

Boy Scouts in the North Sea; Or, The Mystery of a Sub

G. Harvey Ralphson

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The Mystery of a Sub

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START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BOY SCOUTS IN THE NORTH SEA

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The young divers went below and attached their chains to sunken U-13.

BOY SCOUTS
IN THE NORTH SEA
OR
“The Mystery of a Sub”

BY
G. HARVEY RALPHSON

MADE IN U. S. A

M. A. DONOHUE & COMPANY
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CHAPTER I

A PACKAGE VANISHES

“Good night!” exclaimed a lad of about eighteen peering from the window in a railway coach. “This train’s running on a regular lake!”

“What’s that, Jimmie?” asked a companion approaching the first speaker. “Are we on a ferry? I still feel the wheels hit the rail joints.”

“Oh, yes, now and again we crawl along a rail’s length or two,” admitted the boy, “but it’s mighty slow work! I’m getting tired!”

“What place is this, anyway?” inquired a third boy coming to the window. “It looks as if we’re going out into the ocean!”

“We can’t be headed for Holland at this rate!”

“We surely are!” assured the one addressed as Jimmie. “I’ll bet I can tell you what that is! The Belgians cut their dikes and flooded the country to drive out the Germans. My dream book says that’s it!”

A general laugh greeted this assertion. Moving about in the limits of the none too commodious compartment of a European railway carriage four boys dressed in the well-known khaki uniforms of the Boy Scouts of America endeavored to observe the scenery through the windows.

To those of our readers who have followed the adventures of this group of boys as related in the previous volumes of this series no introduction is necessary. However, for the benefit of those who have not been so fortunate, a word of explanation may not be out of place at this time. The lads had very recently been engaged in a man hunt that led through parts of France and Belgium. They had visited the trenches of both the French and German forces and had several times faced death.

Just now they were practically prisoners, having been accorded passage from the German lines to a neutral port in Holland, where they expected to take ship for their home town of New York.

Ned Nestor, a fine, manly lad, was the Leader of the Wolf Patrol of New York

City, Boy Scouts of America. He had been often selected for difficult work by the Chief of the United States Secret Service because of his aptitude for the work. His coolness and sound judgment had carried himself and his companions through many difficulties. It was a mission of this character upon which the boys had recently engaged and from which they were now returning.

Jimmie McGraw, freckle-faced and red-headed, was a member of the Wolf Patrol of which Ned was leader. He was an ardent adherent of Ned's. Brought up a newsboy on the Bowery of New York the boy had come under the observation of the older lad, who had found him indeed worthy of all the care which had been bestowed.

Jack Bosworth, the son of a prominent corporation attorney, and Harry Stevens, whose father was a well-known automobile manufacturer, were the other members of the group. These latter two were members of the Black Bear Patrol of New York. All the lads appeared to be about eighteen years old. Their tidy uniforms, their well-knit frames and their alert attitudes bespoke the constant training of their leader.

As they looked from the windows of the car in which they now found themselves they discovered that the situation was even as Jimmie had stated. The country was flooded with water released from the dikes.

"Tell you what," declared Jack Bosworth, after a prolonged inspection of the landscape, if it may be so called, "this is some wet!"

"You win the argument," announced Jimmie, wrinkling his freckled nose at his companion. "I always said you were the wise little fox!"

Jack's answer to this pleasantry was an attempt to box the younger lad's ears. Jimmie's resentment of the procedure drew the others into a friendly scuffle that terminated only when the contestants paused for breath.

"I wish they'd hurry up and let us get onto dry land again!" said Jimmie, when he next found himself able to draw a long breath.

"You won't find much dry land when it rains like it's going to right now!" stated Harry, pointing out of the window. "Watch it come down!"

"I hope they don't get to the border while it rains like this," answered Ned, with an involuntary shiver. "I don't fancy standing out in such a drizzle as this appears to be. We'd be wet through in no time!"

"Why, do they make us get out?" queried Harry.

“Yes, I understand from what the officer said back there at the old castle that we’ll be searched body, boots and baggage.”

“And what if they find something they don’t like?”

“Perhaps they’ll put us in jail for a few months or until the war has ceased,” replied Ned. “I’m sure I don’t know what they’ll do.”

“Br-r-rh!” shivered Jimmie. “I wouldn’t turn our old friend The Rat out into a rain like this! That would be cruelty to animals!”

“Small chance anyone’ll have to turn him out now!” spoke up Jack. “That dynamite fixed him so he won’t be turned out for some time!”

“Don’t speak of it, boys,” protested Ned. “I see him yet!”

“Let’s change the subject,” proposed Jimmie, out of consideration for his chum’s feelings. “I think I see some land. Can we be coming to the border I wonder? I hope we are and that we can soon be starting home!”

“Train’s slackening speed,” announced Harry. “They’re stopping!”

It was even as the boy had said. With many a bump and groan of grinding brakes the train crawled to a standstill beside a hut built upon a rise of ground. Here was stationed a force of soldiers detailed to the work of searching and examining all who attempted to pass from Belgium to Holland. Those who were not certified as refugees or in other ways vested with proper authority to pass were promptly rejected and turned back.

A guard came running along the foot board opening doors. He shouted instructions to the inmates of the carriages, who promptly began scrambling out of the uncomfortable cars. All baggage was placed along the track to facilitate examination. The train itself was searched.

Gesticulating and conversing rapidly two soldiers approached the little group of Boy Scouts. Apparently an argument of some sort was in progress, but the boys could not determine the nature of it.

One of the men pointed to the uniforms and to the medals upon the sleeves of the boys’ jackets. Gradually his companion seemed to be convinced by the flow of words. At length he nodded his head, as if surrendering his last doubts. The two men fell to examining the luggage.

“Go as far as you like, Old Scout!” scorned Jimmie, as he observed the rough manner in which his belongings were being tossed about. “I’ll bet I’d punch your

dome a little, though, if you could talk English!”

“Ah, ha!” cried one of the soldiers, tapping his comrade on the shoulder, as if his argument had been conclusively supported. “Anglaise!”

A torrent of words from the other seemed to meet a receptive ear. The first speaker nodded energetically. His satisfaction was all too evident. From his appearance he was expecting nothing short of a medal.

“Judging from their motions,” Jimmie remarked, “these two fellows are about to fight a duel. I’ll bet on the shorter one!”

“Not much!” declared Harry. “They’re merely telling one another what a nice day it was yesterday and how fine the weather’ll be when it clears up. They are using the sign language, that’s all!”

“Don’t you kid yourself!” protested Jimmie, uneasily. “I smell Old Man Trouble coming around the corner right now!”

“Go on, Jimmie!” scorned Jack. “You’re dreaming again!”

“I know I am!” replied the younger lad. “Last night I dreamed of eating salt mackerel and my dream book says that means trouble!”

“Here they come now!” cautioned Ned. “Hush a minute, boys!”

Addressing the boys in German the soldier was evidently asking some question which demanded an answer. Ned as spokesman shook his head. The other soldier spoke rapidly in the French language.

“Excuse me, gentlemen,” Ned said, lifting a protesting hand, “we cannot understand the language you are using. We speak only English!”

“Ah, ha! Anglaise!” cried the soldier, gesticulating.

“There, you put your foot in it!” declared Jimmie. “Why didn’t you say: ‘Come across with some good old United States, Bo’?’”

“They probably don’t understand your slang, Jimmie!” replied Ned.

“So-o-o,” exclaimed one of the men in poor English, “you speak English, do you? And from what part of England do you come?”

“We are not from England at all,” explained Ned, “but from the United States. We are being sent home by the kindness of a German officer, who has been most considerate. See, here are our passports!”

“Bah!” scornfully protested the man. “Passports are most easily forged. And

information may be carried still more easily!”

“But I assure you,” continued Ned, “we are speaking the truth!”

“So say all spies!” replied the other. “We shall see for ourselves just what information you have in your possessions!”

“Go as far as you like,” replied Ned, somewhat nettled at the soldier’s insolence. “You won’t find a thing that shouldn’t be there!”

One of the men was already bending over the bags containing such articles as the boys had deemed necessary for their trip. Without regard for the owners’ rights he was rapidly taking out every piece separately. After carefully examining it he threw the article on the ground. He was evidently annoyed at not finding something incriminating.

Submitting to the search with poorly concealed dislike of the man and his methods, the boys waited with what patience they could muster until the ordeal should be ended. Ned endeavored to distract their thoughts by commenting on the others, who were meeting similar treatment.

He was interrupted by an exclamation of delight from the searcher.

“Ah!” cried that worthy, standing upright. “Nothing contraband! Nothing to be concealed! No information! These are not spies!”

He held in his hand a flat packet wrapped in heavy oiled silk, tied with many wrappings of stout twine and sealed carefully with wax.

“Gather your possessions quickly and follow me!” commanded the soldier triumphantly, drawing a revolver. “We shall visit the commander!”

“What is that thing and where did it come from?” questioned Ned.

“Search me!” declared Jimmie, excitedly. “Maybe this gink had it up his little sleeve and dropped it in there at the right minute!”

“He looks equal to it!” stated Jack stoutly. “He’s a villain!”

“Better be careful what you say!” cautioned Ned. “We are not out of the woods, and these fellows understand English pretty well!”

“I wish I had my automatic and about ten yards start!” stormed Jimmie, gathering up wearing apparel and jamming it into his kit. “I could beat that slow-footed camel in a straightaway without half trying!”

“Better wait and see it out,” advised Ned, replacing his own belongings. “It’s

only a mistake and can surely be explained.”

“Maybe we can be examined and go ahead on this same train,” offered Jack consolingly. “Anyhow, we won’t gain anything by arguing with these fellows. They have no sense of humor and don’t want one!”

Following their two captors the lads trudged down the track toward the hut. Carefully they picked their way between groups of genuine refugees rearranging their meagre possessions in the coaches.

In a short time the boys were duly presented before a gray-haired officer seated at a table placed against the wall of the hut. It was darker in the room than out of doors. A single oil lamp served to dispel the gathering gloom of the early twilight.

Reporting volubly in German, with many gesticulations, the soldier presented the four boys. At the conclusion of his recital he laid the parcel upon the table. Drawing himself to his full height and assuming a tragic air he surveyed his captives with complacency.

“Look at that mark!” whispered Jimmie hoarsely. “What is it?”

“It says ‘U-13’ as plainly as the freckles on your nose,” replied Harry, who stood nearest the table. “I don’t know what it means!”

A challenge from the sentry at the door drew the attention of those within the hut. For a moment every eye turned toward the entrance.

Ever on the alert, Jimmie saw a hand thrust through the open window. It seized the package and noiselessly disappeared.

CHAPTER II

DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS

Finding that the disturbance had been caused by the approach of one of the refugees, who demanded an audience with the commander, but who had quickly been satisfied by the explanation of the sentry, the officer again gave his attention to the group before him.

“Proceed!” he ordered. “You may speak English for the benefit of these young gentlemen. Let us have the story, now!”

“Myself and my comrade searched the baggage of these fellows,” began the soldier, directing a contemptuous glance at the boys. “When we reached the kit of that one there,” here he pointed at Ned, “we discovered what seemed to us to be suspicious goods. Here it is—!”

A gasp of astonishment terminated the triumphant recital.

“Go on!” ordered the officer without emotion.

“But a moment ago the package was lying on your table!” almost shouted the soldier. “Now it is gone!”

“So I perceive!” replied the officer. “If you have evidence, please produce it. Otherwise I shall examine the passports of the young gentlemen, and if they are found correct I shall permit them to depart.”

He reached out a hand for the passports, which were quickly presented. After a minute scrutiny and careful comparison of descriptions he returned them to the lads. Again he turned to the soldier.

“Have you any evidence of their guilt?” he inquired.

“I believe they have stolen the package!” stormed the soldier.

“Search them!” commanded the officer. “With respect!” he added.

During the hasty but thorough search of the lads’ clothing Jimmie grinned

maliciously into the faces of the soldiers. His delight knew no bounds. Their discomfiture upon failing to find the package was exceeded only by the delight of the lad, who prudently held his own counsel.

