mowing down the Mikado's men by the score. But the Japanese were brave to the last, and sank beneath the waves with the cry of *Banzai!* (hurrah!) on their lips.

It was an auxiliary cruiser of the Vladivostok squadron which had taken the *Columbia* and the

Chinese junk as prizes of war. The captain of the cruiser was now looking for the rest of the squadron, but so far none of the warships had been sighted.

“They must have returned to Vladivostok,” he reasoned, and then turned in that direction with the *Pocastra*, never dreaming of what the near future held in store for himself, his ship, and his crew.

CHAPTER XV

A SHARP NAVAL BATTLE

So far the weather had been good, but following the conversation recorded in the last chapter there came up a dense fog, and for twenty-four hours the Russian warship did nothing but creep along in the gloom.

During that time, for some unknown reason, Larry and the others were allowed greater freedom than before. Each had his hands chained behind him, but all were separate, which allowed each to roam around as he pleased.

"This is better than being linked to somebody else," said the youth to his old sailor friend. "Not but that we got along well enough together," he added, hastily.

"You're right—there wasn't no sense in joinin' us together," answered Luke. "We can't git away if we want to."

"We might, if we didn't have our hands chained, Luke."

"How?"

"If we all got together some night—providing

we could keep out of the pen—and stole one of the small boats.”

“Easier said nor done. The guard would ketch ye an’ shoot ye down like a dog.”

“Oh, I know there would be a great risk. But I hate to think of going to a Siberian prison, or aboard a Russian prison ship.”

“So do I, Larry. But even if we stole the boat and got away, where would we go to,—especially if we didn’t have much provisions an’ water?”

Larry could not answer that question, since he did not know the location of the *Pocastra*. It might be that they were hundreds of miles from land. If so, to take to a small boat with a scarcity of water and provisions would certainly be foolhardy.

The fog continued during the night, but swept away as if by magic about nine o’clock in the morning. At that time the prisoners had had their breakfast and Larry and Luke were between decks, looking at some gunners’ assistants cleaning out one of the large guns.

Suddenly came a call from the lookout, followed by half a dozen commands. As everything said was in Russian, our friends did not understand a word, but they soon realized that something unusual was in the air. A shrill whistle sounded out and drums began to beat to quarters.

“I’ll wager a new hat they have sighted a Japanese ship!” cried Larry, and scarcely had he spoken when there came a dull booming over the water.

“Let us go to the deck an’ see what’s doing,” returned Luke, and both started for the stairs. But scarcely had they appeared on the deck when they were ordered below again.

Larry was right; a Japanese warship had been sighted, and this vessel had lost no time in discharging a signal gun to a sister ship only a few miles away.

Hardly had the youth and his friend reached the lower deck once more than the Japanese cruiser opened fire on the Russian vessel. The latter retaliated, and the booming of cannon shook the *Pocastro* from stem to stern.

“This is a fight for fair!” ejaculated Luke, with a broad smile on his face.

“I hope the Japs win, Luke!”

“So do I, lad. But where do we come in, that’s what I want to know?”

“If we could only drop overboard and swim to that other ship!”

“No use of trying—some of the fellows in the tops would pick us off in no time. No, we’ve got to stay right where we are an’ take what comes.”

“Where are the others?”

They looked around, but could see nothing of Captain Ponsberry or Tom Grandon. They saw Cal Vincent run past, but he was out of sight before they could stop him.

Suddenly a crash above them told that a solid shot had struck the upper works of the Russian cruiser. Then came another crash at the bow.

“Those Japs know how to fire,” came from the Yankee sailor. “Reckon as how they’re going to do their best to blow this ship sky-high. I’d give ’most a dollar to be somewhere else just about now!” And he shook his head anxiously.

The Russian gunners were working with a will, and so were their numerous assistants. The *Pocastro* was swung around, and now both ships were broadside to each other. The thunder of the guns was terrific and the smoke rolled around in all directions.

“Puts me in mind o’ the battle o’ Manila Bay, eh?” remarked Luke, as he and Larry stood at a distance, watching the Russians work one of the guns.

“You are right, Luke, only——”

Larry got no further, for at that moment came another crash on deck. The *Pocastro* shivered and heaved, and to those below it was as if she would surely sink.

“They’re pumping it into us, sure as you’re born!” sang out the old Yankee tar. “Hullo, what’s this?”

There was a rush of several gunners across the deck. “Beware of that gun!” yelled one in Russian, and then a stampede followed.

In the midst of the confusion came a fearful explosion from below. A portion of the flooring was ripped apart and one of the gunners was instantly killed and several wounded. A great volume of smoke rolled up, and splinters and bits of iron and steel flew in all directions.

Both Larry and Luke were almost stunned by the explosion and for the moment could do nothing but clutch each other in terror. Both were struck by the flying splinters, but neither was seriously wounded. They staggered back and began to cough, for the dense smoke was strangling.

“Must have been a torpedo——” gasped Luke.

“Or else a magazine!” spluttered Larry. “Let—let us get—get out of here. I’m—choking—to—to—death!”

It was really a magazine which had exploded. This tore a good-sized hole in the *Pocastro’s* side, in a spot impossible to get at in the confusion. In the meantime a solid eight-inch shell struck the Russian ship squarely in the stern, doing additional damage.

and killing and wounding two officers and nine men.

Almost choked to death, Larry and Luke crawled to where the ladder ran to the deck. The Russian jackies and gunners were swarming up, along with all the prisoners.

"Larry, are you safe?" came in the voice of Captain Ponsberry, and he loomed up, with Tom Grandon, Cal Vincent, and the Chinese petty officer beside him.

"So far I am," answered Larry. "But I—I—must have air!" and he began to cough.

The jam on the ladder was terrific, and in the midst of the *mêlée* a Russian gunner and the Chinese petty officer got into a quarrel. The gunner threw the Celestial down, but he bounced up like a ball, and in a twinkling the Russian received a blow in the stomach which sent him staggering back into the crowd and the deadly smoke.

"No knock me up the spout!" sang out the Celestial. "Ship go down I go uppee!" And soon he was out on the upper deck.

Fighting, surging, pushing, and yelling the Russians and our friends got to the deck at last. Captain Ponsberry had his coat literally ripped from his back, and Cal Vincent had an arm almost torn from its socket. For this he gave a Russian gunner a

rap in the mouth which knocked loose several teeth. It was a case of each man for himself, and many fought like wild beasts.

At last Larry found himself free of the crowd, with Luke still beside him. Captain Ponsberry and Cal Vincent were not far away, but between surged a great number of Russians. The *Pocastro* was listing heavily to port and had evidently taken a large quantity of water into her hull.

Two Japanese warships were now at hand and both were firing upon the doomed Russian cruiser with deadly accuracy. From the fighting tops of the Mikado's ships came a perfect hail of small bullets which sent the Russians to the deck by the score. By this fire one of the *Columbia's* sailors was killed and Cal Vincent was seriously wounded. A bullet likewise grazed Luke Striker's thigh, drawing some blood, but the Yankee tar did not know of this until the conflict was at an end and he saw the crimson stain on his shoe top.

At last the Russian captain saw that to fight further would be useless. The *Pocastro* was in danger of going down at any moment. The guns could no longer be used, and he ordered the colors lowered and put up a signal of surrender.

A wild cheer came from the two Japanese warships when it was realized that the battle was won.

"*Banzai! Banzai!*" rent the air over and over again. "Hurrah for the Mikado! Down with the Russians!"

A little while after the fighting came to an end, several small boats put off from the two Japanese warships and half a dozen of the Mikado's naval officers presented themselves at the *Pocastro's* side. The Russian ship still listed heavily, but after the smoke below had cleared away it was ascertained that the damage done was not as great as had been imagined. One of the magazines which had been in danger of blowing up had been flooded, and the rush of sea water had likewise put out a fire that had started in the stern.

As soon as order could be restored on board of the *Pocastro* a complete surrender was made to the Japanese, the Russian captain giving up his sword. Then a general conference was had lasting over an hour. At the end of that time, much to their surprise, the Americans were asked to go over to one of the Japanese warships.

"We'll go, and glad of the chance," said Captain Ponsberry; and soon the transfer was made.

CHAPTER XVI

ABOARD A JAPANESE WARSHIP

“WHAT a beauty of a ship!”

Such was Larry's exclamation as he stepped aboard of the Japanese warship. The vessel was, like the Russian prize, an auxiliary cruiser and named the *Mimora Juri*. She was but three years old and had been used for passenger service between Japan and China. For such a small cruiser she carried an unusually heavy battery, and everything was shined up to the last degree,—the work having been undertaken directly after the battle was over. The *Mimora Juri* had suffered but little damage during the contest and only a handful of men had been killed and wounded.

“This looks more like Uncle Sam's navy than anything I have seen yet,” said Luke.

“Well, I don't know that the decorations aboard our ships are quite so fine,” returned the youth. “But then this isn't an ordinary fighting ship. Some of the auxiliary cruisers we used during the war with Spain—those that used to be trans-Atlantic steamers—were just as fine as this and finer.”

As soon as those from the *Columbia* reached the Japanese warship the wounded were taken in charge by the surgeons and placed in the sick bay, as the hospital on a naval vessel is called. This was also in the best of order, with nice, swinging cots, and appliances of the latest designs.

As there were many things to be arranged between the two Japanese vessels and the Russian prize, our friends were not interviewed until late in the evening. In the meantime, some of the Russians were made prisoners, and a prize crew was placed aboard of the *Pocastra*. Then the two Japanese warships moved away, with the captured cruiser between them.

"Those Russians must feel sick," was Larry's comment. "It's worse for them, in a way, than if their ship had gone down."

"Well, we all thought she was sinking," returned Captain Ponsberry. "If she had sunk I reckon some of us wouldn't be here to tell the tale."

When evening came, a guard who could speak a little English conducted Captain Ponsberry, Larry, and Tom Grandon to the commander's cabin. Here they were met by Captain Tonkaka, who, being a graduate of the Japanese naval school, could speak not only English but also several other foreign

languages. It may be mentioned here that the Japanese naval academy of to-day is one of the foremost institutions of its kind in the world.

"I will hear your story, Captain Ponsberry," said the Japanese captain, politely, as he motioned his visitors to be seated.

In a plain, direct manner the master of the *Columbia* told his tale, starting from the time the schooner left Manila with a cargo intended for the Japanese Government. He told of the trouble with Semmel and of the mutiny, and then of the capture by the *Pocastro*.

"You have assuredly been unfortunate," said Captain Tonkaka. "Have you any idea where your schooner is now?"

"I have not, but I thought she must be close to the Russian ship—she and that Chinese junk, too. The *Pocastro* was taking them to Vladivostok as prizes."

"Ah!" The Japanese captain mused for a moment. "I dare say you would like to gain back your ship?" he continued.

"Indeed I would!" cried Captain Ponsberry. "I'd give a pretty dollar to do so!"

"I shall interview the captain of the Russian warship again to-morrow. It may be that he will tell us where she is—although I doubt it."

After this a few questions were put to Larry and Tom Grandon and both corroborated what Captain Ponsberry had said. They were also questioned concerning the treatment they had received while on the *Pocastra*.

"You may be thankful that the treatment was no worse," said Captain Tonkaka. "Of late some of the Russians have treated their prisoners in a most brutal fashion."

"We are thankful," replied the master of the *Columbia*.

The majority of the staterooms aboard of the *Mimora Juri* were occupied by the officers of the cruiser, but one small room was turned over to Captain Ponsberry, and a larger apartment was turned over to Tom Grandon and Larry. At Larry's solicitation Luke Striker was allowed to "bunk in" with the first and second mates.

"This 'ere ship is jest about next to a palace," was Luke's comment. "Ain't seen nothing so fancy in a long time."

The Japanese warships were bound for the nearest naval station with their prize. They could readily have made eighteen knots an hour, but the crippled Russian cruiser could not make over ten, and so this was the rate of speed set for all three.

The Americans were allowed the freedom of the

ship and Larry and Luke spent many hours in inspecting the guns and other equipments, and in watching the Japanese jackies in the gun and cutlass drills, their physical exercises, and in their drills to fight fire and to lower the small boats. Everything on board ran as smoothly as clockwork, much to their delight.

“I can tell you what, Luke!” cried Larry, enthusiastically, “this beats the Russians all hollow! I never saw anything so well done!”

“Almost beats our own navy, doesn’t it?”

“Well, I don’t know about that. But it is certainly just as good. That drill to fight fire is immense, and their physical exercises ought to make each man’s muscles like iron.”

“They are a sturdy lot, lad, no two ways about that,—and they understand just how to keep themselves in the pink of condition.” Luke rubbed his chin reflectively. “Do ye know what I have in mind to do?”

“I think I can make a pretty good guess,” came quickly from Larry.

“Well?”

“You’re thinking that you’d like to join the Japanese navy, just to have a mix-up or two with the Russians.”

“You’ve struck the nail on the head, lad. And

why not, seeing as how we are out here in fighting waters, and with no ship of our own to go aboard?"

"Well, I feel a good bit that way myself. Ben is in the army, and so is Gilbert Pennington. If they can make a record for themselves why shouldn't I do the same? As it was I came close to joining the army with Ben."

"So you told me before. But you're a born sailor, Larry, not a soldier."

"I don't deny it. I'd rather be on board of a ship than on land any day."

"Yes, to a fellow as gets used to the sea the land seems a strange place."

From the Japanese on the warship who could speak English our friends learned much concerning the war. They were told that Admiral Togo's fleet was keeping a strict guard over the harbor approach to Port Arthur, and that a portion of the Japanese army was hemming in the city on the land side and had lately captured several hills of importance.

From Captain Tonkaka the Americans obtained permission to station themselves in one of the fighting tops, and here they spent hour after hour, on the lookout for the *Columbia*. Captain Ponsberry was particularly anxious to find his vessel, and kept

scanning the Japan Sea through a fine spyglass the Japanese captain loaned him.

“If I can gain possession of that ship, I am going to fix Semmel and Peterson,” said the master of the *Columbia*.

“Both of them declared that they took possession of the ship for the sake of the Russian Government,” said Larry. “That being the case, they should be treated as prisoners of war.”

“Exactly my idea, Larry.”

“Semmel is a thoroughly bad egg,” came from Tom Grandon. “He will lie out of his troubles if he can possibly do so.”

“It will be a shame if we don’t find the *Columbia* again,” went on Larry. “Think of those rascals taking her to Vladivostok and getting their share of the prize money! It makes me sick!”

“Captain Tonkaka tells me that other Japanese warships are in this vicinity,” said Captain Ponsberry. “They may fall in with the schooner even if we don’t. But what they will do with her, in that case, there is no telling. They might claim her as a prize also, and if they did, I’d have some trouble in getting my property back.”

What the Japanese captain had said was true. In order to counteract the doings of the Russian squadron which was raiding the northern and east-

ern coasts of Japan, the Mikado had sent out a flying squadron of six or seven vessels, all of which, though not large, had good sailing powers.

Owing to the heavy mists, the flying squadron became separated, and two of the vessels fell in with the *Pocastro*, as already described. Of the other ships some proceeded up the coast to Korea and caught two Russian colliers loaded with coal and another ship carrying steel rails for the Manchuria railroad. The remainder of the squadron put further to sea, and on the fourth day out caught sight of two Russian steamers loaded with munitions of war. A chase ensued, lasting three days, and several shots were exchanged at long range. But a mist, coming up one night, put an end to the chase, and chagrined to think that the enemy had given them the slip after all, the Japanese turned back once more, to look for the other vessels of the flying squadron.

CHAPTER XVII

THE RETAKING OF THE "COLUMBIA"

"WE are in for another storm!"

It was Larry who made the remark. He was in one of the tops with Luke, gazing anxiously to the westward, where the black clouds were beginning to pile up.

"Right you are, lad—and it's going to be a heavy one, unless I miss my guess."

The storm broke half an hour later, and the wind and rain were so furious that our friends were glad to leave the top and go below. But some of the Japanese sailors did not appear to mind the lashing of the elements and remained on deck as if nothing out of the ordinary was occurring.

"These chaps beat me!" said Larry. "They are certainly as tough as pine knots. I never saw their equal."

"I'm beginning to think that the Japanese are a wonderful nation," put in Tom Grandon, seriously. "I used to look at them as something like the Chinese. But there is a wide difference between them and the Chinks."

"A Chinaman isn't in it alongside of a Japanese," came from Captain Ponsberry. "The Japanese are up-to-date and very progressive; the Chinese are about a hundred years behind the times."

The storm continued for the best part of half a day. There was but little thunder and lightning, but the wind blew a perfect gale. Yet even the *Pocastro* did not seem to mind the wind, and all three of the warships proceeded on their way at only a slightly reduced rate of speed.

"Such a gale as this will play havoc with the sailing vessels," said Larry. "I wonder how the old *Columbia* is making out?"

"I was thinking that same," rejoined Captain Ponsberry. "To tell the truth, I'd rather have her go to the bottom than see her taken to a Russian port as a prize."

When the storm cleared away, Larry was one of the first to go on deck, to get a whiff of "washed air," as he called it. The others followed.

"I see a sail!" cried the youth, a moment later, and at that instant came a cry from the lookout. Far to the eastward was a sailing vessel flying a signal of distress.

"She looks familiar to me!" ejaculated Captain Ponsberry, and ran to get Captain Tonkaka's glass. One glance through the instrument was enough.

"The *Columbia*!"

"Are you sure?" cried Larry.

"She certainly is the *Columbia*," said Tom Grandon, after a look through the glass. "She has lost her fore topmast and part of her bowsprit."

"And a part of the stern rail is gone," added Larry, after he too had used the glass. "Let us tell Captain Tonkaka," he added, starting to go below.

The news that the *Columbia* was in sight was soon circulated throughout the ship, and Captain Tonkaka at once signaled to the other warships that he was going to her assistance. Then the *Mimora Juri* steamed away on her new course.

As they drew closer to the schooner they could see that the storm had treated the gallant old ship roughly enough. Many of the sails were in ribbons, and not only the fore topmast but also half a dozen of the spars were gone. One end of the forecastle was stove in, and a part of the stern was a wreck.

"This is the worst yet!" cried Larry. "They must have caught more of the gale than we did."

"They didn't know how to handle her, that's the reason of it," came from Captain Ponsberry. "We have taken her through a worse blow than that; eh, Tom?"

"I think so," answered the second mate.

As soon as the Japanese warship was close enough a boat was lowered and an officer went aboard of the schooner, followed by several of his crew and Captain Ponsberry, Grandon, and Larry.

The Russians having the schooner in charge were meek enough. As a matter of fact the gale had terrorized them, and all had imagined they were surely going to the bottom of the sea. They did not like it to find themselves in the hands of the enemy and were astonished when they learned that the *Pocastro* had been captured.

"It was a fearful storm," said the Russian officer who was in charge. "Several times I fancied the masts would all go by the board. I shall never want another such experience. One man was washed overboard and several were badly hurt by the wrecking of the forecastle."

"Were any of my former men injured?" asked Captain Ponsberry.

"It was my fellow countryman, Ostag Semmel, who was swept overboard and drowned," answered the Russian officer.

"Semmel!" ejaculated Larry. He drew a long breath and his hatred of the man died all in an instant. "Poor chap! That was rough on him!"

"It certainly was rough," answered Captain Ponsberry. "And what of the others?"

“Both Peterson and Shamhaven were hurt, but not seriously. They are below resting,” was the answer.

It was found that some of the seams of the schooner had opened but that no alarming quantity of water was running into the well. The Russians were asked to surrender as prisoners of war and this they did willingly, and were transferred to the Japanese warship. Then Captain Ponsberry was asked if he wished to take charge of the *Columbia* again.

“Will a duck swim!” he cried. “Of course I want to take charge. Hasn’t she always been my ship? And my crew will want to go with me, I know.”

“But the wreckage——” began Captain Tonkaka.

“I’ll attend to that, sir,—don’t you worry. Only give me back my ship, that’s all I ask.”

“It shall be as you say, Captain Ponsberry. But when you get to Nagasaki you will have to settle matters with the Japanese Government. It is, all told, a rather peculiar case. In one way, she is now a Japanese prize of war, and in another way she is not.”

“I understand, and the courts will have to settle the tangle, sir. I’ll do what is fair, and I know the Richmond Importing Company will do the same.”

"Then you can go aboard of the ship as soon as you please."

"Thank you very much."

Captain Ponsberry had returned to the warship for just this talk, and now he lost no time in getting back to the *Columbia*, taking with him all his crew, including Cal Vincent, who was just about able to get around once more.

"Hurrah!" cried Larry, "this seems like home once more, doesn't it?"

"That's what it does," answered Luke. "But there is plenty of work ahead, I can tell you that, lad."

"I don't care—work will help to pass the time."

When Peterson and Shamhaven saw Captain Ponsberry they did not know what to say. The loss of their leader, Semmel, had humbled them greatly.

"I'm not going to say much to you, seeing as how both of you are hurt," said the master of the *Columbia*, briefly. "But understand, I want no nonsense from either of you."

"I'll do all I can to assist you, captain," said Shamhaven, humbly. "All I want is another chance."

"Which you'll not get from me," was the quick rejoinder. "I know you thoroughly, Shamhaven, and I am done with you. You and Peterson aided

the Russians and you can now consider yourselves under arrest. When we get into port I'm going to hand you over to the Japanese authorities."

Both of the culprits wanted to argue, but the captain would not listen. Their hurts were inspected and they were told that they would be allowed three days in which to recuperate, after which they would have to do their share of duty.

"I don't like this," growled Shamhaven, after the interview was over. "Peterson, we are in it deeper than ever."

"Dat is so," was the answer, with a scowl. "Vell, ve not put up mit him, hey? Maybe, ven we git near shore, we run away, Shamhaven."

"Yes, if we can get the chance. But I don't know where you are going to run to—especially if you haven't any money."

"Ve git money."

"From where?"

"I ton't know dot yet, no, but ve git him, yes. Captain Ponsberry must haf some, and dot Larry Russell, too. Vonce I see Russell mit a money pelt vot haf some gold in him, yes."

"A money belt with gold? You must be dreaming."

"No, I see him mit mine two eyes. He count der gold. He haf more as dirty pieces."

"That is worth remembering," answered Sham-haven. And he began to speculate upon what he could do in Japan if he was free and had a money belt full of gold.

That Larry had a money belt was true. He had purchased it several years before, while on shore duty in the Philippines. He was a saving fellow and found the belt useful in which to place his wages and the money which he occasionally received from home. Strange as it may seem, the belt had not been taken away from him by the Russians, and it now contained nearly three hundred dollars. The money was mostly in gold,—for he had found that gold could be used no matter where he went.

CHAPTER XVIII

A CLEVER RUSE

As soon as Captain Ponsberry was in charge of the *Columbia* once more he set about without delay to put the schooner in proper condition for the run to Nagasaki. The broken-off foremast was allowed to remain as it was, but a temporary bowsprit was set into place, and the damage to the forecastle and to the stern repaired. A temporary rail was also nailed up, so that there might be no danger of anybody slipping overboard.

In all this work the sailors and the ship's carpenter did their best, and the captain and his mates helped. Sails were also sewed up, or replaced, and inside of forty-eight hours the old *Columbia* was once more on her way. The water taken aboard was pumped out, and the pumps were kept going two hours each morning and two hours each afternoon.

"She will do now," said the captain, after the heaviest of the work was over. "But when we reach Nagasaki I'll have to put her in the dock for

regular repairs. I shouldn't dare to take her to Manila or to San Francisco in such a condition."

"It will take a long time to have the repairs made in Japan," said Larry. "All the shipyards are busy on government work."

"True, lad, but that cannot be helped. The law would not allow me to sign a crew with a ship that was not seaworthy."

"Then we'll have a long lay-off when we reach Nagasaki."

"Exactly, Larry. But I shan't keep you. If you want to go elsewhere——"

"Not on another sailing vessel, Captain Ponsberry. But you know how it is with Luke Striker and myself. Ever since we were in our own navy we have had a hankering after warships, and——"

"And you think of joining the Japanese navy?" put in the master of the schooner, quickly.

"That's it. You know how I spoke of joining the army with Ben and Gilbert."

"To be sure—and I told you I couldn't spare you."

"But now, if you haven't any use for me any longer——"

"Why, Larry, if you want to fight for Japan, go ahead and fight!" ejaculated Captain Ponsberry.

"I don't blame you. I'd fight myself if I was a

younger man and hadn't any obligations on my shoulders. I suppose Ben is doing great things in the army and you'd like to match him in the navy, eh?"

"If I join the navy I'll do my best."

"Will Striker go with you?"

"Oh, yes, Luke and I always go together, if we can. He was my chum when we fought under Dewey and he has been my chum ever since."

"And a good fellow, too, Larry—a man with a heart of gold. If it wasn't that you and Tom Grandon were with me, I should have made him a mate long ago."

"I don't doubt that, sir—and he is worthy of it." Larry paused for a moment. "Of course, I don't know if they want any of us in the navy."

"Didn't you tell me before that they had several men you had met while under Dewey and some your brother Walter had met while fighting in Cuban waters?"

"Yes, but that was some time ago."

"If they took those chaps then it's likely they will take you now—unless, of course, they have all the men they want—which I doubt."

"We shall not go as ordinary jackies. Ben got a commission as a captain, and Luke thinks he might go as a gunner and I might go as an assistant gun-

ner. We occupied those positions before we left our navy."

"Then I should certainly strike for the positions. They may need gunners even if they don't need common seamen," responded Captain Ponsberry.

As fortune would have it, the run to Nagasaki was made without incident worthy of special mention. Once there was a scare on board, as the water in the well hole increased with alarming rapidity. But the new leak was discovered in time, and the ship's carpenter had little difficulty in repairing it. They also sighted a vessel they thought might be a Russian warship, but she proved instead to be a Japanese coastwise freighter, carrying lumber from one port to another on the northern coast of Japan.

As the *Columbia* drew closer to Nagasaki both Peterson and Shamhaven grew more anxious over what was to become of them. Neither desired a term in a Japanese prison, and both wondered what sort of a charge Captain Ponsberry and the captain of the Japanese warship would prefer against them.

So far Captain Ponsberry had allowed them their liberty, but through the talk of a couple of sailors they presently learned that they were to be cast into the ship's brig and placed under guard as soon as the schooner dropped anchor.

"This looks black for us," said Shamhaven, moodily. "I wish we were out of it."

"I haf a plan got, yes," answered Peterson.

"To get away?"

The other nodded.

"Then let me hear the plan by all means, Peterson."

"It vos—vot you call him—risky, yes. Maybe ve get shot—you no like him, no?"

"Of course I don't want to get shot. But what is your plan?"

"So soon like de ship come up by der harbor we vatch our chances an' trop oferboard, yes."

"And swim ashore?"

"Maybe ve swim by some udder poat, yes. Of ve got money we go to leetle poat—gif Jap mans money to take us away, you see now?"

"You mean to watch for some small Japanese boat—a bumboat, eh? And bribe the boatman to take us to some place of safety?"

"You got him now, yes."

"That's good enough if we can find the bumboat and get the money with which to do the bribing."

"Captain Ponsberry got money—an' Russell he got money pelt, like I told you."

"Oh, I haven't forgotten about that money belt," returned Shamhaven. "And I wouldn't mind tak-

ing it if I could get my hands on it. But Russell must wear it most of the time."

"I t'ink he not put him on by der night dime, no."

"What do you know about Captain Ponsberry's money?"

"He got money in a leetle pag—I see him vonce."

"How much do you think?"

At this Peterson shrugged his shoulders.

"No can tell dat—maype a thousand dollars."

There was a pause, and Shamhaven drew a long breath.

"One thing is certain," he resumed. "I don't intend to go to a Japanese prison, or an American prison either, if I can help it, and if we cut loose here in a strange country we are bound to need more or less money with which to get along. Without money a fellow can't do a thing in a strange country."

"We git money—chust you vait," said Peterson.

At last the *Columbia* came into sight of the shipping of Nagasaki. But it was now dark, and a heavy fog was hanging over the harbor, so it was impossible to make the proper landing before the next day. They came to anchor and the necessary lights were hung out.

"This is our chance," said Shamhaven. "It is now or never!"

He had heard that Peterson and himself were to be made close prisoners directly after supper. He watched his chance and when nobody was looking motioned his confederate to leave the forecastle and steal silently toward the stern of the ship. Each carried a block of wood, to which was attached a bit of iron, to make it sink from sight.

"Now then!" whispered Shamhaven, and threw the block he carried overboard. It struck the water with a loud splash, and the block carried by Peterson immediately followed.

"Hullo, what's that?" came in the voice of Tom Grandon. "Who threw something overboard?"

"Sounded like somebody jumping into the water," replied Captain Ponsberry, who was on deck with the first mate.

An examination was made, but in the fog and darkness nothing could be discovered.

"It was mighty queer," was Grandon's comment. "Somebody must have done it."

"Where are Shamhaven and Peterson?"

"In the forecastle, I suppose. Do you think——"

"I don't know what to think. See if they are there."

At once Tom Grandon ran off, and made a tour not only of the forecastle but also of the forward

deck. He called the men's names several times, and others quickly joined in the hunt.

"They are gone!" he ejaculated, running back to where Captain Ponsberry stood.

"Gone? Then it must have been them jumping overboard that we heard!"

"Like as not—and they are a good bit away from the schooner by this time."

"Bring a lantern and we'll take a look around."

A lantern was brought, and a few minutes later a small boat was lowered, manned by Luke and three other sailors. Captain Ponsberry went with them, and the searchers remained out the best part of an hour.

"They've given us the slip clean and clear," declared the master of the *Columbia*, on returning. "It was a risky thing to undertake in such weather as this."

"Yes, and for all we know they may be at the bottom of the harbor," answered Tom Grandon.

"Which place might be jest what they deserve," grumbled Luke Striker, as he helped to stow away the small boat once more.

CHAPTER XIX

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE ENEMY

As soon as Peterson and Shamhaven threw the blocks of wood overboard they darted for the companionway of the schooner and crept noiselessly down to the cabin.

The apartment was deserted, and the swinging lamp over the center table was turned low. On the table rested several charts which Captain Ponsberry had been consulting before joining Tom Grandon on deck.

It was Larry's watch below and he was improving the time by taking a much-needed nap. He lay on the berth in his stateroom, with the door wide open to admit the fresh air.

"Make no noise!" whispered Shamhaven. "If we are discovered the jig is up with us."

"Russell is here, yes?" came from Peterson.

"Sh-sh! Yes—over in yonder stateroom."

They closed the door leading to the companionway and then tiptoed their way to where Larry lay.

"More than likely he keeps his money belt under

his pillow when he sleeps," said Shamhaven. "Wait till I find out."

He shoved his hand under the headrest with caution and presently his fingers came into contact with a strip of leather and chamois. He pulled on it gently, but it refused to budge.

"Lift his head a little," he said, and Peterson started to do as requested. But the movement, gentle as it was, caused Larry to open his eyes.

"Wha—what are you doing here?" stammered the young second mate, when, waiting for no more words, Peterson clapped a dirty hand over his mouth.

"Keep still, you! If you no keep still I hit you good, yes!"

"Confound the luck," muttered Shamhaven. "I didn't want him to know what we were up to."

Larry began to struggle and with an effort threw aside the hand over his mouth.

"Le—let up!" he spluttered. "I want you—Help!"

"Shut up!" cried Shamhaven, fiercely, and struck him a swinging blow in the temple. Another blow from Peterson followed, and then, with flashing lights darting through his brain, Larry lost consciousness.

Both men bent over him to see if he would move.

When he lay as still as if dead they looked at each other with satisfaction.

"He won't bother us any more—at least, not for awhile," was Shamhaven's comment.

"Quick, de money belt!" came from Peterson, and as he raised up Larry's head, Shamhaven secured it and stowed it away in the bosom of his shirt. "You no keep him!" he went on, in alarm, showing that he did not trust his companion in crime.

"We'll divide up afterwards," said Shamhaven, briefly. "Now to locate the captain's little pile."

Both tiptoed their way into Captain Ponsberry's stateroom. Here there was a small safe, with the door closed.

"A safe, eh?" said Shamhaven. "Wonder if we can open it?"

He knelt down and tried to work the combination lock. The safe was old and out of order and the captain had had the combination lock made as simple as possible in consequence. Soon there came a click, followed by another, and the bolts shot back.

"Luck is with us!" cried Shamhaven.

"Dare is de leetle pag," came from Peterson, and reaching into the safe he drew the article forth. There was a slip string at the top which he pulled apart.

"Gold!" he cried. "See—dirty—forty bieces

of gold!" And then he shut the bag again, and placed it into his own shirt bosom.

"Remember, half of that is mine," came sharply from Shamhaven. He fancied there might be more in the bag than in the money belt.

"Yes,—an' haf de money-pelt money ist mine, yes," returned Peterson.

"Right you are, Peterson. Now to get away from the ship."

"Let us lock Russell in de stateroom first."

"A good idea!"

The door was closed and locked. Larry still lay unconscious and there was no telling how soon he would come to his senses.

They heard the tramping on the deck and the departure of the small boat. Now those in the boat came back and the search for the missing men came to an end.

With the slyness of a pair of cats, the evildoers crept up the companionway once more. Nobody was in sight, and they crawled rather than walked to the rail of the schooner. Both were good swimmers and not afraid to trust themselves to reach some other shipping in the harbor. Yet as an extra precaution each provided himself with a life-preserver.

"Are you ready, Peterson?"

"Yes."

"Then over we go."

A small rope was handy, and lowering this, each slid along it into the waters of the harbor. Then they struck out swiftly but silently; and in a few minutes the fog and darkness hid them completely from view.

It was the best part of an hour before Larry returned to his senses. His head ached as if ready to split open and for several minutes he could not remember where he was or what had occurred.

"Oh, my head!" he groaned. "Oh!" And he turned over and tried to sit up, with the result that he pitched out on the floor of the stateroom. This aroused him and he got up as quickly as he could.

"Those rascals attacked me!" he muttered. "They struck me over the head! I remember now! Oh, how my head spins,—just as if I was in a merry-go-round! I wonder——"

He dropped on the berth and snatched away the pillow. One glance was sufficient to show him how he had been robbed.

"That's why they attacked me!" he cried. "Wonder where they are now? Perhaps they ran away from the ship!"

Leaping up again he stepped to the door, and

finding it locked, began to pound away lustily, at the same time yelling at the top of his lungs. In a few minutes this brought down Captain Ponsberry, followed by Luke, who had been told to come along, the captain fearing that something had gone wrong.

"What's up here?" demanded Captain Ponsberry as he flung open the door.

"Where are they?" came the counter-question from Larry.

"They? Who?"

"Peterson and Shamhaven?"

"Gone—slid away in the fog."

"They have robbed me!"

"You don't say!" ejaculated the master of the *Columbia*. "You are sure?" he went on.

"Yes. My money belt is gone. They came while I was asleep, and when I woke up both hit me,—and I don't know what happened after that. I just came to my senses and found myself locked in."

"The villains!" burst in Luke. "Those chaps ought to be swung up to a yardarm!"

The captain listened to Larry's story and then was prompted to take a look around the other state-rooms. As a result he speedily discovered that the safe had been tampered with and that his own money was gone.

"They are worse rascals than I thought them,"

said Captain Ponsberry, bitterly. "I am sorry that I did not make an example of them from the start."

There was a good deal of speculation concerning what had become of Shamhaven and Peterson, and another search was instituted, lasting until the following day, but not a single trace of the evildoers could be found.