“There must have been a mistake!” at length declared the officer impatiently. “We cannot delay the train longer. Permit them to proceed!”

“But I swear I discovered in their luggage a suspicious parcel!”

“It is not here! The young gentlemen do not seem to have it! In the face of their apparently correct passports and this courteous request from their friend, von Moltke, I am not justified in holding them longer! Young men, you may resume your journey!”

Thanking the officer in grateful acknowledgment of his courtesy the lads again found their compartment. Scarcely had they regained their former position before the train again began to move.

“Now, Ned,” began Harry, as the wheels once more clicked over the rail joints, “produce! Let’s have the secret!”

“Produce nothing!” declared Ned. “I have nothing to produce!”

“The package, man, the mysterious package of contraband spy literature!” demanded Harry in a serious tone. “What secrets are you carrying out of this country to help the English?”

“I tell you I have nothing at all! I don’t know what that package contained, nor do I know where it came from!”

“That’s all right, too!” declared Jack. “But where did it go to so suddenly? That’s the interesting part! What did you do with it?”

“Honestly, boys,” protested Ned, “I haven’t got it. I saw that fellow fish it out of my kit. I saw him put it on the table. When I turned back after glancing at the door the package was gone!”

“We know that!” continued Harry. “Now, who took it?”

“I’d give a good deal to know that myself!” declared Ned.

“Just how much would you give?” queried Jimmie from his seat in a corner from whence he had been listening. “I’d like to make a stake!”

“Jimmie pinched it!” cried Harry, pouncing upon his comrade.

“Deliver that package!” shouted Jack, going to the assistance of his chum.

“Search him, Ned!” he continued, as Jimmie was dragged to his feet. “Go through him carefully while we hold him.”

“Go as far as you like,” grinned Jimmie teasingly. “It’s not here!”

“Where is it, Jimmie?” questioned Ned, seriously, “let’s have it!”

“I tell you I haven’t got it!” declared Jimmie, still grinning. “But I saw it when it disappeared and I know where it went!”

“Hurry up!” shouted Jack, impatiently. “Say something!”

“It went out of the window of the shanty!” declared Jimmie.

“Aw, go on!” scorned Harry. “Just jumped up and flew away!”

With a laugh Jimmie then related what he had seen at the moment when all the other occupants of the hut had been giving their attention to the disturbance at the front door. The tale astonished his chums.

“I saw the hand as plainly as I see my own!” declared Jimmie, holding his hand up to the light of the single oil lamp. “It was the hand of a gentleman, I should say. I mean by that, it was soft and well kept—not hard and calloused. The peculiar mark by which I shall know it again if I see it was a scar extending clear across the back. I somehow connected that scar with a saber or sword cut. It was an ugly wound.”

“Did you see anything of the man?” asked Ned, eagerly.

“No, I wasn’t turned far enough and I didn’t dare move,” replied Jimmie. “All at once I seemed to comprehend that the thief was saving us a lot of troublesome delay, and I just let him make his getaway without raising a holler! I thought he was helping us as well as himself!”

“I think we ought to vote Jimmie a credit mark!” declared Ned.

“He certainly exercised wonderful self-control in not making a noise at a critical time,” added Jack. “I wonder, now, if the chap at the door made the disturbance to assist the other fellow in grabbing the parcel. It would almost seem as if they were working together!”

“It does seem like that!” stated Ned, thoughtfully. “But what puzzles me most is the fact that the package was in our baggage!”

“I wonder what on earth could have been in the old ‘U-13’!”

But ponder and speculate as they might the lads were unable to arrive at a

solution of the mysterious presence and disappearance of the package bearing the curious mark. Weary with the exertion of attempting to solve the problem the boys at length composed themselves for sleep.

Mile after mile the train bumped jerkily along the uneven track. Occasionally a guard opened the door to scrutinize the compartment, but upon finding the little party at rest he again proceeded to his duties.

Gradually the train drew away from the inundated section. To the southward, whence they had come, the boys were leaving the scene of the mighty conflict, the like of which history had never seen. Behind them were the trenches filled with soldiers—some happy and gay even in the presence of death, others disheartened and downcast. There, too, they were leaving the great cannon with their roaring, screaming shells, the vicious crack of rifles and the wasp-like singing of bullets.

Before them in fancy they saw a great ship upon which they would take passage to the peace and quietness of their own country. Their dreams were filled with scenes of New York and their beloved club room, hung with trophies of the prowess of the members of their patrol.

At Amsterdam they would embark speedily, and after a week or ten days of ocean travel would see again the Goddess of Liberty holding up to the world a beacon to guide their ships into a haven of peace and plenty.

Could the boys have pierced the veil and looked upon the scenes through which they were soon to pass their rest that night might not have been so tranquil, their dreams would perhaps have been less pleasant.

Thanks to the consideration extended them at the instance of their friend, von Moltke, the German officer in whose charge they had been placed during the last exciting scenes of their stay in the war zone, the lads had been accorded the privilege of a whole compartment. Due to this fact they found room in which to stretch out as they slept. This exceptional advantage was fully appreciated.

Toward morning the boys were awakened by the bustle surrounding the arrival of the train at Utrecht. At this point another passenger was thrust unceremoniously into the compartment. After performing this duty the guard hastened away to perform similar services for others.

“Good morning, gentlemen,” said the newcomer pleasantly.

“Top of the morning to you!” smiled Jimmie, rising and endeavoring to smooth out the wrinkles in his uniform. “How’s the weather outside?”

“Clearing rapidly, but there’s promise of some wind,” replied the newcomer. “May I ask how far you are going?”

“New York!” declared Jimmie with a grin. “That is,” his added, “if this old ark holds together until we get to Amsterdam and we can find a ship there. It would be just our luck to find the last canal boat gone!”

“Been having tough luck?” inquired the other solicitously.

“Rotten!” stated the boy. “How far do you go?” he asked.

“Amsterdam is my present destination,” was the reply. “My name’s Mackinder—Robert Mackinder, and I’m trying to get out of this forsaken country, don’t you know. I’m in hopes I’ll be able to find some craft destined to a point where I’ll be able to get home.”

Introductions of the four lads followed. Mackinder proved himself an entertaining talker. Listening to his tales of adventure in various lands the boys were soon at ease. The man apparently had traveled over the whole world for he seemed familiar with all lands.

“I say,” declared Jimmie, as their new found friend concluded a tale of privation through which he had passed in South Africa, “that story of starvation reminds me that I am hungry. I haven’t eaten in a week!”

“Jimmie, Jimmie!” cautioned Ned. “Get down to recent dates!”

“Well, it feels that way, anyhow,” persisted the boy.

“Can you tell us where we’ll be able to find a lunch counter?” asked Ned. “We have nothing in our kits except some hard tack.”

“There is no place short of Amsterdam where one can get anything like a decent meal,” replied Mackinder. “There I can show you the way to a restaurant that is all right. It is not far from the docks.”

“Then we’ll get one good, solid, square meal!” shouted Jimmie.

“And after breakfast,” put in Harry, “we’ll go aboard the steamer and let ’em sail as soon as they like! What shall we eat?”

“I want a limburger cheese sandwich,” announced Jimmie. “I’d like it to be on rye bread with plenty of mustard. Then with a couple of cups of real old Dutch coffee I guess I’d last until noon.”

“By noon we’ll be out on the North Sea, I hope,” stated Harry.

“You don’t get onto the North Sea direct from Amsterdam!” scorned Jack. “You have to go through some sort of lake or bay first!”

“Leave it to Mr. Mackinder here!” protested Harry.

“Your friend is right, Harry,” smiled Mackinder, thus appealed to. “Amsterdam is on the Zuider Zee. If we get a vessel at that place we will pass northward through that water, thence between some of the Friesian Islands into the North Sea. From that point it is but a short distance to my destination. Any port in England will be suitable for my purpose.”

“Nix on England for mine!” declared Jimmie. “I’m for the little old United States every time. We are neutral there without having to think about it. I’m about done with war. I’ve seen enough!”

“Too much is plenty, as the Dutchman says,” put in Harry. “But about this Amsterdam place, now. Do you know the town, Mr. Mackinder?”

“Indeed I do!” was the reply. “I have been there many times.”

“Then perhaps you’d be good enough to give us a little help. You see, we’re strangers there and since we’ve lost our airship we’re almost helpless. We’re not accustomed to finding our way about where the inhabitants don’t speak English. Besides, we’re not provided with a map.”

“I shall be delighted to help you in any way possible,” continued the man. “I think that if you follow me you’ll have little trouble.”

The lads gladly availed themselves of this offer, and shortly after their arrival at the city they found themselves in a room plainly but comfortably furnished. From their windows they could see the shipping in the harbor. Before them a busy street teemed with traffic.

Watching the strange sights below the boys were startled to hear:

“I’ll trouble you now for the ‘U-13’ package!”

Wheeling quickly they were frightened to observe that Mackinder had them covered with a revolver. His look was stern and determined.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN WITH THE SCAR

“What package is it you want?” inquired Ned in amazement as he saw that Mackinder evidently intended to enforce his demand at all costs.

“I shall countenance no delay!” spoke the man sharply. “You may step to your luggage there and produce that package instantly. If you refuse I shall summon assistance and it will be taken forcibly.”

“You have the wrong pig by the ear this time, partner!” put in Jimmie. “Just put up your little cannon. It won’t do you any good here.”

“Enough!” snapped Mackinder. “You will gain nothing by attempting such methods. I am not to be balked by trivialities!”

“Well, Boss,” smiled Jimmie, “we haven’t got any ‘U-13’ package and we haven’t got any of those other things, either!”

“I warn you,” went on Mackinder in a menacing tone, “it has become known to the authorities that you have this package. I have been commissioned to secure it. If you surrender it before leaving this country you will lose nothing. If you refuse it will be taken by force. In that case you need not expect to receive any degree of clemency in the matter!”

“Mr. Mackinder,” began Ned with dignity, “we don’t understand what you mean. If you intend to infer that we have some mysterious package that we should not have you are not fair to us. Perhaps you would like to examine our luggage and be sure it is not there.”

“Very well,” stated Mackinder grimly. “If you insist.”

Keeping the revolver leveled in the direction of the group the man stepped to the side of the room. He grasped the old-fashioned bell-pull. In answer to his summons steps were heard approaching the door.

“Ah, there you are, Norton,” sighed Mackinder in a relieved tone as a man in

uniform appeared. "Just keep an eye on these chaps, will you. I'm going through their luggage. Look sharp, now!"

From Norton's appearance the boys judged that the task was much to his liking. He fingered a wicked looking revolver, as if anticipating trouble and hoping that would come quickly. His manner was that of an eager hunting dog scenting game and only waiting a command to attack.

Thinking it best to offer no resistance and understanding that arguments would not avail under the present circumstances Ned seated himself in a convenient chair. He began to divert the minds of his comrades by talking of the shipping and the traffic which they could see.

Hastily Mackinder tossed the luggage about in his efforts to locate the article he sought. Finally he turned to Ned.

"Where have you concealed it?" he asked with some display of anger.

"Concealed what?" asked Ned impatiently. "I tell you, Mr. Mackinder, I don't like this idea of your holding us up in this manner without apparent authority. You are imposing on good nature!"

"Perhaps I have been a little hasty," stated Mackinder, "but I have been commissioned to secure a certain package which is alleged to contain information vital to two countries. It may possibly concern more. You are said to have had possession of this package at the time you left the castle in Flanders. Where is it now?"

"Do you mean the flat package the soldier found in our baggage at the frontier where we were searched?" inquired Jimmie.

"No doubt it is the same one," stated Mackinder.

"Then," declared the boy, pointing at Mackinder's hand, "I have every reason to believe that you know more about the whereabouts of that package than do we. I recognize that peculiar scar on your hand!"

Quick glances of inquiry were directed by the boys at the hand toward which Jimmie was pointing. It bore a scar running clear across the back—an ugly, jagged scar that they had heard Jimmie describe.

"What did you mean by coming here and trying to throw a bluff into us about the package still being in our kits when you yourself took it from the table in the hut?" demanded Jimmie aggressively.