"Well, I am out the whole of my savings," said Larry to Luke.

"It's a shame, lad," replied the Yankee tar. "But if you need ready cash don't fail to draw on me. As long as I have a shot in the locker half on it is yours."

"Thank you, Luke; I know you'd say that. You're the proper kind of a friend to have."

"Avast, Larry, with your compliments. Wouldn't you do the same fer me?"

"Indeed I would!"

"Then it ain't worth talkin' about. Jest the same, I hope we run into them rascals some day; don't you?"

"I do. But more than likely they'll give the *Columbia* and us a wide berth after this," returned Larry.

CHAPTER XX

LARRY BEFORE ADMIRAL TOGO

As soon as the *Columbia* could make the proper landing, Captain Ponsberry went ashore and reported his arrival to the authorities; and also reported the escape of Shamhaven and Peterson. The authorities had already heard of the capture of the *Columbia* from the Russians, and said that the schooner would have to remain at Nagasaki until the whole case could be adjusted. The Japanese were inclined to favor both the Richmond Importing Company and the owners of the vessel, so it was not likely that our friends would lose much in the end. In the meantime the *Columbia* could be put in a dry-dock and given the overhauling that she needed.

"We shall do all we can to locate Shamhaven and Peterson and get back your money," said an official of the secret service department. But his hands were so full with other matters of greater importance that little attention was paid to the disappearance of the two rascals.

“Well, this will tie me up at Nagasaki for some time to come,” said Captain Ponsberry to Larry, on the third day after arriving at the Japanese port.

“Which means, I suppose, that I can join the Japanese navy if I wish,” returned the young second mate, quickly.

“I don’t want to force you to leave the ship, lad. But you said——”

“I know, Captain Ponsberry, and I am glad of the chance to get away. Luke and I have talked it over once more, and yesterday we met a gunner named Steve Colton—he served on the *Brooklyn* at the time Walter did. He is now a gun captain on board of Admiral Togo’s flagship, and he is almost certain he can get us good positions. He says gunners and gunners’ assistants are just now badly needed.”

“Then go by all means, Larry, and make even a bigger record for yourself than your brother Ben is making in the army. Perhaps, when this war is over, you’ll come back to the old *Columbia*, eh?”

“More than likely, and I guess Luke Striker will come, too.”

What Larry had said about meeting Steve Colton was true. As readers of a story of mine entitled “Fighting in Cuban Waters” know, Colton had been a gun captain under Commodore Schley, and

as such had become fairly well acquainted with Walter Russell and had also heard of Larry, who was at that time serving under Admiral Dewey at Manila.

A detail from Admiral Togo's flagship had been sent ashore at Nagasaki, and Larry and Luke, as they walked through the streets, had met several of these men. Hearing two of them speaking English they had halted the pair; and introductions had followed.

"So you are Larry Russell," said Steve Colton. "Any relation to Walter Russell that once served on the U. S. Cruiser *Brooklyn*?"

"Walter is my brother," replied Larry, quickly.

"Oh, so you are the chap that was cast away in the Pacific and picked up by Admiral Dewey's flagship, eh?"

"The same, and this is the friend who was with me, Luke Striker."

"Glad to know ye both." Steve Colton shook hands. "This is my friend, Bob Stanford—he hails from San Francisco and is a gunner's mate with me. What are you doing in this corner of the earth?"

A long talk followed, in which Larry and Luke told their story, and Steve Colton and his friend related how they had come to join the Japanese navy.

"It's this way," said Colton. "I've got the fighting blood in my veins and it won't come out. As soon as this war broke out, I cut sticks from 'Frisco with Bob and we comes to Tokio. There I met another American who was in the navy here, and it wasn't two days before we were booked for Admiral Togo's flagship. We've been down to Port Arthur twice, and I reckon we'll go again before long."

"Perhaps we'll go up to Vladivostok next time," came from Bob Stanford. "I've heard something of bombarding that Russian port."

Colton and Stanford had a couple of hours to themselves and Larry and Luke invited them over to the *Columbia*. In return they were asked to come over to Admiral Togo's flagship, the gunners having the privilege of bringing their friends aboard during the brief stay in Nagasaki harbor.

"You can come aboard to-morrow," said Steve Colton. "They have an inspection and drill, and you can see how they do it in the Japanese navy—not but what it's a good bit like it's done on Uncle Sam's warships."

Larry and Luke were very willing to go aboard of the Japanese warship, and were taken out by Colton the next day, and introduced to several gunners and others who could speak a little English.

They were also taken before the head gunner, who took them to the commander of the warship.

"They both served under Admiral Dewey at Manila," said the head gunner, and this made the commander smile quietly as he shook hands and told them to make themselves at home.

"Everything is as clean as a whistle," was Larry's comment, as they walked around the forward part of the warship and through the gun decks. "The Japs certainly know how to take care of things. Luke, just look at how the brasswork shines!"

"That's the way it ought to be," was the Yankee tar's reply. "No slackness, an' I'm glad on it. I love a clean ship above all things."

Steve Colton and Bob Stanford were enthusiastic over the gun they commanded and explained how it worked. It was certainly an effective weapon and Larry and Luke were thoroughly interested.

"I could handle sech a gun myself," said Luke. "An' do some damage, too; eh, Larry?"

"Anyway, I'd like to try it," returned the youth.

Orders were now being issued for the inspection and drill, and presently nearly all on board of the flagship hurried to the main deck. Here the marines were drawn up in long lines, with the officers in their proper places. The sailors and gunners were also at hand, each togged out in his best, for inspec-

tion by an admiral on any warship means a great deal.

Presently Admiral Togo appeared, followed by several other naval officers of lesser rank. He was in full dress, with many decorations on his breast, and carried his sword. He proved to be a man well along in years, with a round face, and small mustache and goatee.

"He looks like a fighter!" whispered Larry.

"True for you, lad," returned Luke. "An' I reckon he knows how to handle men."

What our friends said about Admiral Togo was true. He was a fighter and a born leader of men. When the Naval Academy of Japan was inaugurated he was one of the first graduates, and he was sent by the government to complete his nautical education in England, where, during 1873 and 1874, he served on the training ship *Worcester*, making a record for himself as a first-class pupil in every respect.

On returning home Togo Heihachiro—to use his full name—found a great task confronting his people. They were becoming civilized as we term civilization and needed a modern navy. He set to work with vim and vigor, and then and there laid the foundation of that navy which is to-day known as one of the most effective in the world.

The navy had scarcely come into existence when there came rumors of war with China. The rumors grew, and China became more and more hateful toward the Japanese. To the outside world it looked as if China, with her vast territory and her immense number of people, would swallow up the sons of Nippon bodily.

At last it was discovered that China was transporting troops with which to begin the war. Togo waited for no instructions from his home government. He went at the Chinese with vigor. The war followed, and after a number of thrilling contests the Japanese were victorious, and Admiral Togo emerged from the struggle covered with glory.

“He is the man to lead us to victory against the Russians!” was the cry throughout the navy, when war was declared between Russia and Japan, and how he sent his ships to Port Arthur and other places, and what effective work was done by them, has already been related. In the whole of the Japanese navy, to serve on the admiral’s flagship, the *Mikasa*, was considered a great honor.

The inspection and drill were exceedingly interesting to Larry and Luke, and they watched both with close attention. After it was over Admiral Togo addressed the men briefly and then turned to the commander of the ship.

"See, he is pointing to us!" whispered Luke. "Hang me if I don't think he is talking about us to the captain!"

"An officer is coming," replied Larry, and a moment later one of the admiral's staff came hurrying to them.

"Are you the two Americans who served under Admiral Dewey at Manila?" questioned the staff officer.

"We are," answered Larry.

"Admiral Togo wishes you to come to him."

"Oh, Luke, we are going to be presented to the admiral!" cried Larry.

"Great pewter!" groaned the Yankee tar. "I didn't expect this nohow. But I don't care," he added, bracing up. "He ain't no bigger nor Dewey. Come along."

He followed the staff officer and Larry did the same. They felt that the eyes of many of the sailors and marines were on them, and stepped out as firmly as possible. Coming up to the admiral, they took off their caps and saluted.

Admiral Togo surveyed the two Americans with interest. He had heard how they had come to serve under Dewey at Manila and he smiled pleasantly as he held out his hand, first to Larry and then to Luke.

"Let me give you a welcome, my men," said he. "I have been told your story. I hope this visit to my ship has interested you."

"Very much, sir," answered Luke.

"I liked the drill, sir," answered Larry, with a smile. "It was fine. And everything is so clean! Really, I don't think it could be cleaner!"

At this Admiral Togo smiled again. "That is a compliment,—since it comes from one who has served in the American navy."

He then asked them to remain where they were, while some of the men went through an exercise with their cutlasses. There was also a gun drill, and they were asked to show how they had handled a gun during the battle of Manila Bay.

"You are well drilled, I can see that," said the admiral, on dismissing them. "They tell me you think of entering our navy. If you wish to do so I think likely we can find suitable openings for you."

CHAPTER XXI

LETTERS OF INTEREST

THE enlistment of Larry and Luke Striker into the Japanese navy came sooner than anticipated. A new warship was being fitted out at a harbor some forty miles from Nagasaki, and Steve Colton and Bob Stanford were transferred to this. Two new gun crews were badly needed on the new ship, and inside of forty-eight hours our friends had signed the muster roll and were put into training, under Colton. The positions occupied were those of gunner and gunner's mate.

"Hurrah for Nippon!" cried Larry, enthusiastically. "Luke, after this we have got to learn to yell *Banzai!* in true Japanese style."

"This gun is a beauty," replied the Yankee tar, as he looked the piece over. "I reckon as I can make her do considerable damage if I get the chance."

"And I'll help all I can," said Larry. "Won't Ben and Gilbert be surprised when they hear of this?" he added.

"They might know you'd do something of the sort."

“That’s so, too. By the way, I’m going up to the post-office to-day and see if there are any letters.”

Much to the satisfaction of our friends they found over a score of men on the warship who could speak English. Some, of course, could speak but little, yet they could make themselves understood. On the other hand, both Larry and Luke began to pick up the Japanese language remarkably fast.

“If we keep at this for six months we’ll be regular Japanese,” said the youth. “It’s not so hard as I thought it would be.”

They found the discipline on the warship very strict and were called on to “toe the mark” continually. Yet all the officers were as considerate as they were firm, so there was little of hardship.

When Larry called at the post-office for letters he found two good-sized epistles awaiting him. One was from his brother Walter, and ran, in part, as follows:

“There is nothing particularly new in this part of the globe. I am doing very well in my new business and it looks now as if I should make a big thing of it. I rather think I am more cut out for work on land than for life on shipboard, although I don’t regret the time I spent in the navy.

“Uncle Job is feeling very well these days and is building a new wing to the old house—going to put in a library of good books he tells me. He is as dear an old chap now as anybody would want for an uncle.

“I suppose you will hear from Ben and Gilbert. I am expecting a letter every day. It’s queer you didn’t go with them, but I suppose the old *Columbia* with her crew suits you better.”

“I am glad everything is all right at home,” thought Larry, as he finished reading the communication. “A new wing to the house, eh? Uncle Job must be spreading himself. Reckon he has found out there is something more to live for in this world than mere money.”

The second letter was from Ben, as he could tell by the handwriting. It had been on the way a long time and had been sent to half a dozen places, including Manila. There was a great deal about life in the Japanese army, and also a full description of the capture of Liao-Yang. Ben then continued:

“We are now on guard a few miles outside of the city. Our camp stretches for many miles, and we are doing all in our power to strengthen our position. What the next move will be there is no telling. One

report is, that our particular command will help to chase the Russians to Mukden, while another report has it that we are to march southward, to aid in the attempt to take Port Arthur.

“I have already told you what trouble Gilbert had with that rascally Russian merchant, Ivan Snokoff, and with Snokoff’s confederate, Captain Barusky, of the Russian army. Well, at Liao-Yang we found Snokoff disguised as a Chinaman, and Gilbert made the fellow pay over all that was coming to him for the Richmond Importing Company. In the attempt to capture Snokoff, Gilbert shot him in the leg. It was only a slight wound, but the Russian was as mad as a hornet, and he vowed he would get square some time. He is now in the hospital here, but they expect to let him leave in a few days. He really ought to be put under arrest, but as he has paid up the money he owed, there doesn’t seem to be any way of holding him. It’s out of the question to go to court with the case. I helped Gilbert to put Snokoff under guard, and he is as angry at me as he is at Gilbert. I don’t know if he will dare to do anything or not, but both of us are keeping our eyes open.”

Larry read this letter twice before he stowed it away. He was always interested in war news and

he thought the description of the great battle of Liao-Yang very realistic. He shook his curly head when he thought of Ivan Snokoff.

“He must be an underhanded rascal if ever there was one,” he mused. “And to think he disguised himself as a Chinaman! I’ll wager Gilbert thought it a fine thing to expose him and make him pay up. But he and Ben had better look out, or Snokoff and that Captain Barusky may cause them a lot of trouble.”

Larry had an hour to himself, and he spent the time in answering both letters, telling briefly what had happened to him since the trip to Manila and how he and Luke were now in service on board of the Japanese warship *Shohirika*. He added that he liked the position of gunner’s mate very much, and that he meant to make a record for himself if given the opportunity to do so. He also told about the doings of Shamhaven and Peterson, and said he hoped to bring them to justice, although he realized that looking for them was as bad as “looking for a pearl on the ocean bottom.”

The letters finished, he addressed and posted them, and then he and Luke took a short stroll through Nagasaki, past the many curious shops, and the fine residences. Some of the shop-windows displayed flaring war pictures, done in glaring colors,

—all telling of tremendous Japanese victories on land and sea.

“They certainly believe in tooting their own horn,” said Larry, with a laugh over one of the pictures. “Just see this one, Luke—one Japanese officer mowing down three Russians with his sword!”

“They ain’t no worse nor we had at home during the Spanish war, lad. I know one picture I see o’ a Rough Rider riding down half a dozen Spanish soldiers. An’ the truth o’ the matter is, them Rough Riders didn’t have no horses at all but fought on foot!”

“You’re right, Luke. We’ll have to put all such pictures down as freaks of the artist’s imagination. But I guess I know why some of them are put out—to draw the young fellows into the army and navy.”

“Right ye are. Some fellers seeing a picture like that want to march to glory right off,—an’ so they go an’ enlist. When it comes tohardtack an’ black coffee——”

“Hold on, Luke. Remember you are in Japan. Here it is rice and tea.”

“So it is, Larry. Say, but I had to laugh yesterday, when I see some of them jackies on board o’ our ship gettin’ out their teapots with tea.”

“It did look funny. But they do the same thing in the army, so I have been told. They can make the Japanese soldier and sailor do everything as we do it but give up his tea.”

“Well, I reckon tea is better nor rum.”

“Certainly it is,—and if I were an officer I’d let them have all the tea they wanted—if they would fight any better for it.”

“Those Russian sailors and soldiers drink an awful lot of *vodka*. I should think they would try to stop that. A half-drunken sailor or soldier isn’t of any account.”

“They are so used to having it, I’ve been told, that to stop it would bring on a regular mutiny. It’s hard to break off using a thing when you are used to it.”

“Right ye are, lad; a habit if it ain’t proper is something awful.”

All was bustle throughout Nagasaki, for several regiments of soldiers had come in, bound for some transports which were to take them to Manchuria. Banners were flying everywhere, and from a distance came the music of a band.

“Wonder how soon we will leave,” said Larry, when he and his old friend were returning to the warship. “Now that we have enlisted, I’d like to see some fighting.”

"Maybe we'll get more fighting than we want, lad. But I'd like to get into it myself," continued the Yankee gunner, with a grin.

Two days more were spent at Nagasaki, and then, on a clear morning, the *Shohirika* left the harbor and steamed off in company with two sister ships. They were to join a squadron bound for the western coast of Korea, but where they were to go after that there was no telling.

Captain Ponsberry came to see Larry and Luke off. "Take good care of yourselves," said the master of the *Columbia*. "An' teach them Russians the lesson they deserve."

"We expect to do our duty," answered Larry.

Life on the Japanese warship proved to be very much like life in the American navy. There were hours set apart for various drills and exercises. Each day they had to go through the movements of handling the gun, fighting with cutlasses, putting out a fire, and manning the small boats. They also had to keep their ditty bags and grass hammocks in good order, also their eating utensils, and each had to do his share of cleaning up. Twice a week the ship's surgeon examined each man, to see that he was perfectly healthy.

"I like this keeping things clean," said Larry. "It is bound to make for good health."

“They tell me that Japanese sailors and soldiers are among the healthiest in the world,” answered Luke.

In a few days the southern point of Korea was passed and the bow of the warship was pointed toward the eastern coast of Manchuria. They were now getting close to the battleground and the lookout was constantly watching for the appearance of the ships of the enemy.

“We’ll have a fight before very long—I can feel it in my bones,” declared Larry. And he was right; but before telling of that contest, and what surprising results it led to, we shall have to tell of something else which occurred, to delight Larry exceedingly.

CHAPTER XXII

A MEETING AND A PLOT

"SOME Japanese transports are coming up," said Larry, two days later. "Six of them, and they are crowded to the rails with soldiers."

"I reckon we are to act as an escort to them," replied Luke. "They would need an escort, if they fell in with a Russian cruiser or two."

The Japanese transports were bound for the coast of Manchuria, to land near the village of Petaka. Soon they fell in behind the *Shohirika*; and then those on the warship knew that they were going to go close to shore, if not to make an actual landing.

A fog came up that night, which made the transports hold off. But the next day was as bright and clear as before, and about noon land was sighted to the westward. A patrol boat was sent ahead and came back stating that all was clear for a landing. Then the warships went closer and the transports followed.

On the following day Larry found himself on shore—having been taken along by one of the offi-

cers of the ship to interview an English merchant who wished to sell some goods to the Japanese. The officer could speak some English, but wanted somebody along who could help him out in case he could not make himself clearly understood.

The landing was at a small Chinese town which was partly in ashes—the Russians having tried to burn it down before leaving. There were a dozen shops, but all were closed and with the windows boarded up. Many of the Chinese had fled to the country beyond; and a Japanese regiment was on guard to preserve order and to keep the Chunchuses, (Chinese brigands) from looting the place.

“This shows what war will do,” thought Larry, as he walked along beside the Japanese naval officer. “I suppose some of the Chinese have lost all they possessed—and through no fault of their own either.”

The business with the English merchant was transacted quicker than anticipated, and, not caring to go back to his ship at once, the naval officer visited the camp of the Japanese regiment, taking Larry with him.

“We expect another detachment here this afternoon,” said one of the regimental commanders to the naval officer. “They are to escort a powder train through the mountains.”

A little while later the detachment came in on foot, looking somewhat tired and dusty from a long tramp through an exceedingly rough country. As the soldiers came to a halt in the public square of the seaport village, Larry uttered a cry of amazement:

“ Ben! ”

“ Why, Larry, can it be you? ” came in a tone of astonishment, and on the instant Ben Russell rushed forward and caught his brother by the hands. “ I must be dreaming! ”

“ I guess I’m dreaming myself! ” said Larry, and gave his brother a warm hug. “ This beats the Dutch! I thought you were at Liao-Yang. How are you and how did you get here? ”

“ One question at a time, please, ” returned Ben, with a happy smile. “ I’m pretty well, although I had a little dose of fever a couple of weeks ago. Our Japanese doctor fixed me up in double-quick time. Our command was ordered down here to look after a powder train. There was a report that either the Russians or the Chunchuses were going to try to capture it or blow it up. Now, how have you been, and what are you doing here? I thought the old *Columbia* was at Nagasaki. ”

“ You want to know as much as I do, Ben. ” There was a pause and both laughed merrily, they

felt so happy. "I'm as sound as a fiddle. The *Columbia* is at Nagasaki and likely to stay there for some time. Allow me to introduce myself, Lawrence Russell, gunner's mate aboard of the Mikado's cruiser *Shohirika*. My head gunner is Luke Striker, Esquire."

"Never!" burst from Ben. "Well, this certainly is news. So you and Luke enlisted? Have you had any fighting?"

"Not exactly. But we have seen some rough times," answered Larry, and then, as soon as Ben could get away for a quiet half-hour, he related his story in detail, just as I have set it down in these pages.

"You are assuredly a lucky chap, Larry, not to be in a Russian prison this minute," said his brother, after the young sailor had finished.

"Perhaps I am lucky, Ben. But it wasn't much of luck to have that Shamhaven and Peterson walk off with my money belt."

"That is so, but as the amount taken wasn't a fortune I shouldn't worry about it. I can let you have any money you need."

"I don't need any, and, besides, Luke is acting as my banker. But now tell me about yourself."

"There isn't very much to tell, outside of what I put down in that letter you received. As you

know, Gilbert and I are both attached to this command of Major Okopa."

"Where is Gilbert now?"

"His company was to bring up the rear. They'll be here very shortly. Since the battle of Liao-Yang we have been on special duty, looking after the pack and powder trains, and have seen very little of fighting. We are reinforcing our lines daily, and I think the Russians must be doing the same. I expect some more heavy fighting soon, unless winter steps in and puts a stop to everything. The nights are already rather cool," added Ben.

It was half an hour later that the company under Gilbert came in, having in their custody two Chinese bandits that had tried to steal four horses belonging to two Japanese army carts.

"So it's really you, Larry!" cried the young Southerner, as he shook hands. "I'm mightily glad to see you and see you looking so well. I suppose Ben has told you all the news."

"Yes, and Larry has been telling some too," put in Ben. "He has seen almost as much of the Russians as we have." And then Larry's story had to be told again.

"I don't know where we shall go after we leave here," said the young sailor. "Are you going back to Liao-Yang?"

“ We don’t know that either. Our orders are to escort the powder train wherever it may be sent,” said Ben.

For two days the Japanese warship remained in the harbor of the seaport village and during that time Larry managed to see quite a good deal of Ben and Gilbert. He wished he could take them on board of the cruiser, but this was not permitted.

On the third day the *Shohirika* received orders from a dispatch boat which steamed into the harbor, and an hour later the anchors were hove apeak and she steamed away, carrying Larry and his old Yankee friend along. Ben and Gilbert stood on a dock watching her departure. They waved their handkerchiefs at Larry and he waved his own in return.

“ I wonder when I’ll see Larry again,” mused Ben. He felt rather sober at the parting from his younger brother.

“ Oh, you’ll see him again before long,” answered Gilbert, trying to be cheerful.

“ Maybe not. It all depends upon where that cruiser sails to. She may go half around the world.”

“ More than likely she has been sent to take part in the bombardment of Port Arthur.”

“ Do you really think we’ll be sent to Port Arthur, Gilbert?”

"It is not unlikely, Ben."

The pair watched the cruiser fade away in the distance, and then returned to that part of the village in which Major Okopa's command had been located.

"By the way," said Gilbert, as they hurried along. "There is one thing I forgot to tell you. Meeting Larry drove it completely out of my mind. On the way to this village we stopped at a place called Wikelipe, and there I met, whom do you suppose?"

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"That rascal Ivan Snokoff. He was at his same old tricks—selling things to the inhabitants at exorbitant prices. When he saw me he shook his fist at me and my men and then ran away and hid."

"Why didn't you root him out, Gilbert?"

"What good would it have done? Besides, I didn't have time. The fight with the brigands made us lose three hours. But do you know, I think Snokoff has it in for me."

"Yes, and in for me, too," added Ben. "He hasn't forgotten how I brought along the guard that placed him under temporary arrest."

There was no time to say more, for the command was to move in half an hour and both of the young captains had to round up their men for that purpose. The powder train was at rest outside of the village

and the men were scattered here, there, and everywhere.

Evening found the command to which Ben and Gilbert belonged ten miles on their way through the mountains. Only the officer in charge of the powder train knew the destination of the precious stores. The train consisted of eighteen carts, each pulled by four horses.

Although none in Major Okopa's command knew it, the train was followed by a Chinaman named Kee Lung, who lived in Wikelipe, the place where Gilbert had seen Ivan Snokoff. Kee Lung was well known to Ivan Snokoff and had been asked by the rascally Russian to keep his eyes on Gilbert and on Ben and to report their movements. He had watched Gilbert's meeting with Ben and Larry and heard something of what was said and had thus managed to make out that two of the party were brothers.

As the powder train approached Wikelipe, Kee Lung went ahead to find Ivan Snokoff. This was not difficult, as he knew exactly where the latter was hiding. A conference lasting an hour ensued.

"Do as you have promised and you shall have fifty *yen*," said Ivan Snokoff.

"You will not fail to pay?" queried Kee Lung.

"By the heads of my ancestors I promise it," was the rascally Russian's answer.

"'Tis enough. I shall do as I have promised," returned the Chinaman. And he bowed himself from Ivan Snokoff's presence. Left to himself, the rascally Russian rubbed his hands gleefully.

"Ha, I trust he is successful!" he muttered to himself. "Once Pennington and Russell are in the power of us Russians I shall show them what it means to insult and degrade a Snokoff!"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ATTACK IN THE DARK

Two days later Gilbert and Ben were seated in their tent talking about the meeting with Larry when one of the guards came in and saluted.

"A messenger to see Captain Russell and Captain Pennington," said the guard.

"Show him in," returned Ben, briefly, thinking it was a simple message about camp duties. He was rather surprised when a Chinaman entered, bowing low as he did so.

"Dis Clabtain Lussell?" asked the newcomer.

"That is my name."

"Dis Clabtain Plennington?"

"Yes," answered Gilbert.

"Sailor man send Chung Wow," went on the Chinaman. "Sailor man want see bloth." He pointed to the two young captains. "Sailor man say he blother you." And now he pointed at Ben alone.

"Said he was my brother?" cried the young captain.

The messenger nodded. "Name allee same Larry Lussell."

"Gracious me!" ejaculated Ben. "Gilbert, what can this mean? I thought Larry sailed away on that warship."

"So did I. But she may be back in port."

"Sailor man hurt." The Chinaman pointed to his side. "Sick—he shot—say you clome tonight."

"Sick? shot?" repeated Ben, and a cold chill went down his backbone. "That is the worst yet. Where is he?"

"Big walk down by the sea. Chung Wow show. But must pay—Chung Wow poor people."

"Oh, I'll pay you," answered Ben, hurriedly. "Gilbert, do you think I can get away?"

"Sailor man say bloth clome," put in the messenger.

"Something is wrong, that is certain," came from Gilbert. He eyed the Chinaman closely. "There is no mistake about this?"

At this Chung Wow shrugged his lean shoulders and looked blank.

"No see mistakee. See sailor mans."

"I guess he is all right," put in Ben. "Something has happened to poor Larry. I wonder if I can get away at once?"

“Let us see the major about this.”

Ben hurried off and caught Major Okopa in his own tent. As the command was not to move until noon of the next day both readily obtained permission to absent themselves until that time.

“But be careful,” said the major. “This may be some Chinese trick.”

“We’ll be on our guard,” answered Ben.

The Chinese messenger had come in on foot. He said he was hungry and was given something to eat. Then the three set off, the messenger carrying a knapsack filled with rations, and each of the young captains carrying his sword and his pistol. They tried to learn from Chung Wow how far they would have to travel, but the Chinaman either could not or would not inform them.

“Perhaps it might have been as well to have taken a detachment of one company along,” suggested Gilbert. “I must say, I don’t like the looks of this.” They were now a good mile away from camp, and in a location that appeared lonely enough.

“Well, we are moving down to the seacoast,” returned Ben. He was taking careful note of the direction they were pursuing.

After that they journeyed along for a good two hours without saying much. They stepped along briskly, for Ben wanted to learn just what had hap-

pened to his brother. For all he knew to the contrary, Larry might be mortally wounded.

Presently they came to a spot in the road where there were a number of dense trees. Chung Wow began to cough loudly.

"What's the matter?" demanded Gilbert. For some reason he did not trust the Chinaman.

"Slomthing fly in float," was the answer, and Chung Wow coughed again. Then he walked on, and they came behind him. But Gilbert drew his pistol and motioned for Ben to do the same.

"I may be mistaken, but we may be walking into a trap," he whispered.

"Why, Gilbert, I don't——" began Ben, when without warning a heavy object dropped upon his head from the limb of one of the trees and bore him to the ground. Another object dropped on Gilbert, but he squirmed from under,—to find himself confronted by several Chunchuses. A cry went up, and a crashing was heard in the bushes back of the trees.

"A trick, Ben, just as I suspected!" ejaculated the young Southerner, and he discharged his pistol point-blank at the Chinese bandit in front of him. This done he made a leap to one side, hurling over Chung Wow as he did so, and darted forward into

some bushes. A shot was aimed at him, but did no injury, and he kept on, running as hard as he could.

In the meantime Ben did his best to get up. But one man was on his shoulders and another had him by the legs, so to move was next to impossible. Then, as he continued to struggle, he received a heavy kick from a wooden shoe which stretched him out like a log.

“He is out of the fight now,” said one of the Chunchuses, as he bent over Ben. “Go after the other. Do not let him escape if you can help it. Americans are worth a good deal to us in these days!”

Three of the brigands remained to guard Ben and the others made after Gilbert. But they could not catch the young Southerner, and after a long chase they came back.

“He has gone back to his camp,” said one of the Chunchuses to his chief. “He will have his friends about our ears very shortly.”

As soon as this news was received, Ben’s hands and feet were bound, and four of the Chinamen caught him up as if he were a dead animal and hoisted him on their shoulders. Off they set at a dog-trot, with the remaining brigands around them.

It was the jogging over the rough mountainous

road which finally brought the young captain to his senses. At first he did not realize that he was on the move.

"Gilbert!" he called faintly. "Gilbert!"

Nobody answered him, and now he essayed to sit up. He could not budge and consequently began to struggle.

"Be still!" cried one of the Chunchuses, in Chinese.

"Where am I? What are you doing to me?" queried Ben.

For answer he received a good shaking and was then dumped on the ground. His feet were liberated, and the chief of the Chinese brigands ordered him to move along, pointing the end of his sword at the prisoner as he did so.

"Where is my friend?" asked Ben.

"He is dead," said the chief, laconically.

"Dead!" burst out the young captain. His heart seemed to become like a lump of lead. Gilbert, his own true chum, dead! It was too horrible to believe.

"Yes, and you will be unless you walk on," added the chief of the Chunchuses.

There was no help for it, and, bruised and bleeding, the young captain took up the march, with his enemies on all sides of him. The gait was a rapid

one, and before they came to a halt once more he was all but exhausted.

“Where are you taking me?” he asked.

“Wait and see.” The chief of the Chunchuses grinned wickedly. “I shall have to trouble you for your valuables,” he went on, in his native tongue, and without further ado stripped Ben of his possessions, including his watch, money, ring, and sword.

There was no use protesting, and therefore the young captain did not attempt it. He was marched along a marshy path, and presently came in sight of the ocean and a small bay, where two sailing ships and a small steamer lay at anchor.

A shrill whistle sounded out, and this was answered by somebody on the steamer. Then a small boat put in to shore, carrying four sailors and an officer. As soon as the officer landed, he was called aside by the chief of the Chunchuses, and a conference lasting several minutes followed.

“It shall be as you say, Ching Fee,” said the officer, in Russian. “It is too bad you did not get the other, too. I know Ivan Snokoff, and Captain Barusky too, and there will be money in this. Yes, I’ll take him on board at once. You had better watch out that the soldiers do not get after you.”

“Trust Ching Fee to take care of himself,” said the chief of the Chunchuses.

With scant ceremony Ben was conducted to the small boat and told to get in. He asked where they were going to take him, but could get no satisfaction. As soon as the steamer was reached, he was conducted to an empty stateroom and locked in.

“This is the worst yet!” he muttered, as he sat down. “I suppose they intend to carry me miles and miles away. Poor Gilbert! I never thought he would be killed in such a fashion as this! What cutthroats these Chinese brigands are! It’s a wonder they didn’t kill me too! Can that story about Larry be true?”

There was a little water in the stateroom, and as his hands had been released, Ben bathed his wounds and bound them up as best he could. He heard the steamer move away from the shore, and soon the steady pounding of the engines proved that she was forging ahead at her best rate of speed.

He was a prisoner of the enemy, and what they were going to do with him was a question still to be answered.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE DEFENSE OF THE POWDER TRAIN

AFTER firing on the Chinese brigands as already described, Gilbert plunged into the brushwood which was not over half a dozen yards distant. He heard the shots discharged at him in return, but fortunately every one went wide of its mark.

Once in the brushwood he did not stop, but continued on his way for several rods. Then he paused, wondering if Ben was anywhere in the vicinity.

"I hope they didn't kill him," he murmured. "What a trap that was, and how easily we walked into it!"

He waited and listened, but nobody came near him. Then, with caution, he pushed ahead, until he gained once more the road leading back to the temporary camp occupied by the powder train and the detachment guarding it. Following this, he ran on at full speed until the welcome camp-fires greeted him.

"Major Okopa, we have been attacked by Chun-

chuses!" he exclaimed, as he rushed up to the officer's quarters. And in a brief manner he explained the situation so far as he knew it.

The Japanese major had taken a strong liking to Gilbert and Ben, and he lost no time in ordering out a company to round up the Chinese brigands if they could be located. It was Gilbert's own command and he was given permission to remain out the whole night and the next day if necessary.

The young Southerner went at the task with vigor, for he realized that every moment was precious. He explained the situation to his men, and they set off at double-quick to where the attack had been made.

As was to be expected, the spot was deserted. By torchlight they saw the evidences of the struggle which had taken place. In one spot was a pool of blood, left by the brigand whom Gilbert had shot in the shoulder.

"They went off in this direction," said one of the soldiers, who was good at tracing footsteps. He pointed to a side road, and along this they ran, keeping eyes and ears on the alert, so as to avoid anything in the nature of a surprise.

Two hours later the company found itself on the seashore. But Chunchuses and vessels were gone and to where it was impossible to find out. But on

the beach Gilbert picked up an empty pocketbook which he knew was Ben's property.

"They brought him here most likely," he said. "See, here are the marks of a rowboat, and of many feet. They have gone off on the water."

"Then the hunt is at a standstill," returned his second in command.

The young captain was unwilling to believe this, and the remainder of the night, and the next forenoon, were spent in an eager search after the enemy. But it was useless; and at last Gilbert, sick at heart, ordered his men to return to the camp.

On the following day the powder train moved onward once more. The first lieutenant of Ben's company took command of the body, and Ben was marked "missing" on the roll.

"It is certainly too bad, and I sympathize with you, Captain Pennington," said Major Okopa. "Captain Russell is a fine fellow."

"It takes all the vigor out of me," replied Gilbert. "Ben and I were like two brothers."

But Gilbert was given no time in which to grieve over Ben's disappearance. Two days later, the powder train was attacked by a detachment of the Russians, who seemed to spring out of the very ground. One of the wagons loaded with powder

was blown to atoms, killing two horses and three soldiers.

"*Banzai!*" cried the Japanese, and when the order was given they attacked the enemy with vigor. It was a hot fight, lasting half an hour, and the Russians were driven among some high hills, backed up by several mountains.

As the powder train had to go through one of the mountain passes so close at hand, the soldiers were sent ahead, to clear the way of all Russians that might appear. This was dangerous work, for the enemy had the advantage of the higher position. But the Japanese were undaunted, and rushed up one slope after another with a vigor and animation that was surprising.

"Can't hold them back, when once they get started," said Gilbert, to the major. "They are like our Southern bloodhounds, when once they strike the scent."