“You’re mistaken, boys, I don’t know what you’re talking about!”

“Then you’ve got a mighty poor memory!” declared the lad.

“Mr. Mackinder,” Ned said in a low tone vibrant with indignation, “if you’ve quite satisfied yourself that we have not got the package you seem to be seeking we’ll excuse you. We don’t want your company any more, and we shall try to proceed upon our journey alone.”

“But, see here, boys—” Mackinder attempted to explain.

“Not another word!” cried Ned rising. “There is the door and you are at liberty to use it quickly. You are welcome to the package!”

“You will find out later on,” Mackinder said, as he started to leave the room in company with Norton, “that I’ve been trying to help you out of mighty suspicious circumstances. You are ungrateful!”

“Good-bye!” called out Jimmie. “Don’t slam the door!”

For a moment the boys gazed at one another in amazement after the two men had left the room. They were excited and puzzled.

“Well, this is a stunner!” declared Ned at length.

“Who is this Mackinder, who is Norton, what is in this ‘U-13’ package that he wants, how did it get into our baggage, why was it put there, where are we going, when do we eat!” demanded Jimmie in a breath.

“That’s the way to talk, Jimmie!” cried Harry, laughing in spite of the situation that the boys all felt to be a serious one.

“The last question is the most important!” stated Jack. “I’m in favor of the eats part and that without further delay.”

“Come on, boys,” suggested Ned. “Let’s eat first and talk things over afterward. I’m nearly famished myself, and Jimmie is hungry, too!”

In a short time the lads were seated in a quaint restaurant ordering strange dishes. They were hungry, as only healthy, active boys can be. The food was well cooked and appetizing. They ate heartily.

“Now, I’m in favor of getting to the docks as quick as possible,” announced Jimmie, pushing his plate away. “Let’s get our passage settled.”

All were in favor of this arrangement. After paying for their breakfast the lads set out in search of a ship upon which they might secure passage to the United

States. But they were not to secure this easily.

Extended inquiry during the forenoon elicited the information that there was no vessel clearing from the port of Amsterdam for any place in America. Although they made every effort to find a steamer which would afford them the accommodations they sought none was found.

Inquiry at the railway station disclosed the fact that their airship, the Grey Eagle, now dismantled and packed in boxes, was at the freight sheds waiting a claimant. Until they could find a vessel to carry it home the boys preferred to let it remain in its present location.

After dinner they continued their inquiries for a vessel. At length they learned of a full-rigged three-masted ship that was to clear in a few days for New York. Regretting even this short delay the lads decided to attempt to secure passage, although the journey would be a long one.

Ned secured the services of a boatman, who offered to row them out to the ship, which lay at anchor in the harbor. The man charged them what the boys considered an extraordinary price for the service, but explained that the weather was unfavorable and that at any moment a storm might break. To this the boys could but agree. A glance at the sky convinced them that a storm of rather unusual violence was gathering.

“Take him up, anyhow, Ned!” urged Harry. “We want to get home!”

“All right, then, here goes!” declared Ned, stepping aboard the waterman’s craft. “Pull away, my friend, we’re all aboard.”

In a short time the man was threading his way amongst the shipping in the harbor. From their position so low upon the water the masts and spars of the vessels looked to be of extraordinary height to the boys, who viewed every object with keen interest.

A hail from the boatman was answered by a man from the deck of the ship. He thrust his head over the rail inquiringly.

“Where’s your captain?” asked Ned, as the man appeared.

“What do you want of the captain?” asked the man in a surly voice.

“We want to talk with him,” replied Ned. “We’ll explain to him.”

“He’s busy now and don’t want to be disturbed. Tell me what you want and I’ll give him your message. Maybe he’ll see you!”

“We want to arrange passage on your ship to the United States.”

“I’ll see what he’s got to say,” replied the man, moving away.

While he was gone the boys examined the vessel closely. Jimmie pronounced the vessel very much to his liking. He admired the lines and pointed with pride to the modeling of the stern.

“Hello!” the boy cried excitedly, his arm extended still in the act of indicating the ship, “there goes our friend Mackinder in a launch!”

“Where?” asked Ned eagerly, turning about in his seat.

“Right astern of us!” replied Jimmie. “I wonder what he was doing aboard this ship. He seems to be in a hurry to get ashore.”

“Maybe he wasn’t on this ship at all,” was Harry’s objection. “He might have been out on the harbor for a pleasure ride.”

“Sure, he’s just the chap to take a pleasure ride on the harbor with a storm brewing! I’ve got a picture of that chap joy-riding!”

“I hope he doesn’t see us,” declared Jack. “He might have enough influence with the captain to prevent our securing passage on this ship.”

The conversation was interrupted by the advent of the captain, who looked over the rail at the little craft riding alongside.

“What do you want?” he inquired in a business-like tone.

“We want to arrange passage on your ship to New York, Captain,” stated Ned respectfully. “We understand you are to sail soon. We are citizens of the United States homeward bound. Can you help us out?”

“Not this trip!” decided the captain instantly.

“We are able to pay well for our accommodations,” continued the boy. “It is rather important that we get home as quickly as possible.”

“Possibly,” returned the captain shortly.

Nonplussed, Ned was at a loss to find words with which to urge his request further. The captain’s distant manner gave him no encouragement.

“We’ll not be the slightest trouble, Captain,” the lad presently continued. “We understand you’ll be loaded in a few days and will sail for New York direct. Cannot you arrange to accommodate us?”

“This isn’t a passenger vessel,” stated the captain.

“Well, then, couldn’t we sign articles and work our way over? We’d be willing to pay whatever you think is right for that privilege.”

“You want to get me into trouble with the authorities, don’t you?” replied the other, preparing to move away.

“But, Captain, just think a moment. There must be some way in which you can arrange it. Don’t leave us in a foreign country!”

“You seem to have done pretty well in foreign countries as it is! If you can pull off the stunts you have just done I guess you’ll get over to New York all right—if that’s where you want to go!”

“What do you mean? I don’t understand you!”

“Oh, you don’t, eh? Well, to put it plainly, this is a peaceable, neutral ship doing honest trading. I carry freight, not spies!”

With these words the captain disappeared. The boys gasped in astonishment at the words and looked at each other speechless.

Ned motioned to the boatman to return to the dock. His puzzled frown showed plainly that the boy was at a loss to understand the situation.

“I’ve got it!” almost shouted Jimmie, as the lads were once more on land. “I know what the answer is! I’ve been reading my little dream book!”

“All right, wise man, let’s have it! Don’t keep it bottled up!”

“Mackinder!” declared Jimmie impressively.

“You don’t mean to say that he beat us to the ship and managed to get the captain to refuse us passage on his vessel?” asked Ned.

“I believe I’m right at that!” maintained Jimmie, stoutly.

“Then the only thing we can do is to try to find some coasting vessel to carry us out of the Zuider Zee into the North Sea and make a port in England. We can then go overland to Liverpool and get a ship from there home. Suppose we try that?” offered Ned.

The boys were passing along a covered dock at the moment. As they turned a corner they saw Mackinder standing near. A smile of triumph lighted his face.

CHAPTER IV

THE LENA KNOBLOCH

“What did I tell you?” inquired Jimmie, as the boys passed the man. “There he stands with his arms folded and grins like a cream stealing cat! I wish I had a half a brick! We’ll have to watch out for him!”

“It surely looks as if you were right, Jimmie!” assented Ned.

“But what gets me,” put in Harry, “is why he should be after us! What have we done? He seems to have information that we’re criminals!”

“It looks mighty strange that he should have stolen the package out of that hut and then continue to insist that we have it,” remarked Ned. “Are you sure he’s the same fellow, Jimmie?”

“It’s the very same hand,” declared the lad, “and that hand is a dead give away! I wonder he didn’t wear a glove or bandage!”

“Maybe he didn’t have time when he got the package,” explained Jack. “Can anyone tell me how the thing got into our kits?”

This question was unanswerable by any of the lads. Puzzling over the strange adventures they had recently encountered the lads proceeded to their hotel, where they spent some time in freshening both themselves and their uniforms and in rearranging their baggage.

At supper time they were tired and very hungry. At the first opportunity they proceeded to the restaurant where they had formerly eaten.

Jimmie’s spirits revived as food was set before them. In a moment he was laughing and chatting away without a care in the world. His good humor was infectious. Soon all four boys were in a merry mood.

“I wish we could get a civilized paper,” declared Jack at length. “I’d really like to see what’s going on in the world.”

“Maybe we can get one at the desk. Or possibly the cashier can tell us where they will have English papers for sale,” suggested Harry.

“Here comes a man who looks as if he were a native,” spoke up Jimmie. “I’ll bet he can tell us a whole lot of things we want to know!”

The boys glanced up to observe a man approaching their table. He was evidently a seafaring man. His dress and manner betokened the deep sea mariner. A decided air of the ocean marked him to the boys’ eyes.

“Goot efening, Chentlemen!” the stranger said as he approached.

“Howdy!” replied Jimmie, with a wave of his hand. “What’ll you have?”

“Vell,” replied the visitor, “schnapps vas goot, but you couldn’t get ’em here. Dis isn’t no blace for dot! No, sir!”

“I wasn’t inviting you to have a drink,” snapped Jimmie somewhat confusedly, “I meant to ask you what’s on your mind.”

“So-o-o-o!” exclaimed the newcomer with a long drawn expression of surprise. His shaggy eyebrows raised as he extended his chin and shrugged his shoulders, pantomiming an apology. “So, dot’s it, eh?”

“Sure thing!” answered Jimmie, regaining his composure in a measure but with his face still flushed. “We want to know what you’re after.”

“Vell,” went on the visitor, “my name’s Captain Johannes von Kluck. Don’d forgot dot ‘Captain’ part, eider. Und I haf learned dot you chentlemans vas lookin’ for a fine, fast ship. Und I have chust dot!”

As he made this announcement Captain von Kluck smiled a wide look of friendship at the entire party. It was a wonderful smile, beginning at the tiny wrinkles surrounding the corners of his eyes. From there it spread all over his face, gradually distorting the features until, as Jimmie afterward declared, the boys were forced to smile in spite of themselves.

“And where does your fine ship go, Captain von Kluck?” asked Ned.

“Chust wherefer you vant to go!” declared the captain solemnly. “Me, I am a goot navigator, und mine mate he is, too, a goot von!”

“We want to go to New York,” continued Ned. “If you can arrange to furnish us passage to that port, we’ll pay you well.”

To this the captain answered by spreading his hands and shrugging his shoulders until they nearly reached his ears. Over his beaming face spread a look of

despair. He slowly shook his head.

“To New York I cannot go!” he answered dolefully. “Bud I vill put you ashore in England, und from dere you can easy get a ship!”

“Well, that’s better than nothing at all!” admitted Ned.

“Sure!” declared Jimmie. “Anything to get out of this place!”

“When can you be ready to sail, Captain?” inquired Ned.

“Who, me?” questioned the captain in a tone of surprise.

“Nobody else but you, your crew and we boys!” laughed Ned.

“Sure! Dot’s all ridt!” nodded von Kluck. “Vhell, I’m ready now. Yet I haf some cheeses on board to put, und some odder tings!”

“Can you accommodate the boxes containing our airship?” asked Jimmie. “We have the Grey Eagle over here at the railroad station and don’t want to leave it behind us when we leave the country.”

“Maybe it vould on de schip go!” consented von Kluck.

“Hurrah!” exultantly cried the lads. “That’s fine!”

“How big is your ship, Captain?” asked Ned, “and what’s her name?”

“Mine schip is der Lena Knobloch!” smiled the captain. “Dot’s vot you English beoples call garlic. Und id vas a goot schip already!”

“Well, then,” suggested Ned, “suppose the captain takes supper here as our guest. Two of us will remain with him to arrange details while the other two hasten away and get a truck to take the boxes to the dock. Can you give us directions for reaching the vessel, Captain?”

“Sure,” assented the captain, seating himself. “Und I know a man vot vould haul your goots, too. I get him,” he added.

“In that case, we’ll all go over together,” proposed Jack. “I don’t like the idea of separating while we’re in a strange town.”