"And that is the way to win victory," answered Major Okopa.

Not long after this Gilbert found himself at the foot of a steep hill with his company. At the top of the hill were a number of great boulders and behind these some of the Russians were in hiding, sending down a spiteful fire whenever the opportunity presented itself.

“We must dislodge those fellows,” said Major Okopa. “It is very dangerous work. Do you think you can accomplish it, Captain Pennington?”

“I can try,” answered Gilbert, modestly, and ordered his company forward. He turned them slightly to the left, for here a fringe of thin brushwood offered a shelter that was not great, but much better than none.

“Major Okopa expects us to take this hill,” he said, in the best Japanese he could muster. “Let us do our best!”

“*Banzai!*” came the rallying cry from the men, and up the slope they rushed, with Gilbert at their side. Crack! crack! went the rifles of the Russians, and then, without warning, several shells were sent up. One man of Gilbert’s company was killed and two wounded, but they did not waver. Passing the brushwood, they ran out boldly on the slope above them.

Many of the rocks at the top of the hill were loose, and as the Japanese came closer, the enemy began to send them down in a shower which was highly dangerous to those below.

“Beware of the stones!” cried Gilbert.

He had hardly spoken when he saw that he would have to look after his own safety. The Russians

were working over a rock that weighed several hundreds of pounds.

All at once the mass broke loose. There was a yell of delight from above, and then the big boulder came rolling straight for Gilbert. Had it touched him he must surely have been crushed to death.

But the young Southerner was as cool as he was quick. Pausing to make certain which way the big stone was coming down, he made a quick leap in the opposite direction. Then the boulder went bounding past him, to crash into some small trees at the bottom of the hill.

“Are you hurt, captain?” asked his lieutenant.

“No,” answered Gilbert. Then he leaped to the front once more. “Come!” he cried. “*Banzai!* Forward for the Mikado!” And on the whole company went as before, firing rapidly as they did so. The Russians clung to the hilltop a few minutes longer, and then, as the first of the Japanese gained a footing there, they broke and fled in wild disorder down the other side of the hill, and into the woods to the northward. The Japanese pursued them for two hours but could not catch them, and at last the chase was abandoned. In this skirmish, called the battle of Po-yang-ling, the Japanese lost in killed and wounded four men, and the Russians

seven. Three of the Czar's soldiers were also taken prisoners.

After that the powder train had no more difficulty, and four days later reached its destination, which was the village of Fanshen, where the Japanese had established something of a base of supplies for that portion of the army which was moving southward to join in the siege of Port Arthur. At Fanshen, Major Okopa's command received orders to go into camp instead of returning to the vicinity of Liao-Yang.

"This looks to me as if we were to be transferred to the army in the south," said the major, after communicating the news to Gilbert.

"Well, I shouldn't mind helping to take Port Arthur," returned the young Southerner. "If you will remember, it was my treatment by the Russians at that place which caused me to take up arms against them."

"So you said before, Captain Pennington. But do not imagine that the taking of Port Arthur will be easy. The Russians have fortified it in every possible manner."

"Yes,—they were doing that before I came away from there."

"For months they have been strengthening their fortifications, and getting in ammunition and supplies

in secret. Their chain of forts extend, so I have been told, for twenty miles and more outside of the city, and being in a mountainous country, they will be hard to reduce."

"Don't you think we can capture the place?" demanded Gilbert.

"Capture it? Most assuredly, captain. But it will mean a great destruction of life," returned Major Okopa, gravely.

What the major said about the Russians fortifying Port Arthur was true. Lieutenant-General Stoessel, the Russian commander at that place, had under him sixty thousand men, the very flower of the Russian army. On the side of the sea the town was fortified at a dozen points, only three of which had been thus far captured under the Japanese army led by General Nogi. To the northward and the westward were some twenty defenses, set among the mountains where they were next to impossible to reach.

In a work of this kind, it is impossible to relate in detail all of the many battles fought over the possession of Port Arthur. The first assault was made in February by Admiral Togo's fleet, and the naval conflict was kept up for almost three months after that. In the meantime a Japanese army under General Oku landed at Pitsewo, and after several

battles at Kinchow and Nanshan Hill, drove the Russians back to their mountain defenses and took possession of the railroad running to Liao-Yang and Mukden. Thus Port Arthur was cut off from almost all communication with the outside world.

CHAPTER XXV

BOMBARDING A PORT ARTHUR FORT

LARRY felt very happy after having met Ben and Gilbert. He had been afraid he should find that his brother or his friend was wounded, even though no mention of such an occurrence had been made in the letter he had received. He knew from experience that Ben was in the habit of making light of things that went wrong.

"I suppose it did your heart good to meet 'em both," said Luke, after the warship was on the way.

"You're right, Luke; it was a regular touch of old times."

"Wish I had seen 'em myself."

"Both wanted to be remembered to you." Larry paused for a moment. "By the way, I wonder where we are bound now?"

"Can't say as to that, lad—secret orders, I reckon," answered the old tar.

The order to sail was evidently an important one, for scarcely was the *Shohirika* out of sight of land than all steam was crowded on. The lookouts were

also doubled, and when night came the strictest watch possible was maintained.

Yet, with it all, several days passed without anything out of the ordinary happening. Drills and exercises went on as before, and both Larry and Luke made themselves familiar with all parts of the warship. Both spent much time in familiarizing themselves with such orders as were given to them in Japanese, so that they might not be too "green," as Larry termed it, if put to the test.

During those days spent on shipboard matters concerning the great war were moving forward steadily. In the vicinity of Liao-Yang both the Japanese and the Russians made several movements to better their positions. This brought on a few skirmishes and one heavy battle, in which the losses were several hundreds on each side. There was also an advance on the outer forts of Port Arthur, and a fair-sized hill was captured by the Mikado's men, who, however held the place only at an enormous loss of life. In moving on the port the Japanese found they would have to do a great amount of tunneling and entrenching, all of which consumed time.

On the ocean the two nations were equally active. Both took several prizes of war, and in an encounter with the Vladivostok squadron a Russian warship was hopelessly disabled and a Japanese cruiser was

all but sunk. Another ship belonging to Admiral Togo's fleet struck a mine outside of Port Arthur and had to be sent back to Japan for repairs.

So far the weather had been warm, but autumn was now at hand and before long the nights became cold and raw.

"This war won't be finished this winter," said more than one. "We are in for another year of it, sure."

The *Shohirika* had been summoned to join the fleet patrolling before Port Arthur. Two days before that station was reached they fell in with a sister ship which brought the news of an encounter with a Russian battleship carrying some troops from Siberia. Both warships had suffered and become separated in the darkness.

"This war is certainly warming up," said Larry. "I hope we see some fighting before it is over."

"Maybe we'll see more of it than you wish," said Luke, grimly.

"Don't you worry—we'll see a whole lot," put in Steve Colton, who was sitting on a ditty chest, playing checkers with Bob Stanford. "Just wait till we get under Admiral Togo's eye—he'll make us be up and doing."

The chance to see some of the war came the next

day, when they were ordered to bombard one of the forts to the north of Port Arthur proper. As soon as they came within four miles of the fort they received a reception which was as warm as it was exciting.

“Now, here is where we show what we can do!” cried Luke, as the orders came to begin firing, and the whole gun company jumped in to assist him. The magazines were opened up, the windlasses set to work, and soon the first real shell—not a mere blank for practicing—came up and was run into the gun. Then the breech-block was swung to and locked, the electric connection set, and Luke sighted the piece with care, after having first received the proper distance from the range-finders in the tops. As soon as the “sight” was “covered” the button was pressed, and *bang!* went the gun with a concussion that shook the whole ship. Other guns followed in rapid succession, until Larry had to stuff cotton in his ears to keep himself from becoming deaf. As soon as the gun was discharged, it was opened to let the gases out and then cleaned with wet swabs and flushed with running water to cool the barrel.

The bombardment lasted for an hour, and during that time the fort was hit in a dozen places. Sand, dirt, and rocks flew in all directions, and once there

came a flash which told of an explosion of a quantity of powder.

"If we could only hit the magazine it would be good-by to that fort," said Larry, but this was not to be.

After the first few shots the fort had remained silent, but now, when the *Shohirika* was about to retire, the gunners opened up once more, and a rain of shot and shell flew all around the warship. One struck the bow of the vessel, tearing off a few feet of the forward deck and another entered the forward turret, killing one of the gunner's assistants.

"We can be thankful we weren't in that turret," said Luke, when he received the latter news.

"Yes, indeed!" murmured Larry, and could not repress a shiver. "I can tell you, it's mighty risky work after all!" he added, soberly.

"Well, we've got one advantage over those fellows," put in Colton, after the firing had come to an end, and the warship was fast getting out of range. "We can run away, while they have got to stay right where they are."

"Oh, they can run away too," said Larry.

"Not unless they abandon their fort,—and that would be just as if we should abandon our ship."

The work at the gun had been severe, and after the bombardment was over Larry was glad to clean up and take a rest. The perspiration, grime, and smoke had made him look like a negro, and he used up several buckets of water before he got himself into as cleanly a condition as was habitual with him. Luke also took a "scrubbing down," as he called it, and so did the others.

What amazed Larry more than anything was the quietness of the Japanese sailors. Now that the bombardment was ended they said scarcely a word about it, but went on exactly as before.

"They are the most matter-of-fact chaps I ever saw!" he declared. "I believe if the ship blew up they would say 'Very sorry' and swim away. Now on one of Uncle Sam's ships the men would be all woke up and out for a jollification. Ben says it's the same way in the army. If they get excited at all they always seem to be sorry for it afterwards!"

"That's what ye call a characteristic o' the race, I reckon," returned Luke. "They're taught to act that way from babyhood. It ain't polite nor high-toned to git excited. The only thing they kin yell is *Banzai!* an' they let thet out loud enough, goodness knows!"

"I can't understand why we didn't keep at that

fort," came from Colton. "I was just getting the range beautifully when orders came to shut down."

"Well, there must be a reason for it, Steve," answered Luke.

There was a reason for it. Admiral Togo had just received word that certain ships of the Port Arthur squadron were going to make an attempt to break out of the harbor, either that night or the next day. Consequently the *Shohirika* was needed further down the coast, and steamed away in that direction as rapidly as her somewhat limited supply of coal permitted.

"I don't think the navy will ever find its way into Port Arthur harbor," said Larry, later on, after studying a map of that locality. "There are too many forts on the hills outside of the town. They could smash our ships to smithereens if we got too close."

"Trust Admiral Togo to know what he is doing," answered Steve Colton. "He won't go too close. At the same time he ain't going to let the Russian ships get away any more than Schley and Sampson let Admiral Cervera get away from Santiago Harbor in Cuba."

"It's the army that will make Port Arthur a hot place to live in," came from Bob Stanford. They can entrench and thus gain a little ground day by

day, and as soon as they win some high point, like say 203-Meter Hill, it will be all up with General Stoessel, mark my words."

The night to follow proved to be misty, and so cold that the majority of the sailors were glad to don their heavy peajackets. Fearing that the enemy would try to take advantage of the weather, Admiral Togo turned on all the searchlights his fleet possessed, and these were flashed in all directions.

"False alarm," said Luke, after midnight had sounded out on the ship's bell. "Reckon the Russians don't dare to come out."

But the old Yankee tar was mistaken. The enemy were on the alert, and at three o'clock, when the mist was extra heavy, the movement to steal out of Port Arthur harbor was begun, two torpedo destroyers taking the lead, and several cruisers following. This brought on a heavy sea-fight lasting far into the next day, and one which came close to cost Larry his life.

CHAPTER XXVI

BEN MEETS CAPTAIN BARUSKY

FOR several days poor Ben remained a prisoner aboard of the small steamer. During that time only two men came near him—an under officer and the sailor who supplied him with food and water. Neither would answer his questions, so he could not learn where he was being taken or what was to be done with him.

One evening there was a slight commotion on the deck, and the course of the steamer was changed. Then came a blowing of steam whistles lasting several minutes. Finally the steamer came to a standstill.

“You are to leave this vessel at once,” said the under officer, as he opened the door of the young captain’s temporary prison. “Come, we have no time to spare.”

“Where am I to go?” questioned Ben.

“You will soon learn. Hurry!”

There was no help for it, and soon Ben was on deck. He was made to enter a small boat and was

thus transferred to another steamer—one which had formerly been in the East Indian trade but which was now acting as a Russian supply boat.

“What a dirty craft!” was his mental comment, after having been thrust into a pen which was little better than a horse stall. The supply boat was loaded to its fullest capacity, so quarters for all on board were limited.

Two days passed and he received food which was scarcely fit to eat. When he protested he was threatened with a flogging. The air was foul and he began to fear that he would become sick.

“I won’t be able to stand this much longer,” he thought, dismally. “If they want to kill me why don’t they do it at once and have done with it?”

On the following morning a surprise awaited him. He heard two Russian officers pause in front of his pen and one said to the other:

“Here is the prisoner, Captain Barusky.”

“Is it the fellow named Russell?” was the question from Captain Barusky, the rascal who had aided Ivan Snokoff to make so much trouble for Gilbert Pennington.

“The same.”

“They did not capture his friend?”

“No—in the struggle he slipped away.”

“I am sorry for that. We wanted Pennington more than we did this fellow. But I am glad we got at least one of them. As I understand it they work hand-in-glove with each other;” and then the two Russian officers passed on.

Like a flash Ben realized the truth of the situation. His taking off had been a trap set by Snokoff and this Captain Barusky, who had hired the Chunchuses to help work out their plot. He was now in the hands of the enemy in more ways than one.

“They won’t treat me as an ordinary prisoner,” he reasoned. “This Captain Barusky will make it as hard as possible for me—more especially so as Gilbert managed to escape his clutches. Well, I am glad Gilbert got away.”

Resolved to “take the bull by the horns,” Ben asked the prison guard if he might speak to Captain Barusky.

“I will see about it,” answered the sailor, and went off to find out. On his return he stated that the captain would visit the pen some time during the day.

The Russian officer came late in the afternoon, when nobody else was near the pen. There was a sarcastic look on his face when he gazed at the young captain.

“So you want to talk to me,” he said, abruptly.

"I do, Captain Barusky. I want to know why this plot was laid against me."

"I know of no plot. You are an American in the employ of the Japanese Government as a spy. Russia captures all the Japanese spies she can."

"I am no spy."

The Russian shrugged his shoulders. "That is what your friend, Captain Pennington, once told me, too. Yet as soon as he got out of Port Arthur he was made a captain in the Mikado's army."

"He applied for the position because the Russians had mistreated him and because he loves active service."

"Have it as you please, Russell; both of you are spies, and you will have to suffer as one."

"Where are you taking me?"

"Since you seem so anxious to know, I will tell you, for I do not think you will be able to take the news to the Japanese. This boat is carrying supplies to Port Arthur."

"Port Arthur!"

"That is what I said. When we arrive there you will be placed in one of the strongest of our prisons at the port. Do you not admire the prospect?"

"Well, if you take me to Port Arthur, perhaps I

shan't be a prisoner long," replied Ben, resolved to put on as bold a front as possible.

"And why not?" demanded Captain Barusky, curiously.

"Because our army and our navy are bound to capture the place."

"Bah! The Japanese will never take Port Arthur. It is absurd to think of it."

"It may not come right away—but it will come sooner or later."

"Never! But if it should, you will not be there to enjoy our downfall. Remember that spies are tried, and if found guilty they are taken out and shot."

"You cannot prove that I am a spy."

"That remains to be seen."

"If you bring me before the court I'll have something to say about your underhanded work with Ivan Snokoff. I can prove that he is a swindler and that you are his accomplice."

"Ha! you threaten me!" roared Captain Barusky, in a rage. "Have a care! I come from a most respectable family and I have great influence."

"Nevertheless, I think those who are higher in authority than yourself will listen to my story. The Russian army officers are as a rule gentlemen and strictly honest."

“Which means to say that I am not a gentleman and not honest!” bellowed Captain Barusky. “That, for your opinion!” And reaching out he gave Ben a ringing box on the ear.

It was the last straw. With no fresh air and no food fit to eat, the young captain was desperate, and leaping forward he struck at the Russian captain's nose. His fist went true, and as Barusky staggered back against the pen door the blood spurted from his nasal organ.

“Don't you dare to hit me again!” panted Ben, standing before the Russian with both hands clenched. “Don't you dare—or you'll get the worst of it!”

His manner made Captain Barusky cower back, and he glared at Ben with the ferocity of a wild beast. Then he called to the guard.

“Run for aid, Petrovitch,” he said. “The prisoner has attacked me. He is a beast, and must be chained up.”

The man addressed summoned three other sailors and the captain of the ship's guard. All came into the pen and forced Ben into a corner.

“The Yankee dog!” said the captain of the guard. “To dare to strike a Russian officer! Bring the chains at once!”

Chains were brought, and soon Ben was bound

hands and feet, with links that weighed several pounds. Then a large staple was driven into one of the uprights of the pen and he was fastened to this with a padlock.

"Now place him on half-rations," said Captain Barusky. "It is the only way to tame him." And then he hurried away to bathe his nose, which was swelling rapidly.

If Ben had been miserable before he was doubly so now. The chains were cumbersome and cut into his flesh, and being fastened to the upright he could scarcely move a foot either way. To add to his misery the front of the pen was boarded over, so that what little light had been admitted to his prison was cut off.

In this wretched condition he passed a full week. In that time Captain Barusky came to peep in at him three times, and on each occasion tried to say something to make him still more dispirited. The food was so bad he could not eat and the air often made his head ache as if it would crack open.

"If this is a sample of Russian prison life it's a wonder all the prisoners don't go mad," he reasoned. "A few months of this would surely kill me."

At the end of the week Ben heard firing at a distance. The supply boat was now trying to steal into Port Arthur and had been discovered by a

Japanese patrol boat. The craft was struck twice and the prisoner below heard a wild commotion on the deck, as one of the funnels was carried away. But darkness favored the Russians, and inside of two hours the supply boat passed into Port Arthur harbor without sustaining further damage. She was then directed to a proper anchorage by the harbor master; and on the following day the transfer of her cargo to the storehouses on shore was begun.

For several days longer Ben was kept on the boat. Then, one wet and cold morning, he was liberated and told to march on deck. From the vessel he was taken to a big stone building which was being used as one of the garrison quarters. Here he was given a scant hearing in the presence of Captain Barusky, who appeared against him.

"We have no time to investigate your case at present, Captain Russell," said the officer who conducted the examination. "But from reports I should surmise that you are a dangerous young man. You must remain a prisoner." And then the young captain was taken away. Later on, he was marched a distance of half a mile and blindfolded. When the bandage was removed from his eyes, he found himself in an old stone building, dirty and neglected. He was taken to a small room, having a grated win-

dow, and thrust inside. Six other prisoners were put into the apartment with him, one man with a hacking cough, dreadful to hear. The door was closed and barred; and all were left to take care of themselves as best they could.

CHAPTER XXVII

A FIERCE BATTLE AT SEA

LARRY was taking a nap when the call came to clear the ship for action. It had been discovered that the Russian fleet was trying to escape from Port Arthur harbor, and the news was flashed from vessel to vessel of Admiral Togo's fleet, and all were ordered to prevent the movement at any cost.

"Now I reckon we are in fer it!" ejaculated Luke, as he and the youth rushed over to their gun. "Larry, it's in my mind we have some tall work cut out fer us this trip!"

"Let it come—I am in just the humor for fighting!" cried Larry. "I hope we can smash them just as we smashed the Spanish ships in Manila Bay."

Sailors and gunners were hurrying in all directions, and orders were coming in rapid succession. At first the Russian ships had turned in one direction, now they were turning in another, and, later still, they separated. A distant firing could already

be heard, but where it came from those on the *Shohirika* could not tell.

So far no ships of the enemy could be seen with the naked eye. The lookouts kept a close watch, and the flashlights continued to play all over the bosom of the rolling sea.

It was almost daylight when a distant explosion was heard. A Russian torpedo boat had run into a mine and was so badly damaged that she sank inside of ten minutes, carrying a large part of her crew with her.

This disaster proved a warning to the other Russian ships and they proceeded on their courses with added caution. The Japanese warships were equally on the alert, yet, just as the sun came up, one brushed against a mine and received such damage that she was practically put out of the contest.

"There is one of the enemy's ships!" was the cry, as the mist swept away as if by magic and the sun came out strongly. "Now is our chance. *Banzai!*"

"And there is another ship!" came a moment later, "and one of our own pounding her as if she was a witch!"

Guns were now booming over the water constantly, and from the forts on shore came shots and shells in rapid succession. Soon the *Shohirika* was in the midst of the battle, and then Luke and Larry

worked over the gun as never before, doing their full share towards disabling the ship that was trying to escape up the Manchurian coast.

For over an hour the running fire kept up. Neither ship dared to put on full speed, for fear of running into a mine. Solid shot was hurled in all directions, and the *Shohirika* received one below the water line which for the moment looked as if it might sink the craft. But the ship's carpenter and his crew got at the leak immediately, driving in a wedge which quickly stopped the flow of water.

It was hard, exhausting work between decks, and at the end of an hour Larry felt he must have some fresh air. Both he and Luke applied for permission to go on deck, and this permission was readily granted, for the guns on their side of the warship were not then in use.

On the deck of the *Shohirika* they could see what this battle really meant. Dirt and débris were to be seen in many places, and half a dozen sailors and marines had been killed or wounded. Everybody was bathed in perspiration and grime, and some of those who worked the big guns were panting like dogs after a chase.

"It's work, that's what it is," said Luke, running the perspiration from his begrimed forehead with his finger. "Ain't no child's play about it!"

"And dangerous work at that," added Larry. He gave a look toward the enemy's ships. "I declare, Luke, I believe they are running back to Port Arthur harbor!"

"I think the same, lad," responded the Yankee gunner. "Reckon they are findin' it is goin' to cost too much to get away. As soon as they get away from them land batteries we can pound 'em for keeps and they know it."

"And get away from the mines. That's the worst with fighting around here—you don't know how soon you'll hit a mine and be blown up."

"Oh, I reckon our captain is watching out fer them pesky things."

Larry was interested in watching the sharpshooters and range-finders in the tops, and he walked across the deck to get a better look at them. Luke followed, and as he did so, one of the nearest of the Russian ships sent out a roaring broadside at the *Shohirika* which raked her fore and aft and sent another hole through her side, but this time above the water line where it did scant damage.

"Gee Christopher!" began Luke, when he chanced to glance upward. "Larry, look out!" he screamed. "The top's coming down on ye!"

Luke was right. One of the shots from the enemy had struck the foremast, above the fighting top, and

it was crashing down, carrying a portion of the ship's flag with it. One end struck the gun turret, and then the wreckage hit Larry on the shoulder, hurling him on his back.

The foremast was heavy and had it struck the youth before landing on the turret and the surrounding works it might have killed the young gunner's mate on the spot. As it was, Larry lay like a log where he had fallen and when Luke raised him up the old tar found him unconscious.

"If he ain't got his shoulder broke then I miss my guess," muttered the Yankee gunner. "Larry! Larry! Can't ye speak to me?"

"That was a nasty one," came from one of the officers of the deck. "Better carry him below." And then the officer gave orders to remove the wreckage and hoist the flag once more.

With the unconscious youth in his arms, Luke hurried below and to the sick bay of the warship. Here the surgeon got to work immediately and examined Larry thoroughly.

"No bones broken," he announced. "But the bruise is severe and he is suffering from shock. He will soon come to his senses."

Luke had to return to his gun, for duty is duty in the navy, regardless of what is happening around one. It was true, the Russian warships were now

doing their best to sneak back into Port Arthur harbor and Admiral Togo wanted to do all the damage possible before the forts made it impossible to follow them further. All of the warships' guns were worked to their utmost, and when the Russian vessels did get back they were so badly crippled that they were of small consequence for future fighting until undergoing repairs.

When Larry opened his eyes again he found himself lying on a clean white cot in the ship's hospital with an attendant standing over him bathing his face.

"Oh!" he murmured and stared around him. "Oh, my shoulder! That was a fearful crack I got!"

The attendant did not understand, but smiled blandly and continued to bathe his face and also his head. Soon the full realization of what had happened came to the young gunner's mate. Then he asked about Luke.

The fighting was at an end and presently Luke came to him, to find Larry sitting up in a chair.

"I feel stiff and sore all over, Luke," said the youth. "It was just as if a house came down on me."

"Thank fortune you wasn't killed, or didn't have your bones broken," returned the Yankee gunner.

"I am thankful. Were you hurt?"

"Not in the least."

"What about the fight?"

"The Russians have sneaked back into the harbor like a lot of whipped dogs."

"What is our ship doing?"

"Putting up the coast. I don't know where we are going," answered Luke.

Larry remained in the ship's hospital for three days and then resumed his duties as before. His shoulder still felt stiff and sore and lifting anything was a good deal of labor. But Luke favored him, so he got along very well.

A week passed and the *Shohirika* remained at sea, moving in a wide circle, on the lookout for Russian warships or supply boats. But none were encountered, and then the cruiser was ordered to escort a transport filled with soldiers bound for the front.

The transport landed at a point some miles north of Dalny and the troops went ashore without delay. They were bound for the railroad, and were to participate in the advance upon Port Arthur from that point.

As the warship remained in the harbor several days, both Luke and Larry were allowed a short run on shore. They enjoyed this trip very much, until, much to their surprise, they learned that Major

Okopa's command was in the vicinity. Then they hunted this up, to learn the sad news from Gilbert that Ben was missing.

"Missing!" ejaculated Larry, in horror. "Taken by Chunchuses! Oh, Gilbert, this is dreadful!"

"Well, I don't know as you feel any worse than I do, Larry," answered Gilbert. "It makes me wild to think of it."

"But couldn't you find any trace of him at all?"

"Not the slightest, although I think he was carried off in a boat."

"But why should the Chinese brigands make him a prisoner?"

"I'm sure I don't know, excepting to hold him for a ransom. But if they intended to do that it is likely we should have heard from them before this."

The matter was discussed as long as Larry and Luke could remain on shore. But nothing came of it, and with a heavy heart the young gunner's mate returned to his place on the warship.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SIEGE OF PORT ARTHUR

AFTER the fruitless effort to escape from Port Arthur harbor the Russian warships "bottled up" there remained where they were for a long time to come. Occasionally one or another attempted to run the blockade, but results were usually disastrous, and at last the risk became so great nothing more was done in that direction. The Japanese continued to put down mines and sank several boats loaded with stone in or near the winding channel, and this made getting in as hard as getting out—thus putting a stop to the arrival of more supply boats, such as brought Ben to the seaport.

In the meantime the campaign on land was pushed forward with increased activity. The headquarters of the Japanese army investing Port Arthur was not far from the railroad, but the lines stretched many miles to the east and the west. Troops were hurried both from Japan and from the divisions near Liao-Yang, and heavy siege guns were mounted on every available hilltop. The Japanese were, at the start,

at a great disadvantage—they could not see the enemy at which they were firing. Hills and mountains cut them off from every view of the port. But they kept hammering away, day after day, week after week, and month after month, gaining steadily, throwing up new intrenchments, digging new tunnels, and hauling their heavy guns forward to more advantageous positions. The labor was body racking and the sacrifice of life enormous. But the Mikado's soldiers did not appear to care. They had set out to capture Port Arthur and they were going to do it.

For the foot-soldiers and for the cavalry there was at the start but little to do in the way of fighting. Most of the time was spent in digging trenches and tunnels, and in keeping out of the way of shells that whistled and screamed in all directions—shells weighing hundreds of pounds, which, when they struck, tore up the ground for yards around and smashed the rocks as if the latter were passing through a quartz crusher. Such is war of modern times, when carried on at a distance of miles.

But as the months went by, and Japanese and Russians came closer to each other, hand-to-hand conflicts became numerous. The Russians contested every foot of the ground, fighting with a courage that was truly heroic, and sacrificing themselves

freely for the Czar and the country they loved. The hand-to-hand conflicts became bloody in the extreme, thousands upon thousands being slaughtered between the rising and the setting of the sun.

From the seacoast the command to which Gilbert was attached moved to a small place called Fugi Klan. Here they went into camp for several weeks and while there were joined by a number of other commands, including that containing those old soldiers of fortune, Dan Casey and Carl Stummer, who had served with Gilbert and Ben in Cuba and in the Philippines.

"Py chiminy, of it ton't done mine heart goot to see you, cabtain!" exclaimed Carl Stummer, rushing up and giving Gilbert a handshake. "How you peen, annavay?"

"First rate, Stummer. And how are you, Casey?"

"Sure an' it's meself is as foine as a fiddle," answered the Irishman, with a broad grin on his freckled face. "It's a great war, ain't it now? Both soides is fightin' like a pair o' Kilkenny cats, so they are! An' where is me ould friend, Captain Russell?"

"He was captured by Chunchuses."

"No!" came from both Stummer and Casey, and then they poured in a volley of questions which were

bewildering. Gilbert answered them as best he could.

“Dot’s der vorst ding vot I hear yet alretty!” said Carl Stummer, with a sad shake of his head. “I vish I got dem Chunchusers—or vot you call dem—here. I fix ’em, eh, Tan?”

Dan Casey nodded vigorously. “Sure an’ we’d be after puttin’ a ball through ivery mother’s son of ’em, so we would! Poor Ben Russell! I loiked him loike a brother!” And the honest Irish sharpshooter heaved a long sigh.

Both Casey and Stummer had been having easy times of it for several weeks, but now they were called upon to go forth with pick and shovel, to do their share of work in digging intrenchments. This was not so nice, but they went at the labor without a murmur.

“Sure an’ we might as well git into practice,” observed Casey, as he started in with vigor. “Whin the war’s over an’ we git back to the States, it may be ourselves as will be workin’ fer the corporation in New York or ilsewhere!”

“Yah, udder puttin’ town railroad dracks alretty in der Vest,” answered Carl Stummer. “Dot is,” he added, “of I ton’t got money enough to puy a farm.”

“’Tis a stock farm I’m wantin’,” came from Casey. “Wid horses galore. There’s money for

ye, Carl!" And he went to work with added vigor—as if he expected to turn up the stock farm from the soil beneath him.

To Gilbert, even though he occasionally saw Stummer and Casey, the days were very lonely. He missed Ben greatly, and each day wondered if he would ever see his old war chum again. Major Okopa saw this and did what he could to cheer up the young officer.

"He may turn up before you realize it," said the major. "I don't think he was killed."

"If he is alive, it is very strange that we do not hear from him."

Two days later came a batch of letters into camp, written, or rather painted, for the most part, on thin Japanese paper. Among the communications were two for Gilbert, one from Captain Ponsberry concerning the *Columbia* and her cargo, and the other from a stranger in Peking, China.

"Who can be writing to me from Peking, China?" mused the young captain, and began to read the communication with interest. It was from a Chinese merchant, and ran in part as follows:

"You will be mystified to receive this from an utter stranger, but I deem it my duty, kind sir, to send this word to you.

“ Know, then, that one Ken Gow, a servant of my family, was in Port Arthur up to sixteen days ago—first a servant in an American family there, and next a prisoner in the vilest prison man ever saw, guarded by dogs of Russians unworthy to be used as door mats. Ken Gow is a faithful man, the flower of all my help.

“ It is needless to explain to you why my servant was thus ill-treated. But you must know that when in prison he met your great friend Captain Benjamin Russell, and it was the captain who saved Ken Gow from many hard blows from the other prisoners, who wanted not a Chinaman amongst them.

“ Ken Gow was grateful, even as I am grateful, and he promised to get word to you of this matter if the Russians granted him his liberty. Finding no fault in my servant he was, after a time, liberated, and watching his chance, left Port Arthur and came home.

“ Kind sir, he is grateful to Captain Russell and would do much for him if he could. Yet his most is to send this letter to you, telling you that Captain Russell is alive and held in a Port Arthur prison as a spy. One Russian hates him—his name, Captain Barusky,—and it would appear that this Russian is also your enemy, so beware of him.

“ I can tell no more. Ken Gow is sick from his

treatment at the hands of the Russian dogs. Accept this miserable assurance of my eternal friendship, and esteem for one I know must be high and illustrious.

“CHENG MO.”

Gilbert read the letter several times and showed it to Major Okopa. It was written in true Chinese style, with a big Chinese seal attached, and was, beyond all doubt, genuine.

“I can't understand one thing,” said the young captain. “How did Ben get to Port Arthur?”

“It may be that this Captain Barusky had him taken there, Captain Pennington.”

“I thought Captain Barusky was at Mukden.”

“The Russians have been taking in some troops at Port Arthur on the sly. Despite Admiral Togo's efforts, some supply boats and transports have passed his ships.”

“If Barusky is there he will do what he can to make Ben miserable. He is down on both of us—for he knows we are down on him and Ivan Snokoff.”

“Do you think Snokoff could have anything to do with this?”

“I'm sure I don't know. Anything is possible. Snokoff would be glad to make trouble for Ben—

since he helped me to make him settle up at Liao-Yang. Those Chunchuses tried to capture both of us."

The matter was talked over for half an hour, but brought forth no satisfaction. To Gilbert's mind, being held by the Russians as a spy was as bad as being in the hands of the Chinese brigands.

"I wish we could get into Port Arthur at once," he said, finally. "I shouldn't like anything better than to capture this Captain Barusky and liberate Ben."

"We are bound to get into the port sooner or later," answered Major Okopa. "They are bringing up more siege guns every day. If the Russians won't give up we'll batter the whole town down over their heads."

"Which will be a bad thing for Ben," rejoined Gilbert. "I don't want him killed in the attempt to rescue him."

CHAPTER XXIX

FROM ONE DIFFICULTY TO ANOTHER

“WHERE is this going to end?”

It was Ben who asked himself the question, as he walked up and down the narrow cell in which he had been confined in the prison at Port Arthur.

What had been written to Gilbert in the letter from Pekin had been substantially correct. Ben had aided Ken Gow in numerous ways, and for this the Chinaman had been extremely grateful and had promised to do all he could for the young captain should he manage to escape from the blockaded seaport. Then Ken Gow had disappeared one night, and that was the last Ben saw of him.

Three days later a guard entered the prison and announced that the prisoners were to be transferred to other quarters. With his hands bound behind him, Ben was marched forth through a side street of Port Arthur, where stood an old building which had formerly been used as a market. Cells had been built in this structure, and into one of these he was thrust, the guard sarcastically telling him to make himself as comfortable as possible.

The young captain was sick in both body and mind and fast reaching that point where one becomes desperate and fit for any deed of daring. More than once he was tempted to throw himself on the guard in an endeavor to overpower the fellow and escape. But he realized that if caught at this he would be immediately shot down.

Day after day passed, and from outside the prisoner heard the dull booming of cannon. Occasionally a shell would explode close to the prison, causing a wild yell of alarm and a general rush by those outside. There were flags over the prisons and over the hospitals, showing what manner of places they were, but, as said before, the Japanese were at a loss to see what they were firing at, so many shots and shells went where they were not intended. These mishaps were what caused the report to circulate that the Mikado's men were not fighting according to the rules of modern warfare, but were doing their best to shatter the hospitals in which lay their own and the Russian wounded.

It was a cold, raw day, with a touch of snow in the air, and Ben felt one of his desperate moods coming over him. His hands and feet were free and he peered forth from the one narrow window that the cell contained. All he could see beyond was a courtyard, surrounded by a stone wall.