“Perhaps the captain can tell us where we can get some English papers,” ventured Jimmie. “We’d like to get the latest news.”

Wheeling in his chair the captain bawled out an order in Dutch. A waiter came bustling up with an air of deference. Evidently he knew the captain and understood that no delay would be tolerated.

A few words were rapidly spoken, whereupon the waiter hastened away to return presently with several newspapers. These were spread upon the table before the boys, who began a perusal of their contents.

“Gee whiz!” exclaimed Jimmie, glancing at the headlines of the paper which had fallen to his lot. “Listen to this—three vessels sunk in the mouth of the Mersey river by a German submarine identified as the ‘U-13.’ Then there’s been two vessels sunk at the mouth of the Thames!”

“What sunk them?” inquired Harry.

“It says here that they were sunk by a German submarine. In each case the diver has been identified as the ‘U-13’ by the crews of the ill-fated vessels. Now, that’s going some!”

“Let’s see,” pondered Harry, “the Thames is the river leading to London, while the Mersey is the river leading to Liverpool.”

“Right you are, Old Scout, go to the head of the class!”

“Hush, Jimmie, no nonsense!” cautioned Ned.

“What I was thinking about,” continued Harry, “is the distance a boat would have to travel to get from one place to the other. It must be all of seven hundred miles around Land’s End. A boat would have to be speedy to cover that distance so quickly!”

“How quickly?” demanded Jimmie. “The paper says the three ships were sunk at the Mersey on Wednesday morning. Those at the Thames, or rather ‘off Margate,’ as the article states, were sunk Thursday afternoon. That wouldn’t be such an impossible feat after all!”

“Twenty miles an hour sustained speed for about twenty-eight hours is running along at a pretty good clip, just the same!”

“Well, the vessel did it!” declared Jimmie. “The paper says that about six o’clock Wednesday morning the Wanderer, a vessel laden with foodstuffs from Australia, was hailed by the crew of a submarine. They were permitted to take to the small boats and then the Wanderer was torpedoed, going down at once. The submarine was positively identified as the ‘U-13.’ Then the other paragraph says that at about eight o’clock on Thursday evening the steamer Adventure from Buenos Ayres with a cargo of flour for London was treated in the same manner off Margate by the ‘U-13!’”

“Isn’t it a little strange that the submarine should have attacked a peaceful

merchant vessel?” inquired Jack. “That isn’t war!”

“Evidently it is the intention to blockade all English ports and shut off the food supply of the nation,” ventured Ned. “You see the article relates that all the ships were loaded with food and destined to English ports. It must be a blockade movement!”

“Here’s an account,” announced Harry, “that says a steamer was hailed by a submarine a few miles off the Lizard Head. It escaped by its superior speed, but only by a narrow margin, for the submarine launched a torpedo that barely missed striking the after portion of the ship!”

“Maybe it was the same little old ‘U-13,’” suggested Jimmie.

“Oh, you ‘U-13’!” laughed Jack. “You’re some boat, all right!”

“Say!” shouted Jimmie, jumping quickly to his feet. The boy glanced about the group with startled looks. “What about that ‘U-13’ package? Do you suppose it was intended for the submarine?”

The boys exchanged puzzled looks. Perplexity was expressed in every face. A look of worry began to appear on Ned’s countenance.

“I wonder who Mackinder is and what he has to do with that package,” the lad said presently. “Boys, we’re surely stumbling into a mess of something. We’ll have to be careful!”

“Captain,” demanded Jimmie, turning to von Kluck, “what do you know about this ‘U-13’ business? What is the ‘U-13’?”

Leaning back in his chair the captain drew a long breath. He filled a great pipe from a capacious pouch. Gravely he packed the tobacco into the immense bowl, accompanying the procedure with sundry shakes of his head. Not until the pipe was drawing freely did he reply.

“Ach, id vas vot der Deutsch say it ‘Unterseeboot’! You English say it submarine! Und dot liddle schip goes ‘Boom’! und down goes der big schips under der vasser! Und dey stay, too!” he concluded.

“Yes, we know that,” assented Jimmie, punctuating his statement with a poke at the paragraph he had just read, “but who owns it?”

“Vhell, der Chermans dey claim to haf a big share in id!”

“Then if we start out for England in this Lena Knobloch of yours how do we know that the ‘U-13’ won’t come along and take a poke at us just out of pure

spite?" questioned the lad.

"Vhell, maybe she vill," agreed von Kluck, between puffs. "Bud if you vhas like me, you iss willing to took a chance. I go, und das Lena goes, und by und by maybe we make blenty money und go ashore to shtay."

"You take it easy, I must say!" returned Jimmie, somewhat amused.

"Are you going out just the same, Captain?" inquired Jack.

"Sure!" proclaimed the captain, in no uncertain tones.

"Then let's be getting that truck and take the Grey Eagle boxes aboard the Lena Knobloch!" cried Jack. "The sooner it's over the easier I'll feel. I'm beginning to get nervous about all this 'U-13' business!"

After paying their bill the boys set out in company with the captain to find the trucker. That individual put up a strong protest at taking out his horses at the unseemly hour, but a piece of coin slipped into his hand at the opportune moment by Ned soon changed his mind.

Another piece of money changing hands at the proper moment secured the consent of the official in charge of the freight sheds to the delivery of the boxes containing the precious Grey Eagle.

Making the affair a pleasure jaunt the lads lost no time in loading the cases aboard the truck. Merrily they set off for the dock.

Upon arriving in the vicinity of his vessel the captain shed his jovial air like an overcoat. He bawled out orders to his crew, emphasizing his commands with sundry fistic punctuations. The men evidently knew with whom they had to deal, for they fell to the work with a will.

The boys turned back to the hotel to secure their hand baggage.

A small cart drawn by two huge dogs was approaching. In the vehicle were some milk cans. The figure of a woman guided the strange team.

"This is rather early for the milklady!" laughed Jimmie.

"That's no woman!" declared Jack. "Look at that walk!"

"That's Mackinder!" Jimmie cried. "See the scar on his hand!"

CHAPTER V

TWO MYSTERIOUS CHANGES

“Hey, you!” shouted Jimmie, dashing across the street in the direction of the queer outfit. “Come here! I want to see you!”

The pseudo milk vendor gave a quick glance at the approaching boy. A street lamp cast a flickering glare upon the automatic which Jimmie had drawn from his pocket. Without waiting to explain or ask questions the person addressed deserted the dog team instantly.

With but a single look over its shoulder the figure darted toward a building at the head of the quay. Boots clattered on the pavement, while the long stride clearly indicated to the boys that Jimmie and Jack had been correct in their surmise that the garb of a woman milk vendor had been assumed as a disguise.

Although Jimmie’s speed was great, the lad’s sprint was not sufficient to permit him to overtake his quarry.

“He’ll never make it!” declared Jack, tugging away at his own automatic and preparing to follow his comrade.

“Come on, fellows, let’s get a move on!” suggested Harry. “That fellow will just about get into a corner somewhere and knock Jimmie over the head. He’s capable of worse than that, I believe!”

All three lads hastened after the fleeing figure of their red-headed chum and the one whom he was pursuing.

An open door in the building indicated that the race had turned in that direction. Producing an electric searchlight Ned urged caution. Directly the lads heard the sound of a falling body. This was at once followed by an exclamation of surprise and disgust. They recognized the tones as those of their companion.

“Are you there, Jimmie?” called Ned, swinging the beam from his searchlight about the interior, lighting up a collection of merchandise piled in the warehouse.

Jimmie was nowhere to be seen.

“Where could he have gone so suddenly?” queried Harry.

“Maybe Mackinder hit him over the head!” ventured Jack.

“Mackinder better be careful how he monkeys with this crew!” was Harry’s belligerent comment. “Maybe that guy’ll get all that’s coming to him and get it right in the neck!”

For a moment the boys stood listening intently for some indication of the presence of their comrade. Once Ned thought he heard a soft footfall. He put out his hand to touch Jack on the arm.

“Ss-s-sh!” he hissed. “What was that?”

“Rat, maybe!” suggested Jack. “Turn your searchlight this way a minute. I want to see where this passage leads.”

Ned swung the searchlight in the direction indicated. Its lance of flame pierced the gloom, revealing tiers of boxes and piles of bags and bales heaped up in orderly array. Sufficient space had been left between the heaps of merchandise to provide passageway.

“Come on,” cried Jack, “we’re losing time standing here!”

Scarcely had the boy uttered the words ere an object came hurtling through the air. It struck the searchlight fairly upon the lens. There was a quick cry of distress from Ned, a rattle of broken glass, the tinkle of the falling searchlight. For a moment complete silence reigned. The next instant there was a rush of a heavy body.

Taken by surprise the boys were not prepared for the onslaught. They went down like ten pins. Harry received a blow on the jaw that nearly put him out for the count. Jack declared afterwards that his stomach would never cease aching from the punch that landed there.

Ned had been bringing up the rear of the little party, hence suffered least. He felt about quickly for the searchlight as he lay on the floor. Before he could recover it the boys heard the outer door slam and knew that someone had passed out of the building after the sudden attack. Who it might have been they could only conjecture.

“Oh, my poor jaw!” groaned Harry. “I’m knocked out!”

“No, you’re not!” protested Ned. “That only shook you up!”

“Sure!” agreed Jack. “Shook us all up so we’ll get a little more ‘pep’. Let’s hurry up and follow that guy!”

“Wait a minute,” objected Ned. “We want to find Jimmie first!”

“Right-O!” agreed Harry. “I think my jaw is better now. Where are we going, anyway? Do you suppose that was Jimmie that floored us just now? Maybe he thought Mackinder had pals coming in!”

“I don’t believe it,” stated Ned. “Jimmie must have known that Mackinder was alone with the milk wagon. He also knew that we would follow him here. Possibly the lad is farther along in the warehouse, lost amongst this merchandise. That must have been Mackinder!”

“You’re right, Ned!” declared Jack. “He probably misled Jimmie in here and then dashed out as we came in!”

“But where is Jimmie now?” queried Harry. “I don’t hear him!”

“Oh, Jimmie!” called Ned in a loud tone.

To this hail there was no answer. Complete silence reigned.

“That’s mighty funny!” puzzled Harry. “Get your searchlight and let’s hunt him up. He can’t have gotten far away.”

A short search by all three boys resulted in the recovery of the searchlight. Beyond the damaged lens the instrument had suffered no injury. It was still serviceable and cast a strong beam of light.

By its aid the lads followed the passage, stepping rapidly forward. They were becoming alarmed over the failure of their chum to respond to their calls. All feared that Mackinder might have done the lad harm. Momentarily their anxiety increased.

“Here’s a side passage!” declared Harry, who brought up the rear of the little procession. “Where does this go?”

“Wait a minute with that searchlight, Ned!” called Jack, who followed Ned closely. “Throw it back here a minute for Harry!”

Before the light could be brought into service Harry had taken a step into the passage he had just discovered. A sharp cry of surprise brought Jack and Ned to his side in an instant.

The lads saw Harry bending over the form of their missing chum. Jimmie lay in a heap, blocking the passageway.

Fearful that their first suspicions had been correct, the boys scarcely dared investigate. Jack began growling out uncomplimentary remarks concerning Mackinder. Ned quickly forced his way to Harry's side.

"Here, let me see him!" Ned cried, throwing the flame of his searchlight on the recumbent form. "Why, he's all huddled up!"

"All in a bunch!" agreed Harry. "I wonder if he's hurt!"

"Roll him over," directed Ned. "Let's get him out of here!"

"Why, he's tied!" cried Harry, in a startled voice.

"Tied?" questioned Jack, pushing forward. "Who tied him?"

"And gagged!" went on Harry, his voice vibrating with indignation. "Mackinder will pay for this!" the lad continued. "We'll get him!"

Without the loss of a moment Harry was swiftly relieving Jimmie of the object which prevented speech. A small block of wood had been forced between Jimmie's teeth. This had been secured in place by tying a handkerchief over his face. The gag had been extremely effective, even though it was uncomfortable and crude.

As the gag was removed Jimmie wagged his jaw a few times to relieve the strained muscles. He nodded his appreciation.

"How are you feeling, Jimmie?" was Ned's solicitous inquiry.

"All right," replied the lad. "Untie my hands, will you?"

"Gee, but you're an artist, Jimmie!" cried Jack. "We'll get you a job as 'Tricko, The Handcuff King'! I want to say right now," the boy went on in mock seriousness, "there are very few people who can tie themselves up so completely and so quickly as this job has been done!"

"You win the argument!" decided Jimmie, ironically. "If I get my tutor where I can lay hands on him I'll show him a trick or two that wasn't in the first chapter. He's in for some instruction all right!"

"What happened, Jimmie?" asked Ned, carefully passing his knife through the bonds that confined the other's hands and feet.

"Well, when I came slamming along into the warehouse I was only a few feet behind the milk maid!" began Jimmie. "I at once crept in on tiptoe, because I reasoned that he would be slugging along, making considerable noise. I didn't know that there were goods in here."

“I couldn’t see him anywhere. From that I concluded that he had either stopped or had taken to tiptoeing, too. I had my ‘gat’ ready and started in. I felt along the bales and boxes a ways. Just as I heard you fellows come into the door something tripped me and down I went.

“Before I could say a word he had shoved that thing into my mouth, pulled a handkerchief out of my pocket, tied it around my face and then tied my hands together under my knees. Say,” the lad continued earnestly, “that guy never got his knowledge out of a correspondence course! He’s been there and helped skin ’em! He’s smooth!”

“Where’s your automatic?” asked Harry.

“I don’t know,” replied Jimmie. “Let’s have the bug a minute. I’m sure I heard it fall, but I can’t say whether Mackinder got it or not!”

“Mackinder?” questioned Ned. “How do you know it was he?”

“Because as he was tying my hands together I had a chance to feel of the back of his right hand. I could feel the scar as plainly as could be. It was the same scar I saw before he started to run and the same scar I saw when the ‘U-13’ package was pinched!”

“I’d like to take a poke at him just for luck!” declared Jack.

“I don’t know about that,” stated Jimmie. “I can’t help but admire a fellow as capable as he is. He tied me up so quickly and cleverly and yet so effectively. I’d like to take lessons of him!”

“Here’s your gun!” joyously announced Harry. “And here’s the milkmaid’s dress he shed in here after he trussed you up.”

“Now, then,” began Ned, as the party was again complete and ready for action, “let’s get out of here and get our baggage.”

“Let’s get Mackinder first,” proposed Jack.

“I vote ‘No’ on that question, Mr. Chairman!” declared Jimmie.

“Why?” questioned Jack, with surprise. “What’s the matter?”

“Well, there are several matters!” declared Jimmie. “I don’t feel that we’d gain anything by chasing him. The ‘U-13’ package is not in our possession and he knows it. Besides, he’s a clever guy and we might get the worst of it if we step out of our way to go after him.”

“I agree with Jimmie,” announced Ned. “Let’s get aboard the Lena Garlic and

get started on our way as soon as possible.”

“You mean Lena Knobloch!” corrected Harry.

“It’s the same thing!” declared Ned. “Knobloch means garlic!”

“All right, then, let’s get going!” agreed Jack.

The boys lost little time in proceeding to their hotel, where they went directly to their room. Here a scene of confusion awaited them. Their possessions lay scattered around in disorder.

“Well, Great Frozen Hot Boxes!” cried Jimmie. “What’s this?”

“Mackinder and Norton again, I’ll bet my head!” said Jack.

“Weren’t satisfied with their first search,” agreed Jimmie.

“Came back here and went through everything. Then I’ll bet Mackinder grabbed that milk cart and dogs, slipped on an old lady’s dress and chased down to the dock to see if he could stop us!” put in Jack. “When he found we were armed he just cut it and ran away!”

“Boys, we will do well to pack up and get aboard that vessel as quickly as possible!” declared Ned. “Through a mistake we’re under suspicion, and it won’t pay us to remain here another minute!”

Replacing their belongings in the bags with skill and despatch the lads were soon ready. They at once proceeded to the dock.

Tramping aboard they proceeded to the cabin at the after end of the vessel. Entering they discovered Captain von Kluck seated at the little table. Before him was a bottle and a glass.

“Well, Captain,” began Ned, “we’re here and ready to go!”

“So-o-o?” queried von Kluck. “Vhell, if you’re reatty to go, vhy go! But you don’d go on dis schip. Vhe don’d carry bassengers!”

CHAPTER VI

A DIFFICULT DEPARTURE

Astounded at the statement of the captain, whom they had begun to regard as a friend but whose present manner indicated anything but friendship, the boys glanced at each other in some degree of alarm.

“Just what do you mean by that, Captain?” inquired Ned. “I thought it was understood that we were to have passage on your boat!”

“Vhell, den I forgot dot vhe don’d carry bassengers!”

“And I suppose it took Mackinder to refresh your memory!” snapped Jimmie, stepping forward with an outward thrust of his chin.

At the mention of Mackinder’s name the captain gave a quick start. His glance at Jimmie was one of uneasiness and alarm.

“Vot do you know about Mackinter?” he inquired.

“I know this,” stated Jimmie, angrily. “He’s a fake and if you know when you’re well off you’ll let go your lines right now!”

“Yes, Captain,” added Ned, “we found Mackinder trying to detain us because he fancies we have done something wrong or because he thinks we have something he wants. Who he may be we don’t know!”

“I know!” stated the captain, stoutly. “I know dot feller is a officer in der British army, und when he says shtay, den I shtay!”

“An officer in the British army!” gasped Jimmie.

“I think I see now why he wants that package!” declared Ned. “He thinks that we are bringing some instructions or something to the submarine named ‘U-13’ and he’s trying to intercept the despatches!”

“Well, he’s welcome to the ‘U-13’ package as far as we’re concerned!” maintained Jimmie. “What we want is to get home to the little old U. S. A., and

that right quick. So, Captain, we'll go now, if you please!"

"No!" decided the captain bluntly. "Vhe don'd go!"

"But you may listen to reason!" said Jimmie, drawing his automatic. "I don't like to hold you up, but you're going to get out of town right now and we're going with you!"

"Put dot gun oop!" cried the captain, starting from his seat.

"I will on one condition!" declared the boy. "If you get under way at once without any more monkey business I'll keep it in my pocket. If you don't I'll use it! We are neutral and we're going to remain neutral if we have to fight to do so!"

"Vhell, I guess dere's no real goot reason vhy vhe shouldn't go, anyhow!" decided the captain. "Mackinter don'd got no license to shtop us. Aber he don'd like id, he couldt lump id!"

"Now you're talking sense!" declared Jimmie. "But, remember! No tricks, or we'll feel like starting something ourselves!"

"All right!" consented von Kluck, secretly anxious to help the boys. "Chust come along und make me leaf port. Dot let's me ouid!"

Upon von Kluck's appearing at the companionway the crew immediately assumed an air of attention. Some were grouped about the capstan, where they were watching the sky and speculating on the character of the approaching storm. Others were occupied at various duties about the vessel. Every man seemed to stand in fear of the captain.

Bawling out a hoarse order, von Kluck at once assumed command of the deck. Lines were thrown down from the belaying pins. A group of men tailed onto the halyards, hoisting the foresail, staysail and jib.

The Lena Knobloch was a schooner-rigged vessel with two masts. The boys noted with a considerable degree of satisfaction that she was built along clipper lines, vastly different from the round-bowed type of vessel commonly seen in those waters.

Under jib, staysail and foresail the vessel swung around as the dock lines were let go. Gathering speed with the force of a favorable wind the little vessel plunged ahead. Von Kluck was evidently planning on leaving the harbor without the use of a tug—a somewhat difficult, if not dangerous, experiment.

Urged by the vociferous driving of the mate men were already hauling on the halyards of the mainsail. With the added press of sail the Lena Knobloch heeled over until her lee rail was nearly awash.

A strong wind was coming out of the northwest, favoring the maneuver of von Kluck, but kicking up considerable commotion on the harbor. Waves were running so high as to make navigation of small craft exceedingly difficult if not dangerous.

Carrying full staysail, jib, foresail and mainsail the schooner plunged into the waves, sending cascades of water over her forecastle with every leap. She was loaded deeply and the boys could see that she would prove to be what the sailors term a “wet ship.”

Every moment the speed was increasing. The mate had trimmed the sheets to the exact point for greatest efficiency.

Suddenly all hands were startled by a hail from a point on the starboard bow. They saw a small motor boat riding dizzily upon the crest of a wave one moment to be dropped out of sight in the trough the next.

“Ahoy, the Knobloch!” came a cry.

“Ahoy, the launch!” bawled out the mate in a voice of thunder. “What do you want? Stand off or we’ll run you down!”

“We want those passengers of yours!” was the reply.

“All right, come on and get ’em!” yelled the mate above the noise of singing wind in the rigging. “We can’t stop now!”

“If you don’t heave to I’ll fire!” was the answer.

“Good night!” cried Jimmie from a position near the lee rail, where he could look out beneath the main boom. “That’s Mackinder!”

A revolver shot sounded amidst the tumult of rushing waters and singing rigging. The echo was quickly bitten off by the rising wind. The shot sounded dully above the humming and roaring.

Before Ned could detain him Jimmie fired. Faintly the boys heard a crash aboard the motor boat. The green starboard sidelight of the launch disappeared. Urged on by the tremendous press of wind in her sails the Lena Knobloch was fast dropping the launch astern.

No other shots were fired at the schooner. Scrambling from his position at the

starboard rail Jimmie made his way aft to a point beside the helmsman. Here he peered eagerly into the darkness astern.

“I can’t see them at all!” he announced, turning presently to his companions, who were grouped about the little skylight.

“Perhaps we’ve shaken them off for keeps!” ventured Jack. “Did you see who that was with Mackinder?”

“I thought,” said Harry, “that it was his pal, Norton!”

“Well, they’re safely out of reach now!” declared Ned. “I’m glad of it, too! If we can hold on at this gait we’ll soon reach a port in England, where we can transship the Grey Eagle and get home.”

“I only hope the real ‘U-13’ doesn’t come along and demand that package from us!” laughed Harry. “They might take a notion to send us to the bottom if we don’t deliver it on demand!”

“Let us hope they’re busy on the west coast of England by this time!” suggested Jack. “I don’t want any more ‘U-13’ in mine!”

“What’s dot about der ‘U-13’?” inquired von Kluck, coming up to the little group. “Is id der ‘U-13’ dot you’re skipping?”

In a few words Ned related the important details of their experience with the ‘U-13’ package and with Mackinder.

“And so,” the boy concluded, “we were just hoping that the real ‘U-13’ wouldn’t show up and claim the package that we haven’t got!”

“No danger!” reassured von Kluck. “Dis vindt keeps dose fellers under vasser deep! Dey like rough vedder not at all!”

“Hurrah!” joyfully cried Jimmie. “Blow, winds; blow hard!” the lad continued, stretching his hands to windward in an appealing attitude. “Blow hard enough to keep the submarines submarooned!”

A laugh went round as the boys listened to Jimmie’s coined word. They were all heartily in sympathy with the expressed wish that the wind would blow hard enough to keep the submarines from the surface.

“But, den,” continued von Kluck, with a frown that wrinkled his heavy brows, “dot’s not all. Dere’s mines floatin’ round der Nord Sea dot dem verdom Deutsches blanted. Maybe vhe hit one of dem und if vhe do—”

Here the captain shrugged his shoulders, spreading his hands palm upward and

extending them with a final toss aloft to indicate the hopelessness of a situation such as he intimated might befall them.

“Can’t we dodge a mine?” queried Jimmie.

“Sure, if vhe can see id!” declared von Kluck.

“That’s the trouble,” explained Ned. “These mines float deep and before a ship can know of its danger—Bang!”

“Well, Ned,” announced Jimmie with a grin, as he wrinkled his freckled nose, “I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll bet you my old hat that if we do hit a mine and get blown up I go higher than you do!”

“All right,” agreed Ned, laughing in spite of the seriousness of the situation. “We’ll ask von Kluck to be the judge.”