“I wish I was out there—I’d get over that wall somehow!” he muttered to himself.

The cell window was not over fifteen or sixteen inches wide and twice that in height. The bars were of iron, but set in wooden frames but a few inches in thickness.

“A fellow might smash out those bars with the bench end,” he thought. “But after that what? I reckon the guard in the courtyard would shoot me on sight. I might try it at night.”

Still in a desperate mood, Ben picked up the bench, a solid affair several feet long. He made an imaginary lunge at the window bars with it.

“I’ll wager I could knock them out with one blow. They——”

Ben got no further, for at the moment a fearful explosion sounded somewhere overhead. The explosion was followed by a crash and a wild yell of alarm. A Japanese shell had struck the top of the building, tearing away fully a quarter of the roof and sending the bricks and timbers flying in all directions.

“Now is my chance!” he muttered, and without stopping to think twice he rammed the window bars as hard as he could with the bench. A second and third blow followed, and down went the irons, carrying a portion of the window frame with them.

Then through the opening leaped the young captain. As he landed in the courtyard, he picked up a small log of wood lying handy.

A glance around told him that the guard was nowhere in sight, the Russian having run to the other side of the building to note the damage done by the shell. Log in hand, Ben leaped quickly across the courtyard and placed the bit of wood up against the wall. This gave him a footing, and in a twinkling he was on top of the wall.

But though he acted quickly a guard from the prison building saw him and ran forth gun in hand.

"Halt!" came the command, in Russian, and then, raising his weapon, the guard fired at Ben.

The bullet whistled over the young captain's head, and without looking back to see who had fired it, he dropped on the other side of the wall. Then he sprinted up the street and around a corner.

Ben knew not where to go, but his one thought was to put distance between himself and the prison, and he hurried on and on, until he came to a barn which stood open. Into this he darted, to find the building empty of occupants.

The Japanese had begun a general bombardment of Port Arthur and shot and shells were flying in all directions. This being the case, the majority of the troops and the inhabitants were out of sight,—

hid away in cellars and dugouts. Nobody paid any attention to him and he was thus given ample time in which to think matters over and decide upon his next movement.

From the barn Ben moved to the building next door—which was a sort of dwelling and storehouse combined. Here, from the wide open doorway, he gazed at the scene of destruction before him. It was full of horror and made him shiver.

“War is certainly a terrible thing,” he thought. He saw some people running for their lives, and beheld one man go down struck in the back by a shell. Then he turned away to shut out the sight.

In one room of the warehouse he found an old overcoat and a slouch hat, and lost no time in donning these, both as a disguise and to keep himself warm. Then he hunted around for something to eat, but could not find a mouthful.

“I might have known there would be no food squandered,” he told himself. “Didn’t they say at the prison that they were slaughtering the horses just for the meat, and that butter and eggs were worth their weight in gold? I’ll be lucky to get bread and soup—especially as I haven’t a dollar with which to pay for a meal.”

Ben was about to leave the warehouse when he saw a file of Russian soldiers approaching. With

the soldiers were two officers, and as they came closer he recognized one as Captain Barusky.

"It was a bad thing to let that American escape," said the captain to the other officer. "If you catch sight of him, shoot him on the spot."

"Which we shall do with pleasure," was the ready answer; and then officers and soldiers passed on.

"I've got to keep out of sight, that's all there is to that," reasoned Ben, grimly. "If they catch me again it's all up with me. I wonder if it would be possible to get out of Port Arthur? Gilbert got out, but things weren't half so closely guarded as they are now."

Ben waited until nightfall before leaving the warehouse. Then, keeping a constant lookout for Russian soldiers, he sneaked along one street after another. Where to go he did not know, but he realized that he must have something to eat or he would starve.

Presently he came to a small garden in the center of which was a neat-looking residence. On the door-plate was the name Nathan Chase.

"Nathan Chase!" Ben cried, half aloud. "I wonder if that can be the gentleman Gilbert knew? If it is perhaps he will aid me."

At first the young captain thought to ring the doorbell, but fearful of meeting the wrong person

he resolved to investigate in a more private manner. The side windows of the residence were curtained, but the curtains were only partly down. Going to one of the windows he peered inside.

In a neatly furnished sitting room sat a young lady and a Russian soldier. They were arguing about something—money matters as far as Ben could make out. The young lady did not wish to give the soldier the money and he insisted upon having it. While Ben gazed at the scene, the Russian soldier leaped up, grasped the young lady by the shoulders and shook her roughly.

“Don’t!” screamed the young lady, in English. “Let me go!”

“I want the money!” answered the soldier, in his native tongue. He was a Cossack and of brutal features.

The young lady was pretty and she was helpless, and this combination was more than the young captain could resist. Regardless of consequences, he shoved up the window and leaped inside the apartment.

“Keep your hands off of that young lady!” he cried, and catching the Cossack by the shoulder he threw him backward. “Don’t you know how to treat a lady when you meet her, you big brute?”

The Cossack was startled, first because he had not

expected the interruption and secondly because he had no business to be in the mansion. He gave one look at Ben and then rushed out into the hallway and left the premises with all possible speed.

As soon as the Cossack was gone the young lady and Ben stared at each other. She started to speak, but stopped suddenly.

"Excuse me for coming in as I did, but I thought it was necessary," said the young captain. "I guess that fellow had no business here."

"You are right, sir. Papa is away, and he wanted me to give him money. He must have known I was alone in the house."

"Are you Miss Chase?"

"I am. But you have the advantage of me."

"I know it. I am Captain Benjamin Russell. Perhaps you know an old friend of mine, Gilbert Pennington. He knows your father, I believe."

"Oh, yes, I have met Captain Pennington. They tell me he is now in the Japanese army."

"He is." Ben paused and looked at the young lady keenly. "Miss Chase, can I trust you?" he asked, abruptly.

"What do you mean?"

"I will tell you," and in a few brief words he related his story, to which Grace Chase listened with close attention.

“ You were lucky to escape from that prison ! ” she cried, when he had finished. “ To be sure I will assist you as far as I can. Papa is away on business, but I expect him back in two or three hours. We haven’t much on hand to eat, but such as there is you are welcome to.”

“ I’m hungry enough to eat anything,” said Ben, with a little smile.

“ Then come with me to the dining room, Captain Russell, and I will prepare supper.”

“ You haven’t any servants now, I suppose ? ”

“ No ; every one of them has deserted us.”

They entered the dining room, and the young lady asked Ben to close the shutters. While he was doing this she prepared such a meal as the larder of the house afforded. It was not much, but he did not complain, and he thanked her warmly for giving what he felt she could ill afford to set before him.

The meal finished, they sat down to await the coming of Mr. Chase. While doing this Ben related some of his experiences in the army and the young lady told of the horrors of the siege.

“ One cannot understand it unless you are in the midst of it,” she said. “ Papa says business is at a standstill, the hospitals are filled with the sick and the wounded, and we are in constant dread that the next moment will be our last. The suspense is so great

that in one or two cases the inhabitants have gone crazy."

"I can well believe that, Miss Chase. During the war in the Philippines I saw——"

Ben paused, as a heavy footstep sounded on the porch of the residence. Other footsteps followed, and then came a loud knock on the door.

"Open here!" demanded a voice in Russian.
"Open, in the name of the Czar!"

CHAPTER XXX

A SURPRISE FOR LARRY

As the days passed, the watch upon Port Arthur from the sea became closer and closer. Admiral Togo gave strict orders that no ships should be allowed to enter or come from the harbor under any circumstances, and each commander of a warship was on his mettle, knowing full well that if he was derelict in his duty he would speedily hear from his superior in a manner far from pleasant.

Blockading became something of a monotony to Larry and Luke, and after several weeks had passed both wished something would happen.

"I'd rather put up with a stiff sea fight than this," declared the young gunner's mate.

"Right ye are, lad," replied the old Yankee tar. "Ain't no use o' bein' ready for a tussle if it ain't comin'. As it now is, life in the navy ain't no more excitin' nor life on the old *Columbia*."

During that time Larry received a letter from Captain Ponsberry, similar in contents to that sent to Gilbert. The Japanese Government had released

the cargo of the schooner and then bought the same at a good round price. The ship had also been released, Captain Ponsberry having to pay a nominal sum for this action.

"I think the captain is lucky to get off so easily," said Larry. "I suppose the Japanese Government might have scooped in everything."

"Well, the Japs think it best to remain friendly to the United States," answered Luke, and it is likely that the old sailor was more than half right.

Cold weather had come in earnest and work on deck was far from pleasant. Yet each man on the *Shohirika* had to do his full duty as before, and, be it said to their credit, not a sailor or marine did any shirking. Gun drills and various exercises were kept up constantly.

One day the warship ran close to a big trading brig bound for Hong-Kong. As was the custom, the brig stopped to allow the commander of the *Shohirika* to make certain that she was not carrying contrabands of war for Russia or had no intentions of running the blockade.

While this examination was going on, Larry and Luke chanced to come on deck, curious to have a look at the stranger.

"About as big a brig as I ever see in these parts,"

was the Yankee tar's comment. "She must carry a whopping cargo."

"Yes, and a lot of men to man her," answered Larry. "Think of hoisting and furling such sails as she carries!"

The two vessels had come fairly close to each other, and our friends continued to survey the brig with interest. Then Larry gave a cry.

"Oh, Luke, I wish I had a glass!"

"Why?"

"Unless I am mistaken, there is Shamhaven on the deck of that ship!"

"No!"

Larry pointed with his hand. "Doesn't that look like him?" he continued.

"Keelhaul me, if I don't think you're right, lad. Wait, I'll get a glass an' make certain!"

The old tar knew where he could borrow a glass, and in a minute more he returned, and both took a brief look through the instrument.

"It is Shamhaven!" ejaculated Larry. "And look, there is Peterson coming from the fo'castle!"

"That's so. What ye goin' to do about it?"

"Tell the officer of the deck. They shan't get off with my money if I can help it."

Rushing away, Larry soon acquainted the proper officer with what he had discovered—telling as much

about the robbery as seemed necessary. The officer was interested, and, what was even more to the point, liked the young American.

“Do you wish to go to yonder ship and confront the men?” he asked.

“Try me and see!” answered Larry, excitedly. “I mean, yes, sir,” he stammered. “And will you let Luke Striker go, too?”

The officer agreed, and soon another small boat put off from the warship, and Larry and Luke, with the officer, were speedily landed on the deck of the brig.

“You’re a fine rascal, to rob me!” cried Larry, rushing up to Shamhaven. “And to rob Captain Ponsberry, too!”

Shamhaven had not expected this encounter, and for the moment he was dumbstruck. He gazed from Larry to Luke as if they were ghosts.

“I—I—who are you, anyway?” he stammered. “I don’t know you,” he added, striving to regain his composure.

“Yes, you do know me, and you know Luke Striker, too,” answered the young gunner’s mate.

“What does this mean?” asked the captain of the brig, while a number of others looked on with interest.

“I’ll tell you what it means, sir,” said Larry, and

did so. "He has got to give up my money belt and my money, and give up Captain Ponsberry's money, too."

At this moment Peterson came up and was promptly collared by Luke.

"Stop! Don't you vos touch me!" cried Peterson. "I ain't noddings done, no."

"You helped Shamhaven to rob me," came from Larry.

"No, he done it all alone! I no touch noddings!"

"Oh, shut up!" roared Shamhaven, in disgust. "I never robbed anybody. If you lost your money Peterson must have taken it."

A quarrel ensued between the evildoers, in the midst of which came a cry from the *Shohirika*.

"An enemy is in sight!"

At once all attention was turned to the warship. Scarcely a minute elapsed when a signal was displayed:

"A battleship, and she is trying to escape up the coast!"

"To the boats!" roared the Japanese officer on the deck of the brig. "To the boats at once! This investigation will have to be postponed. We shall expect you to remain as you are"—the latter words to the captain of the big brig.

"As you will," was the smooth answer.

A rush was made for the two small boats, Larry and Luke being hustled along with the crowd. Soon they put off for the warship, which was already preparing to follow the Russian battleship that had been seen.

"I didn't get my money, after all," grumbled the youth. "But perhaps I'll get it later—if that ship of the enemy doesn't sink us," he added.

As soon as they were on board of the *Shohirika* again, the cruiser started after the battleship. But the enemy had a good lead, and it was some time before the Japanese warship could command a full head of steam, which meant everything to her. Then, when steam was to be had in plenty, there came a breakdown in the engine room, causing a delay of twenty minutes.

"We'll never catch her,—at least, not to-day," said Luke, and he was right. Darkness found the battleship still three miles away. Half a dozen shots were fired at her, but none took effect. Then night ended the pursuit.

In the morning nothing was to be seen of the enemy and those on the Japanese warship were much depressed, for they had fancied that an encounter might add greatly to their laurels. But shortly

before noon the lookout announced the approach of another ship.

“A Russian cruiser!” was the cry.

This was correct—the vessel was the auxiliary cruiser, *Pontomuk*, formerly a steamer in the Siberian trade. She was manned by a fierce and swarthy-looking body of sailors and marines, and carried a first and second battery of no mean proportions.

“I’ll wager we have got some work cut out for us now,” said Larry, and he was right. Finding she could not run away from the *Shohirika* the Russian auxiliary cruiser came steaming up and let drive at close range,—a broadside that raked the Japanese warship from end to end with deadly effect. The *Shohirika* answered immediately, and both the steering wheel and the rudder were smashed on the enemy’s ship.

“Phew! but this is hot work!” panted Larry, as all those around the gun worked like Trojans.

“An’ it’s going to be hotter!” ejaculated Luke. He sighted the piece with care. “There, Sally Jane, let her go!” And he pressed the electric button. *Bang!* went the gun with a roar that was deafening. Then the breech was thrown open and the smoke rolled out, filling the air with a smell that made them cough and sneeze. But nobody stopped

work. In a trice the gun was cleaned and cooled and another shell pushed into place, and then the firing was repeated.

“She’s coming alongside!” was the announcement from on deck. “All hands to repel boarders!”

“A hand-to-hand fight!” cried Larry, and scarcely had the words been uttered when there came a bump that hurled half the sailors flat. Up they sprang, and as order after order was delivered the marines and others ran for their guns and cutlasses, while the officers saw to it that their pistols were ready for use.

A wild, maddening yell came from the deck of the Russian ship, as marines and sailors poured over the side. An answering *Banzai* issued from the Japanese, and they met the first onslaught with vigor. Then came a fierce tramping over the deck, as the two conflicting parties moved first to one side and then the other.

“We are ordered up!” cried Larry, a few minutes later. “Here is where we have got to fight for it, Luke!”

“Right you are, lad. Do your best, and trust to Heaven for the rest!” was the Yankee tar’s reply. and then, cutlasses in hand, both mounted to the deck, to engage in the fiercest hand-to-hand encounter either of them had ever experienced.

CHAPTER XXXI

A CALL TO REPEL BOARDERS

IT was a battle royal from the start and for some time neither side had an advantage. Pistol shot was met by pistol shot, and a rifle gun placed on the upper deck of the Russian warship was balanced in execution by a similar gun mounted on the *Sho-hirika*. The slaughter created by both weapons was frightful, a dozen or more going down on either side each time a gun was discharged.

When Larry and Luke came out on deck the spectacle was enough to make the blood of the youth run cold, and it was only his previous experience in warfare which rendered him capable of doing what he knew was his duty.

“Charge on them!” came the cry in Japanese. “Kill them, or drive them back to their ship! *Banzai!*”

“*Banzai! Banzai Nippon!*” was the yell. “Hurrah for Japan!”

The Japanese had not expected a hand-to-hand fight and the closing in of the enemy aroused them

as they had never been aroused before. For the first time Larry saw the sailors and marines awakened to their full fighting fury—a fury in which every Japanese scorns death and thinks that to die is glory for himself, his family, and his emperor. They leaped on the Russians with a ferocity that was appalling, and that first shock sent the Czar's men back to the deck from which they had come.

But the Russians were likewise aroused, and with cheers and yells they came on once more, leaping over the bodies of those who had fallen, and meeting shot with shot and cutlass stroke with cutlass stroke. Officers and men fought side by side, and many went down to a common death.

By instinct Larry and Luke kept close together, with the others from Luke's gun near at hand, and Steve Colton and Bob Stanford not far away. Each used his cutlass as best he could, warding off the blows of the enemy and dealing cuts whenever a chance appeared. Larry was glad that he had learned to use a cutlass so well, and soon found himself the match of almost any Russian who challenged him.

The fighting was now spread over the decks of both vessels, which were hooked together tightly and pounding broadside at every swell of the ocean. To

attempt to blow up either ship would have been fatal probably to both—one dragging down the other—so no such attempt was made.

While the fighting was at its height, Larry suddenly found himself face to face with a Russian lieutenant of marines. The fellow had a pistol in his hand, and as Larry raised his cutlass to strike, he dropped the weapon on a level with the youth's head and pulled the trigger.

Had the bullet sped as intended it is likely Larry would have been killed. But just as the trigger fell Luke, who was at Larry's side, knocked the pistol to one side with his cutlass and the bullet merely grazed Larry's hair. Then Larry leaped forward and gave the Russian lieutenant a thrust in the side which put the fellow out of the fight instantly.

For fully fifteen minutes the battle had now raged and it was growing hotter each instant. All of the available men on each ship were in the fray, and the cries and yells which resounded were deafening.

"We certainly can't keep this fight up much longer!" panted Larry. He had a cut on his left hand and one in the shoulder, but kept on with dogged determination.

"Well, we ain't goin' to surrender!" grunted Luke. "It's fight or die, I guess!" And he leaped forward once more.

Two tall Russians were directly in front of the old Yankee gunner, and both fell upon him with their cutlasses at the same instant. Luke was capable of warding off the weapon of one, but he was no match for the pair, and it speedily looked as if they would surely kill him.