“Von Kluck don’t seem to be very much worried over the prospect of hitting a mine!” declared Jimmie. “I guess we’re all right!”

“Und now,” announced the captain, “come to der cabin und eat!”

The boys needed no second invitation. They were soon seated about the little table, where they found great slabs of cheese set out on a plate. Loaves of hard, black bread were placed upon the table by the steward, who withdrew to presently reappear bearing a great pot of steaming coffee. Von Kluck refreshed himself with a glass of his beloved “schnapps,” then fell to heartily upon the bread and cheese, motioning to the boys to do likewise.

With considerable relish the lads made a good lunch off the bread and cheese and coffee. Hard and dark, but possessing considerable nutriment, the bread was not at all unpleasant to the taste. It had been plentifully seasoned with small seeds, which lent an appetizing flavor.

Shortly after finishing their lunch the boys again gained the deck, to find the mate actively driving the men in their various duties. The wind still came out of the northwest with a stinging snap. Ned declared that he could feel rain approaching.

“Feels to me more like snow!” stated Jimmie, sniffing to windward. “We’ll be getting outside the Friesian Islands soon and then we’ll find out what’s coming. We’re somewhat protected here.”

“How long will it be before we pass into the North Sea, Captain von Kluck?” asked Ned of the captain, who approached.

“Vhe might make id by morning,” stated the captain. “I vish I make a swift voyage dis time. If Mackinter gets news to England ahead of me, maybe he makes droubles by das Lena Knobloch.”

“So you’re carrying all the canvas you dare?” asked Harry.

“Chust now, yes! Maybe vhen vhe come about und head up into der vindt vhe get oop der tops’ls und put oop uuder vun chib. I reach off a goot vays und leaf Amsterdam und der vest coast of der Zuider Zee, den I make vun straight reach und run ouid by Eijerlandsche Gut.”

“Then I’m going below to try for a little sleep!” declared Jimmie. “I’m not needed on deck and this wind is too cold for comfort!”

“I’ll go with you and keep you company,” volunteered Jack.

“We’ll all go,” added Harry. “Come on, Ned.”

Clinging to hand rails the lads scrambled below. The deck leaned at an angle that made walking almost impossible. Every plunge sent shivers through the little vessel. Tons of water broke over the bows and dashed along the planks to rush hissing through the scuppers.

In the cabin a lamp swung wildly from a beam overhead, throwing weird, dancing shadows on the bulkheads. Here the noises of the wind were hushed. Only a moaning from the taut rigging reached the ears of the four lads. But the cabin was full of eerie sounds of creaking timbers and straining planks. For some time the boys lay on lockers listening to the confusion of noises. Presently they fell asleep.

They were wakened by the sound of tramping feet on deck, and knew that some maneuver was about to be executed. Coils of rigging were flung on deck. The stentorian voice of the mate bawled out orders.

“Stand by to come about!” roared you Kluck over their heads.

CHAPTER VII

A WARNING FROM THE SEA

Springing from their resting places the four boys staggered up the unsteady companionway. As they gained the deck they were assailed by terrific gusts of wind carrying sleet and snow. During their stay below the weather had turned colder, bringing fitful dashes of sleet out of the north. The schooner presently rode easier.

A hoarse order from forward was followed by a clanking of the cable through the hawse pipes. The sails rattled with great slapping noises as the *Lena Knobloch* rode to her anchor.

Men were instantly aloft securing the lighter topsails. With a run the foresail and mainsail were lowered and furled. The staysail and jib had but a moment before been lowered as the schooner was headed into the wind. Under bare poles they rode on gentler swells.

“Where are we?” asked Harry, throwing up an arm to protect his face. “Have we reached England yet? Where is the captain?”

“Vhell, how do you like id now?” roared the voice of von Kluck almost at Harry’s elbow. “Vhat you tink of dis for some shtorm?”

“This is fierce!” replied the lad, bracing himself against the wind. “Where are we now, Captain von Kluck?”

“Under der lee of one of der Friesian Islands,” replied the captain. “I see some rocks aheadt und dere is a big shteamer in drouble oop to vindvard. I hope she makes id into safety, bud I don’d know!”

Shaking his head doubtfully the captain went away forward. Presently he returned, still shaking his head. The crew except the captain and the mate were gathered forward round the capstan.

“Dere’s rocks dere—lots of dem!” announced von Kluck. “Dot wessel looks like

she's lost her rutter, und if she gets off dem rocks dot captain needs a medal. I tink he's a goner, sure!"

It did, indeed, appear as if von Kluck was right. A big cargo steamer, now dimly discernible to the boys, was rolling in the trough of a heavy sea, urged on by a vicious wind from the northwest. Her range lights showed clearly at the mast heads. A gleam of red indicated that the vessel was showing her port side. With every roll great masses of water boarded the weather rail, sweeping the decks of every movable object.

"Look!" cried the mate, excitedly pointing toward the steamer.

There was no need of explanation. A great mass of rock directly in the path upon which the steamer was drifting sent gigantic columns of water into the air with every wave. Although the eastern sky showed a tinge of gray the blackness upon the water was intense. It was lightened momentarily by the white smother of spray and foam cast upward as wave after wave broke upon the black and threatening menace lying immediately before the apparently doomed vessel.

"Py golly, he's all right!" yelled von Kluck in a moment. "He's lost dot rutter und he's backing on his enchines! He'll make id!"

Surely enough the steamer's captain was executing the very maneuver at which von Kluck had guessed. By backing on his engines he succeeded in drawing the vessel so far to one side of the dangerous rock that it was passed. Only a margin extremely narrow intervened.

But the danger had not passed. Another rock threatened to tear to pieces the all but helpless vessel. With straining eyes and beating hearts the lads watched anxiously as this danger was also cleared.

They clung to the weather shrouds in spite of the whip-like sting of sleet and spray, watching the struggle against wind, wave and rock.

At length the vessel won through the dangerous places. It was now so close that the boys could make out the details of the rigging. Ned procured a pair of binoculars and spelled out the name.

"That steamer is the Anne of Melbourne," he announced. "I wonder if it isn't an Australian vessel. They have had a hard time of it."

"She's close to us now," cried Harry. "I wonder what they'll do."

"If they're wise they'll let go an anchor and ride it out," answered Jimmie. "If I had sense enough to bring a vessel through a tight place like that I'd get a hook

overboard as soon as I could.”

“That’s just what they are doing!” announced Ned. “There’s a group of men at the forward end preparing to get the anchor over.”

Directly the boys heard the rattle of the cable in the steamer’s hawse pipes, followed instantly by a great splash at the bow that told as plainly as words that the ground tackle was out.

Still feeling the heave of waves surging around the head of the island the steamer slowly swung to her cable. The range lights shifted their position. The red side light disappeared.

“She’s safe now!” cried Ned, in a tone of relief. “I’m glad they made it all right. I wonder how they got crippled.”

“Let me take the glasses a minute, Ned,” requested Harry.

“Can you see what’s the matter with her?” queried Jimmie.

“Yes,” replied the boy, with the glasses to his eye. “Von Kluck was right. It looks as if the rudder stock is twisted and bent badly out of shape. As the stern lifts I can see the blades of the propeller all right, but the rudder seems to be missing.”

“The Anne of Melbourne,” mused Ned. “I wonder now what that vessel is doing away off up here. If they had a cargo destined for an English port they should have been much farther south.”

“You don’t suppose the captain lost his reckoning and got this far out of his course, do you?” suggested Jimmie.

“I don’t know,” replied Ned. Then turning to Captain von Kluck the lad continued: “Captain, what do you think about it?”

“Mit der var doing so many tings, I don’d know what to tink!”

“I can see men moving about on deck now, apparently clearing up the recent damage,” stated Harry. “And I see a Boy Scout, too!”

“No!” objected Jimmie. “Don’t say that! I don’t want any more Boy Scouts mixed up in this! It isn’t fair!”

“Just the same, he’s there!” laughed Harry.

“Well, then,” stated Jimmie, with a sigh of resignation, “we are in for another siege of it. I never knew it to fail! Just as quickly as we get going somewhere and a Boy Scout shows up there’s trouble ahead and lots of it! Why can’t they

stay home?”

“Now, Jimmie,” cautioned Ned, “you know we’ve never in all our adventures found a Boy Scout that really brought us ill luck. Sometimes they’ve caused us a lot of trouble, but usually they help!”

“That’s true, too, but I wish we could get home to the little old U. S. A. without mixing up in this ‘U-13’ business with the Boy Scouts!”

“Maybe it’ll come out all right after all,” soothed Ned.

“Maybe,” reluctantly agreed Jimmie. “I say, Harry,” he continued, “let me take those glasses. I want to see what that fellow’s like.”

Long and eagerly the lad peered through the binoculars.

“I see him!” he cried, presently. “He’s going up the foreshrouds! I’ll bet he’s working his passage on that steamer!”

“What’s he doing on the foreshrouds?” asked Ned.

“It looks as if something had fouled at the fore top,” replied Jimmie. “He’s going up to clear it, I guess. Oh, look!” the boy shouted. “He’s falling! He’s broken one of the ratlines and is falling!”

“I see him!” cried Ned. “I can see him!”

“Oh, good!” exclaimed Jimmie, the next moment. “He hit the shrouds and the steamer rolled at the right minute, throwing him clear of the deck. See that splash in the water?”

“I see it!” answered the others, together.

“Are they trying to help him?” asked Harry.

“Yes, they are,” stated Jimmie. “They’ve thrown him a ring buoy!”

“Can you see him now?” asked Ned.

“Yes, and he’s swimming. There must be a current in here that’s dragging him away from the steamer. The buoy fell short and he’s swimming directly away from the steamer. He’s coming towards us!”

Intently the lad watched the one in the water. He swam a good stroke resting easily, even though somewhat impeded by his clothing.

Now and again as the crest of a wave approached the swimmer his head was submerged, only to reappear again in the yeasty froth following the racing

monster. Eagerly his progress was noted by all on board the schooner. They were at a loss to understand why he had left his own vessel to swim toward a strange craft.

Presently, however, as he approached the Lena Knobloch the lad's strokes became more feeble. He was evidently tiring rapidly.

"Captain, what do you say to getting a boat over?" asked Ned.

"Vhait!" grunted von Kluck. "Id's lots of vork to do id!"

"But the lad may need help!" urged Ned, eagerly.

"Vhell, if he needs id, I put him ofer. Nod before!"

Jimmie ran forward into the very eyes of the schooner. In his hands he grasped a ring buoy, to which was attached a goodly length of line. This he coiled ready to heave the buoy to the one in the water as soon as he should come within reach.

Just as Jimmie was measuring with his eye the distance separating the swimmer from his goal and preparing for a mighty throw of the buoy he noted that the other's stroke was fast weakening.

With a jerk the Wolf unfastened and kicked loose a shoe. In an instant the other followed. A rapid movement loosened his jacket. A backward twist of his shoulders helped him slip from the garment.

One look over the rail showed that the swimmer was losing control of his muscles. Both hands went up into the air only to disappear beneath the crest of an oncoming wave. The boy stayed under.

"Stand by to get me, boys!" shouted Jimmie.

A splash told that he had gone overboard. His companions crowded eagerly to the rail, watching for his reappearance. In a moment they were relieved to see his red head come up close to the spot where the other had sunk. Emptying his lungs of the pent up air with a loud "Whoosh!" the boy instantly refilled them to plunge again under water.

To the intense satisfaction of those on board the schooner he again came quickly to the surface, this time dragging by the hair the boy to whose rescue he had gone. Swimming on his back, using but one hand, Jimmie slowly brought the other lad to a position where he could reach the buoy flung to him by Ned's strong arm.

Harry had already made a bowline in a bight at the end of a line. This he passed

over the side to Jimmie, who succeeded without difficulty in getting the loop over the shoulders of the rescued lad.

Soon both were on deck, where they received the attentions of all hands. Captain von Kluck insisted upon giving the newcomer a draught of “schnapps” to assist in the reviving process. As the fiery liquor burned its way down his throat the lad coughed violently.

Choking and spitting the lad clawed at his burning mouth and throat. Evidently he thought the cure worse than the disease.

“Let’s get into the cabin,” suggested Jimmie. “I’m freezing!”

“Sure enough!” cried Ned. “How thoughtless of us! Captain,” he added, “can you have the steward bring us some coffee?”

Roaring for the steward to perform this service, the captain picked up the nearly drowned lad in his strong arms. He deposited the boy on a locker in the cabin, then stood aside to permit his passengers to administer such assistance as they might.

Ned stepped forward to begin operations. With a cry he bent over the boy. Wonderingly the others crowded forward.

“Frank!” cried Ned, seizing the lad by the shoulders. “Frank! Speak to me! Frank, how did you get here?”

“Who is it?” asked Jimmie, elbowing his way into the group to a position where he could see the recumbent figure. “Why,” continued the boy in a tone of amazement, “if it ain’t old Frank Shaw of New York!”

A cup of steaming coffee at this moment brought by the steward was offered to the newcomer, who drank eagerly. He glanced about the group with a faint smile in answer to their puzzled looks.

“Look out for the ‘U-13’, boys!” he said.

CHAPTER VIII

MORE ABOUT THE “U-13”

“Frank Shaw!” cried Jimmie, crowding close to the lad lying on the locker. “What’s that you’re saying about the ‘U-13’?”

“I say ‘Look out for it,’ that’s all!”

“No, it isn’t all!” protested the boy. “Take another drink of this coffee and then brace up and tell us what you know! How did you get here and what and who and where and why is this ‘U-13’?”

Frank smiled as he struggled to a sitting posture.

“If you’ll rub the cramp out of that leg, boys, I’ll ‘fess up’ everything,” he began. “That leg feels as if some one were trying to pull some teeth out of it by the roots. A cramp is fierce.”

Two lads began massaging the offending member.

“If I’d known it was you swimming to us, I’d have lowered a boat myself and come to your assistance!” declared Jimmie.

“And if I’d known you were on board this schooner,” replied Frank, “I’d have left that ship long before I did!”

“Why, what’s the matter on that ship, Frank?” asked Ned.

“Oh, nothing, only it’s one of these ‘work-houses’ just exactly like we have read of. The captain is a hard nut and the mates are both of the ‘bucko’ type. There isn’t a man aboard who hasn’t got a mark from one or the other of the mates. They’re a tough crowd!”

“I’ll bet you didn’t just fall overboard, then!” shrewdly guessed Jimmie. “You missed your footing purposely! You know you did!”

“How do you know?” grinned Frank, nursing his cramped leg.

“I was watching through the binoculars,” answered Jimmie. “But go ahead and

tell us something. We're dying from curiosity!"

"Well," began Frank, "you know I wasn't quite satisfied to be left behind when you four lads left in chase of the fellow who had stolen the Panama plans. I wanted to go along in the Grey Eagle."

"We know that, and we're sorry we didn't take you!" cried Ned.

"I went to see Mr. Bosworth about following you," continued young Shaw. "He was opposed to that plan, but you know I usually get my own way somehow. I put together a kit and started out. I had little difficulty in securing passage on a ship loaded with miscellaneous cargo for England. The vessel was a British tramp—a 'bucko' ship.

"We got close to Land's End after a rather uneventful voyage across the Atlantic. I was dreaming of getting ashore in a short time and then hiking across the channel into France to hunt you up.

"One fine morning we were all startled to hear a hail from the lookout informing the deck that a submarine was approaching. We hove to at the command of the submarine people. They commanded our captain to get his crew into the boats as quickly as possible, for in five minutes they intended torpedoing the ship. They wouldn't take 'No' for an answer."

"That was going some, I must say!" put in Jimmie.

"You needn't be told, of course," went on Frank, "that we lost little time making preparations. One of the sailors disputed my right to take my kit into the small boat. I objected and he cracked me on the jaw. When I recovered I was alone on the vessel. The boats were at some little distance away, with the crew pulling like racers.

"For a moment I was quite desperate, not knowing how to escape. I thought of trying to signal the submarine, but could see the vessel just launching a torpedo. Seemingly the whole after end of the ship was shattered by the explosion. As soon as I could I tried to signal the enemy, but they were just turning about to leave the spot.

"Maybe I didn't hustle about some. The ship was already filling rapidly. The stern was settling fast. All the boats were gone. I could see nothing to serve as a float. Desperately I seized a capstan bar and knocked the wedges and battens off a hatch cover. Then I got a small piece of line. I passed it through a ring bolt and made fast. I figured that when the ship went down the cover would float free for a raft on which I could keep up. Before I was fully ready the compressed air

blew the cover off with a 'boom'. It landed close to the rail.

"Just as the hull took a last slant I jumped overboard. After swimming quite a distance away I saw the ship go down. I turned back. There was my hatch cover floating just as I expected."

Here Frank paused to extend his hand for another cup of coffee.

"You're the wise little Scout!" declared Jimmie, admiringly.

"Sure!" agreed Frank. "Then," he continued, "I floated around for the rest of the day on that hatch cover. Toward evening I saw a smoke off to the southwest. It was just out of the glare of the sun. When it got nearer I knew it was a steamer bound for England or some nearby place. It was the Anne of Melbourne. So here I am!"

"But what about this 'U-13'?" inquired Harry, eagerly.

"Oh, yes, I nearly forgot," said Frank. "The submarine that torpedoed the ship was marked 'U-13' on the side!"

"They've been doing a lot of that, according to the newspapers!" stated Ned. "But why do you warn us to look out for her?" he asked.

"When I told the captain of the Anne of my experience," went on Frank, "he decided to head north, intending to go to the westward of Ireland, around between Scotland and the Shetland Island into the North Sea, in the hopes of dodging the submarine, which seemed to be working the waters of the English Channel. Yesterday morning we were hailed by a submarine. I could see that it was the same old 'U-13'!"

"How did it get way up here?" questioned Ned, incredulously.

"Search me!" replied Frank. "They ordered us to heave to, but that captain is a daredevil. He cracked on all steam full speed ahead, declaring that if they took him they'd have to catch him.

"The submarine launched a torpedo at us, but it only smashed our rudder. We had good headway on. That, of course, put us in a mighty bad fix, as the submarine could then have easily sent a torpedo into us, but for some unknown reason they turned and left us.

"The captain was nearly crazy when he discovered what damage had been done. The vessel had been bad enough before, but it became ten times worse. I got a crack or two with a rope's end that sting yet!"

“How could they navigate?” asked Jimmie.

“They couldn’t!” answered Frank. “We just lay in the trough of the seas and let the old tub roll. They even put preventer stays on the masts and on the boilers to keep them from rolling out of the crazy old wagon. You never saw such a place as that ship was!”

“And then when the captain got her under the lee of this land and you saw this schooner you just concluded that you’d jump the ship?”

“Exactly!” agreed Frank. “I had lost my kit when the sailing vessel went down, so I left nothing on the steamer.”

“I’m awful glad you got here safely,” stated Ned, grasping Frank’s hand in a hearty clasp that spoke eloquently of the friendship between the two boys. “But you’re too late to help capture the Panama Canal plan thief. He’s out of his misery quite a while ago!”

“But he’s just in time to get mixed up in this ‘U-13’ business!” urged Jimmie. “He’s right in the midst of the excitement!”

“But since you don’t want any more Boy Scouts along we’ll pitch Frank overboard again!” declared Harry, with mock gravity.

“Aw, you go on!” scorned Jimmie. “I didn’t know it was Frank!”

Laughing at Jimmie’s confusion the boys related to their chum the salient points of their experience up to the time of their strange meeting. Frank was greatly puzzled over the circumstances of the strange package, for the presence of which in their kits the boys could not account.

For some time the lads remained in the cabin, drying the uniforms of the swimmers and exchanging experiences. It was the opinion of all that they would be adopting a wise course to return at once to New York.

Captain von Kluck was greatly interested in his strange passengers. He listened eagerly to Frank’s account of the doings of the strange submarine. At the conclusion of the recital he paced the deck nervously.

Not until midafternoon did the wind decrease sufficiently to permit the Lena Knobloch to venture forth from her position of shelter.

Through the binoculars the boys made long examinations of the steamer lying to windward of their position. They determined that preparations were being made to send a boat’s crew to some port for assistance in towing the crippled vessel to

a harbor.

At one bell, or half past four o'clock, Captain von Kluck came from his cabin. He stepped to the rail, sniffing at the wind. Presently he turned to join the mate in his walk across the deck.

For some minutes the two conversed in low tones. Directly the mate stepped forward, bawling out orders to his men.

At once all was commotion on the Knobloch's decks. Men tumbled eagerly about, hauling a line here, letting go another there, until they had set the double reefed mainsail, foresail and a mere rag of jib.

When this had been accomplished all hands seized capstan bars. To the tune of a Dutch sailors' "chanty" the links of the cable slowly clanked inboard. With a lurch the Lena Knobloch swung as the anchor broke ground. Like a storm driven bird she was off in the wings of a northwester, lying far over even under the greatly reduced sail.

"Where to now, Captain?" asked Ned as von Kluck stepped along the deck with head bent forward. By his manner of nervous intentness Ned guessed that the captain was carrying a load on his mind.

Von Kluck's only response was a growl as he passed the boys.

"Captain's grouchy!" declared Jimmie. "Leave him alone, Ned!"

"Sure, don't bother him!" added Frank. "He's worried enough!"

"Just the same, I don't like his looks!" stated Ned with some degree of apprehension. "He seems to have soured after hearing about the 'U-13.' Didn't you fellows notice how he listened to Frank's story?"

"Sure we did," Jimmie replied, "but then, it's only natural that he should be worried over the possibility of losing his vessel!"

"Well, his getting under way in this weather shows that he intends to be square and land us in an English port as he agreed!"

"I guess von Kluck is a pretty good sort of a chap, after all!" ventured Harry. "He has tried to treat us as right as he could!"

"I think you're right. We can't blame him for feeling somewhat worried under the circumstances. We'd be grouchy, too!"

Under a port helm the Lena Knobloch swung to starboard leaping forward into the waves as if glad to again be battling with the sea.

Ned and his companions felt that they could be of no service in handling the schooner. They, therefore, retired to the shelter of the cabin, where they were protected from the stinging blasts of sleet and snow that came screaming out of the northwest.

Scarcely had the schooner won clear of the jagged ledges when the full force of the tumbling waves was felt. It seemed to the boys that the stern of the little vessel was hurled to an unbelievable height only to drop so far they feared nothing could save them.

But Captain von Kluck and his mate were expert navigators. They had sailed the ocean since large enough to handle a line. They knew the Lena Knobloch's ability to withstand the buffeting of the elements.

As night drew on the boys expected to witness a cessation of the storm. Their prediction was fulfilled. Gradually the gale blew itself out, leaving but a strong sailing breeze, although the water still continued rough. Captain von Kluck took advantage of this change to shake out the reefs in his canvas and to spread more sail.

Just as the moon showed in the east between masses of cloud the lookout reported a ship in sight off the port bow. In a short time the two vessels had approached within about two miles of each other.

"They're apparently heaving to!" cried Ned who had been using the binoculars. "It looks as if they're getting the boats over!"

From the waist of the other vessel the boys saw a great cloud of dark smoke appear. The small boats had scarcely gone a ship's length away from the scene. The crew were rowing with the greatest haste.

"I see the conning tower of a submarine!" cried Ned.

CHAPTER IX

A STRANGE VISIT

Clearly visible to the members of the crew on the Lena Knobloch the great cloud of smoke slowly spread over the vessel.

Directly a sullen “Boom” reached their ears. As the smoke spread away the lads could see a great rent in the side through which water was rushing. Already the ship was listing heavily.

Two small boats were being pulled away from the vicinity by the crew of the doomed vessel. The small craft were handled in a seamanlike manner. They made good progress in spite of the still heavy sea.

“By golly!” ejaculated Von Kluck, drawing a long breath. “Maybe vhe get id next, vhat? Dere ain’d no vay of tellin’!”

“Why do you think that, Captain?” questioned Ned.