“Back with ye!” he yelled, and swung his cutlass as rapidly as he could, but they crowded him still closer and then one made a thrust at his face and another at his body.

It was at this critical moment that Larry, who had been engaged with somebody else, saw his old war chum’s predicament. With a leap he gained Luke’s side, and down came his cutlass with a sweeping blow on the wrist of one of the enemy. The Russian dropped his cutlass to the deck and staggered back, his hand almost severed from his arm. Then Luke slashed the other Russian across the cheek, and both of the enemy hurried back behind the other fighters.

“Good fer you, Larry!” panted Luke, when he could speak. “They had me about cornered!”

“These fellows certainly know how to put up a stiff fight.”

“You’re wounded yourself. Better go below.”

“No, I’m going to see it out. Why don’t you go down yourself?”

"It ain't in me, that's why," answered the old Yankee gunner.

Again came a fierce onslaught from the Russians. But the Japanese now had another rifle gun in place, and sharpshooters were crowding the fighting tops. The latter picked off the Russian officers, and this created a momentary confusion. Then came a sudden order to unlock the two ships and this was done.

"The Russian ship is going down!" was the yell, and the news proved true. An explosion below decks had torn a hole in the Russian warship's bottom and she began to sink rapidly.

The scene was now indescribable. Both the Russians and the Japanese on the doomed vessel endeavored to reach the deck of the *Shohirika*. In this struggle the majority of the Russians received the worst of it, and fully fifty of them, including not a few wounded, remained on board when the doomed warship took her final plunge beneath the waters of the sea. Eighteen Japanese were likewise drowned, including two under officers.

"Surrender, or we will drive you over the side!" was the command from the Japanese, and utterly disheartened by the loss of their ship, the Russians threw down their arms; and the fierce and bloody contest was at an end. The common sailors were

driven forward and chained together or bound with ropes, and the officers were grouped near the stern, where a formal surrender was made by the captain of the lost ship giving up his sword. This formality over, the Japanese set to work at once, cleaning up the deck and caring for the wounded as well as the hospital accommodations of the *Shohirika* would permit.

"I never wish to see another fight like that," was Larry's comment, when he had washed up and had his wounds dressed. "It was simply a slaughter!"

"Right you are, lad," answered Luke. "An' I reckon I'm a-goin' to carry the scars o' it down to my grave." The old Yankee gunner had received several severe wounds, and he was glad enough to have Larry swing his hammock for him and lie down to rest.

The battle over, the captain of the *Shohirika* sailed away, to look for the big brig once more and to report to the flagship of the fleet. But the brig had taken time by the forelock and left for parts unknown.

"I suppose that is the last of Shamhaven and Peterson and my money," said Larry, when this news reached him. "I wish we had met that brig a week ago."

"Oh, it's possible we may see her again," said

Luke, cheerfully. "But it gets me that she ran away, unless she had something to run for."

"She must have been carrying some contraband of war, Luke."

"It ain't unlikely, lad. Well, she's gone, an' it ain't no use to cry over spilt milk. When you write to Captain Ponsberry you can tell him ye saw them two rascals an' that's all the good it did."

"Do you know what I'm thinking?"

"Well?"

"I'm thinking that brig was bound for Port Arthur, and she'll slip into that port some dark and misty night."

"It's a risky piece o' business. Either our ships or the mines are likely to blow her up."

"That is true. But the Russians at the port must be getting desperate, and they'll most likely pay any kind of a price for supplies. A captain who ran the blockade successfully could make a fortune," returned Larry.

The young gunner's mate was right in his surmise. The big brig was a Russian vessel in disguise and loaded to her fullest capacity with supplies for the blockaded seaport. She had been fitted out at Vladivostok, but had taken a wide sea course, so as to pretend to have set sail from Nagasaki. Several Russian shipping merchants were interested in

the venture, which was a private one, and among the number was Ivan Snokoff. From Captain Barusky, Snokoff had heard that fabulous prices could be obtained for needed commodities at Port Arthur, and he had invested nearly every *ruble* he possessed in the enterprise. If the vessel succeeded in reaching Port Arthur, Captain Barusky was to undertake the disposal of the goods shipped in Snokoff's name, and then the two were to divide the profits.

The big brig had come close to being wrecked off the coast of Japan and during a gale had run down a fishing smack containing Shamhaven, Peterson, and two Japanese. One Japanese had been drowned, and the three others from the smack had been made to join the crew of the big brig. This was agreeable to Shamhaven and Peterson, who did not wish to remain near Nagasaki or at any place where Captain Ponsberry or Larry would be likely to discover them.

CHAPTER XXXII

FALL OF PORT ARTHUR—CONCLUSION

“OPEN, in the name of the Czar!”

Such was the command which startled both Ben and Grace Chase, and for the moment each gazed at the other in horror, not knowing what to say or do.

“I must get away from here!” whispered the young captain, but scarcely had he spoken when there came a crash, and the front door of the residence swung in. Then half a dozen Russians poured into the house.

“There he is, as I suspected!” said one, an officer from the prison. “We’ll see that you do not escape again,” he added to Ben, grimly.

In the midst of the excitement Nathan Chase arrived. But he could do nothing for the young captain, and was glad that he was left to protect his daughter.

“We ought also to take her,” said the prison official. “She did wrong to harbor this prisoner.” And then, without further ado, Ben was marched back to the place from which he had escaped such a short while before.

After that the time passed dismally enough for the young American. For having run away he was put on the most miserable fare the prison afforded, the food being often so vile he could not touch it. Whenever he attempted to protest he was met with kicks and blows.

“They might as well kill me and be done with it,” he thought. “Oh, how I wish the Japs would take the city and give me back my liberty!”

In those days Port Arthur became a most uncomfortable place for all living there. The Japanese army was pressing forward steadily, and army and navy did everything possible to destroy the shipping in the harbor and make the various forts untenable. Shots and shells were hurled into the city at all hours of the day and night, until living there became worse than a nightmare. Among the soldiers scurvy became prevalent, until the hospitals could not accommodate the sick and the dying. Nothing was done to clean up the streets, and the rubbish lay many feet deep over the sidewalks. Practically all of the shops were closed, for they had next to nothing to sell. The main article of food was rice, and to cook this many old buildings had to be razed in order to procure necessary firewood. As winter approached the suffering of the poor became so in-

tense that riots broke out and to maintain order not a few were shot down.

Such was the condition in the city. Outside, to the northward, the fighting went on week after week. So many soldiers were killed upon both sides that to bury the dead became impossible, and thousands were left where they had fallen, to become the prey of vultures, or to putrefy and fill the locality with a stench that was as nauseating as it was deadly! Such are the horrors of modern warfare. The demands for universal peace cannot come any too quickly.

In the advance on Port Arthur, Gilbert did his full share of the fighting. The Japanese were now struggling for the possession of what was known as 203-Meter Hill, a rocky elevation which was not fortified but which was in the direct line of Russian fire. The top of 203-Meter Hill commanded a fine view of Port Arthur and its harbor, and it was this view the Japanese needed, in order to make their shell fire most effective.

The battle for 203-Meter Hill is one which will be long remembered. The Japanese fought with a desperation impossible to describe, and when the hill was captured, General Stoessel sent out nearly all his available men to retake it. But this could not be accomplished, and late in December the Japanese

stormed the inner defenses of the Russian chain of forts, killing nearly all of the brave defenders who dared to oppose them. Then tons upon tons of shot and shell were sent into Port Arthur and over the harbor once again, until the locality became little short of an inferno. Nearly all the shipping was destroyed, and so many buildings were set on fire that to stem the conflagration became all but impossible. The end came on New Year's Day, 1905—ten months after the famous siege began. To hold out longer seemed impossible, and to avoid further carnage General Stoessel called a council of war and sent a message to General Nogi offering to capitulate.

“Port Arthur has surrendered!” The news flew from one Japanese regiment to another, and soon the warships were sending the message from vessel to vessel. For once the Japanese showed their real feelings, and “*Banzai! Banzai!*” rent the air again and again. “Long life to the Mikado! Port Arthur is ours once more!”

“It is a well-earned victory!” cried Larry, when he heard the news.

“Yes, lad, and I trust it brings this bloody war to a close,” came from Luke.

“They say General Stoessel blew up the warships remaining in the harbor.”

“He couldn’t have had many left,” returned the old Yankee gunner. “The army and the navy have about battered everything to bits.” And in this surmise Luke was correct.

The fall of Port Arthur caused widespread consternation in Russia, while the people of Japan were correspondingly elated. Because of the gallant defense of the place, the Japanese made generous terms with those who had surrendered, much to the satisfaction of the world at large. Many had predicted a universal butchery, but nothing of the sort occurred, and the Russian sick and wounded were given every possible attention.

After the fall of the port Larry was permitted to go ashore some miles above the town, and he managed to locate Gilbert, and then learned for the first time that Ben was a prisoner in the captured place.

“A prisoner!” he ejaculated. “Oh, Gilbert, we must find him and have him released!”

“That is just what I have been thinking, but I don’t know exactly how to go at it, Larry.”

“There ought to be some way of doing these things. We might interview one of the generals and—— Who is that coming this way?”

“Why, it’s Ben himself!” cried Gilbert.

“Ben!” screamed Larry, and ran forward to meet his brother. Soon they were in each other’s

arms, and then Gilbert received an equally warm greeting.

“We were released this morning,” said Ben. “I can tell you I was mighty glad of it. I haven’t had a meal fit to eat in weeks.”

“Well, you shall have the best our larder affords,” said Gilbert. “My, but you’re a sight for sore eyes!” he continued.

“Don’t say a word!” came from Larry. Two tears were glistening in his honest eyes. “It’s almost too good to be true!”

Here let me add a few words more and then bring to a close this tale of the naval and military adventures “At the Fall of Port Arthur.”

After the surrender of the city the army in that vicinity, and also the fleet near the harbor, had but little to do outside of caring for the sick and wounded and disposing of the thousands of prisoners. The Russian officers were allowed to go on parole and the prisoners were transported to Japan. Many of the mines in the harbor were taken up, so that ships might come and go in safety.

Larry was anxious to learn what had become of Shamhaven and Peterson, and through the Japanese guards stationed in Port Arthur located the rascally sailors at a cheap boarding-house. Both were made

prisoners, and Larry got back a portion of the money stolen from Captain Ponsberry and himself. It was learned that the big brig had been destroyed by the Japanese shell fire, so that Ivan Snokoff lost everything he placed in the venture.

"Well, it served him right," said Gilbert, when he heard of this. "He is responsible for the time Ben spent in prison."

What had become of Captain Barusky was at first a mystery. But at last it was learned that he had sneaked aboard of a transport filled with wounded soldiers and bound for Chefoo. He pretended to be wounded himself, and was given medical attention until the trick was discovered, when he was treated as a coward. As soon as Chefoo was reached he disappeared, and that was the last seen or heard of him for some time.

"We are well rid of that fellow," said Ben. "I hope the Russians read him out of their army. He isn't fit to hold a commission."

"What do you imagine will be the next move in this war?" questioned Gilbert.

"It is hard to tell. I think they will try to take Mukden, for one thing."

"Russia is going to send out more warships," put in Larry. "If they come this way, it may mean more fighting for me."

“ Well, I reckon you’ll do your duty, if you are put to it,” answered Gilbert, with a smile.

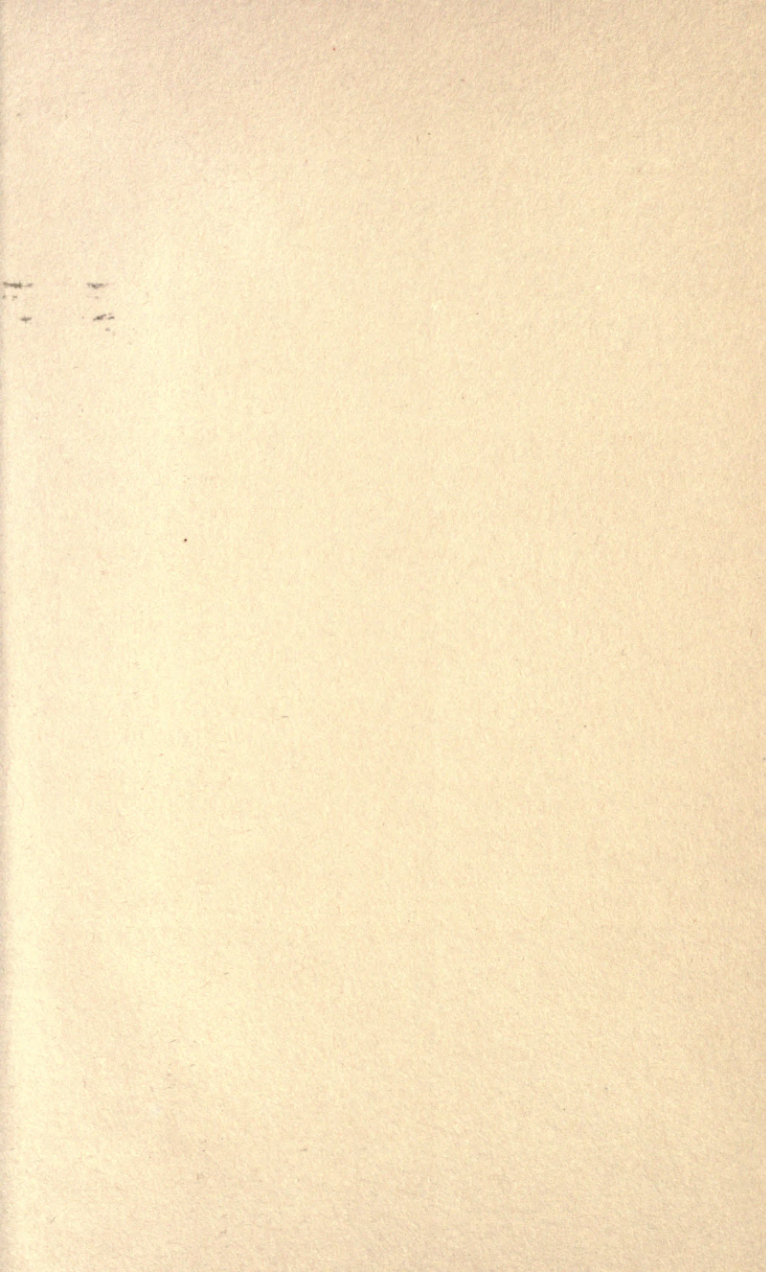
“ And so will you do yours,” came from Larry.

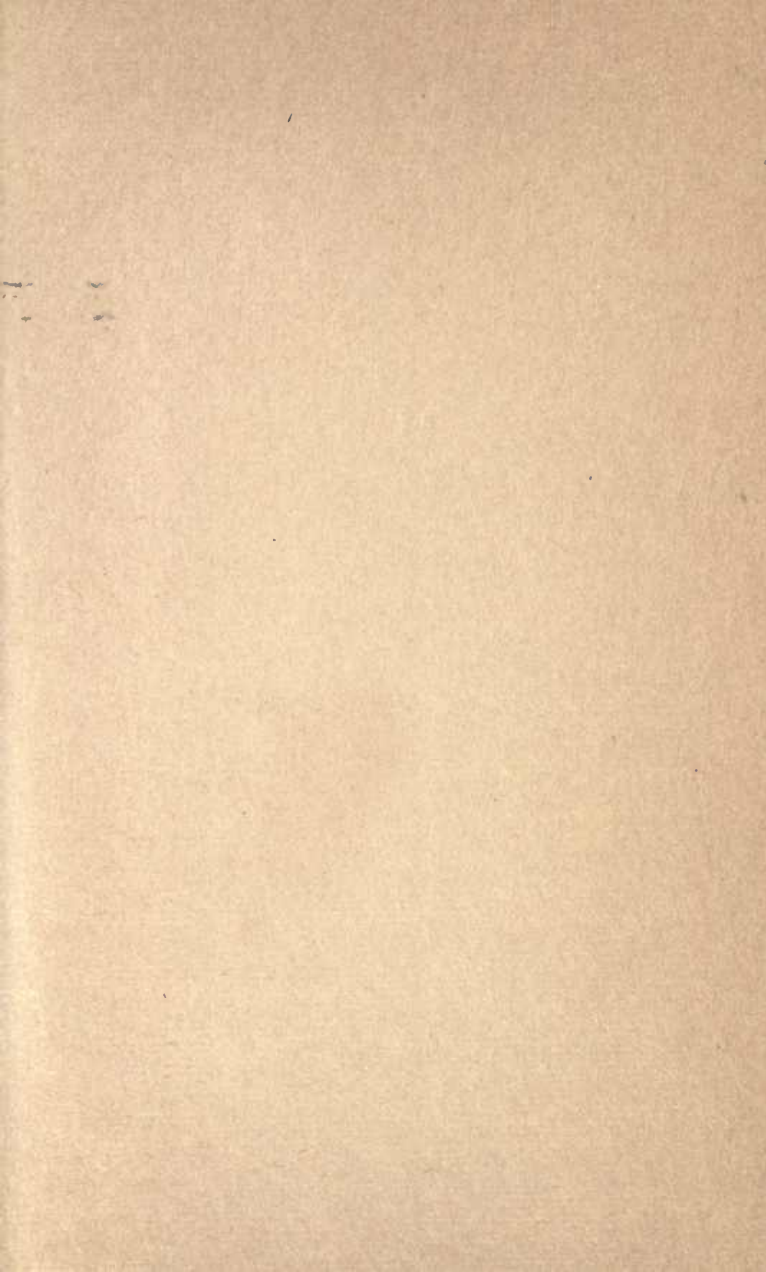
“ We’ll all try to do our duty,” broke in Ben.

“ We didn’t join the army and the navy to hang back. Just the same, I’d enjoy a bit of a rest just now.”

The others agreed that the rest would be beneficial all around. It was given to them; and here, for the present at least, we will leave them, wishing them the best of good luck in the future.

THE END





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