“Dot verdom ‘U-13’!” grunted Von Kluck. “Vhe’ll pe lucky,”—here his excitement grew so intense that he delivered himself of several great sailor’s oaths—“if vhe make a port in England alretty!”

“Keep a sharp lookout, boys,” said Ned. “Maybe we can get a sight of the ‘U-13’ if it’s still in this neighborhood.”

Scarcely had the boy uttered the words before the lookout hailed the deck. His voice vibrated with excitement and fear.

“Vot is, aloft, dere?” roared Von Kluck.

Excitedly jabbering in his intense emotion the lookout frantically pointed in the direction of the sinking ship. Without waiting for orders he came sliding down the halliards. As he landed on deck he turned an ashen face toward the captain. Again he pointed seaward.

“The ‘U-13’!” he gasped in an agony of terror.

A glance in the direction indicated showed the boys an object like a spar buoy apparently standing upright in the water. The next moment a swell rolled over something beneath the upright object.

The next wave disclosed a long, rounded steel hull. In the center the conning tower showed plainly. A moment later the outlines of the dreaded submarine were distinguishable as the craft was propelled to the surface. Each wave broke clear over the arched back of this terror of the seas leaving the black hull gleaming in the faint light. Only the upper portion of the conning tower escaped a ducking.

Presently the hatch was opened. A man in uniform stepped out onto the narrow confines of the small deck. His attention was directed toward the schooner. After what seemed to the boys to be an almost endless examination of their vessel the man turned to address a remark to some one evidently close to the hatch but out of their vision.

“What is he saying?” Ned asked von Kluck.

“He iss telling dot odder feller dot vhe iss das Lena Knobloch!”

“What next, I wonder?” speculated Jimmie aloud.

“Next?” almost screamed von Kluck. “Next, vhe iss ordered to get by our boats into und row far enough avhay so dey couldt blow up us!”

In his intense agitation the captain began pacing up and down the deck. The submarine drew close alongside the schooner easily keeping pace with the sailing vessel at the rate they were progressing.

“Von Kluck is certainly worked up about it,” remarked Harry as he noted the captain’s distracted manner. “He’s almost bughouse!”

“Well, so would you be, too, if all you had were about to be sent to the bottom of the ocean!” declared Ned. “It’s tough luck!”

“Maybe we’d better be getting our kits in shape,” suggested Jack moving toward the cabin. “I don’t want to leave everything!”

“I had to leave everything,” put in Frank, “when they sunk the ship I was on. I felt lucky to get away with my life!”

“Let’s make a try for it, anyway,” continued Jack.

“Wait a minute!” cried Ned, “let’s see what they’re going to do. The man is going below again! Why don’t he hail us?”

Strangely enough the officer was descending the hatchway without speaking a word to those on board the schooner.

This procedure puzzled von Kluck, but did not serve to reduce in any degree the excitement under which he was laboring.

“Lay aft a couble of handts und make reaty der boats!” he shouted. “Come on, hurry oop! Lifely, now, men!”

In obedience to this command two members of the crew sprang towards the stern of the schooner to make preparations for launching the boat lashed at the stern. Two others frantically loosened the lashings of the upturned boat lying amidships.

A clanking sound indicating that the hatchway of the “U-13” had been closed attracted the attention of the boys in that direction.

“What are they going to do now?” questioned Jimmie eagerly.

“I fancy they are going to pull away a little so as to launch a torpedo at us,” stated Ned. “It don’t look as if they’re going to be kind enough to let us get off the vessel before they blow it up!”

“Then it isn’t the same crew I met!” declared Frank firmly. “They treated the men fine! While I must admit that I don’t admire their way of sinking merchant ships, I will have to say that they gave the people a chance to get out of danger!”

“Well, is it the same submarine you saw?” asked Ned.

“It looks exactly like it. Besides,” the boy continued, “I see the figures ‘U-13’ painted on the side of this one, too. I believe it is the very same vessel. Maybe they won’t sink us!”

With hatch closed the submarine was preparing to execute some maneuver. Gathering speed the craft plunged ahead quickly leaving the schooner alone. Scarcely had the bow of the sailing vessel been passed ere the submarine was so far beneath the water as to show only the periscope. In a moment there was but a swirl to indicate where that had been. Presently it, too, disappeared. The “U-13” was gone.

For some time the boys stood at the rail eagerly scanning the water to discover evidence of the submarine’s return. Their search was fruitless. Nothing was found to indicate the presence of their late visitor. The waves rose and fell without hint of its location.

“Oh, Captain von Kluck!” Ned called. “They have gone!”

“Vhat?” asked the captain in a tone expressing doubt.

“Yes,” continued the boy. “They have slipped back into the ocean again and have left us. Possibly they think we’re too small for them to waste a torpedo on. Torpedoes cost a lot of money, you know!”

“Vhell, dot’s lucky!” answered the captain, much relieved.

“Sure is!” assented Jimmie, throwing out his chest. “You see, Captain, we’re mascots for you. We’ve brought you good luck!”

Joining in the laugh that greeted this remark the captain ordered the men who had been at work upon the boats to cease their operations. A hand was again posted aloft to act as lookout.

After a short consultation between von Kluck and the mate it was decided to proceed on the course traveled by the steamer from which Frank Shaw had recently escaped. They intended to pass between the Shetland islands and the coast of Scotland in an attempt to make a port on the west side of England, believing that there would be less danger in this procedure. Accordingly all sail possible was made.

As if understanding the necessity for haste the vessel leaned far over under the press of canvas and sprang forward with increased speed.

“We ought to make the west coast of England in a short time, Captain, at this rate,” said Ned as he noted with satisfaction the rate at which the Lena Knobloch was traveling through the water.

“I don’d know!” declared von Kluck. “Dere’s nasty vedder oop dere!” he added, pointing to the western sky. “I don’d like id!”

“It can’t very well blow hard enough to stop us, can it?”

“Don’d you tink it can’t blow hard in dese vatters! Ask me—I know!” replied the captain sagely wagging his head.

With eager looks the boys watched the gathering clouds to westward. The captain’s prediction seemed about to be verified.

An uncommonly strong puff of wind struck the schooner heeling her far over to starboard. The blast bore a chill as of ice.

“Oh, boys,” cried Jimmie turning his head away from the biting blast, “look up to windward and see how smooth the ocean is getting!”

“That’s wind coming!” shouted Ned.

An order was roared out by von Kluck. Men sprang to the lines. The sails were stowed with a speed that seemed scarcely credible. Heeling round on a port helm the Lena Knobloch turned from the approaching blast.

Leaving only the shortened jib von Kluck and the mate stood on the after deck peering anxiously at the violent disturbance overtaking the little vessel. Now and again the mate glanced apprehensively at the schooner’s masts or along the decks.

With a shriek the storm struck. For a moment the very weight of wind seemed to settle the schooner farther into the water. The next instant they were tearing along with the speed of a race horse.

Flattened by the pressure of the wind the waves no longer gave her motion. By reason of her being headed directly away from the blast the schooner rode on an even keel. Every line, every shroud hummed like the strings of a gigantic harp. The noise was terrific.

A glance at the compass in the binnacle showed Ned that they were headed nearly northeast. They were fast leaving England astern.

Conversation was almost impossible in the howling gale that tore and fretted at the vessel. Yet Ned managed to shout to the captain:

“How much sea room have we got in this direction?”

A shrug of the shoulders indicated the captain’s doubt. He accompanied this movement with a wagging of the head.

“Vhe’ll get into der lee of somedings bretty soon,” he replied.

“I surely hope so!” declared Ned, cupping his hands to carry his voice to the other’s ear. “I’d hate to hit anything at this rate!”

Nodding an acknowledgment to this assertion the captain by signs indicated to the mate that he desired a hand sent aloft as lookout.

In a short time it seemed to the boys that the terrific force of the gale had somewhat spent itself. Waves began to toss the vessel at an alarming rate. Each mountain of water appeared about to board the schooner at the stern, threatening to crush the craft by its weight.

Anxious for the safety of the vessel and for their own welfare the lads, nevertheless, understood that they could do little good on deck. They, therefore,

made their way into the cabin, where they sat on lockers.

Here the noises of the tempest were somewhat stilled, but the creaking and groaning of the timbers was far more noticeable. It seemed to the lads that the vessel was being torn asunder by every billow.

“I wonder what weather the old ‘U-13’ is making of it about now?” said Frank, as the boys grouped themselves about the little table.

“She’s in smoother water than this, I’ll venture to say,” put in Jimmie, clutching the edge of the table in an effort to support himself.

“If they are not in better water than this,” remarked Harry, “they’re getting shaken up some! I’d like to be under water right now!”

“Why, Harry,” spoke up Ned, “you shouldn’t say that!”

“I mean in a tight little submarine!” explained Harry.

“I wish we had the Sea Lion over here!” cried Jimmie. “We could have more fun than we had when we tried to rescue the papers out of that ship in the Gulf of Tong King with Moore and his nosey son butting in!”

“That was sure some fine boat!” declared Ned. “Just as easy to ride in as a rocking chair. And it was always smooth and—”

The boy’s speech was cut short by a violent roll of the vessel. All the lads were thrown in a heap to the cabin floor. Directly the schooner righted herself, but began pitching with a violent motion. From the sounds the boys knew that the captain had hove to, bringing the vessel into the wind. Apparently he intended riding out the storm.

Waves were breaking over the bows, falling with tremendous blows upon the forward deck. The scuppers were not able to release the flood.

Suddenly a terrific crash sounded directly beneath the cabin floor. The stern seemed to lift bodily into the air. A shudder ran through the fabric. Again the boys fell to the deck.

CHAPTER X

SHIPWRECK AND RESCUE

Above the noises of the tempest and the straining timbers sounded cries from the deck that told of confusion amongst the crew. Von Kluck's hoarse voice was bawling out orders mixed with great sea oaths. He was driving the men to some duty.

The tramping of feet above the boys sounded for a moment, then ceased. Judging from the sounds they thought the men had gathered in the waist of the vessel. Puzzled, they looked at each other in fear.

"What's up?" inquired Jimmie, attempting to rise to his feet.

Ned steadied himself at the table as he tried to peer out of the little skylight overhead. He could see nothing.

"We just about struck something!" declared Jimmie.

"Maybe we hit another vessel," ventured Harry.

"Or a rock, perhaps," continued Jack. "We surely struck something solid. I hope we don't hit it again like that first crack!"

"Look here, boys!" cried Ned in alarm. "The motion of this ship is much less than it was a minute ago! Notice it?"

"It surely is!" agreed Jack. "Is the wind going down?"

"We are getting into some sort of shelter," guessed Harry. "Probably von Kluck has navigated the schooner behind a breakwater."

"Boys, the ship is sinking!" shouted Ned. "See the water coming into this cabin! We've struck a floating mine!"

In alarm the boys sprang to their feet. As Ned had said, the motion was lessening rapidly. They found little difficulty now in keeping their footing without support. With one accord they made a break for the companionway, crowding out in a

body.

The sight that met their gaze brought consternation to every heart. The schooner lay head to the wind. The mainsail had been set with a double reef, to help keep the vessel in that position. The seas seemed alarmingly higher than when they had been last on deck.

This was due, of course, to the difference in perspective, owing to the fact that they were fast settling into the water.

Above the stern clung traces of heavy, black smoke. A disagreeable odor pervaded the atmosphere in spite of the strong wind.

“There goes von Kluck and the crew!” shouted Harry, pointing to leeward. “They’re scared to death. That mine settled them!”

A short distance away the boys could see the larger of the two boats that had been carried by the schooner. In it were the members of the crew, accompanied by the captain and the mate.

Tossed about by the angry waters the little shell seemed about to be engulfed at any moment. However, skillful hands were at the oars. Rising and falling, now on top of a wave, now out of sight, the boat soon put considerable distance between the two parties.

“Well, Great Frozen Hot Boxes!” exclaimed Jimmie in disgust. “What do you know about that? They’ve gone and left us!”

“And the ship is settling fast!” cried Ned, in alarm. “We’d better get busy if we don’t want to go down with it!”

“What can we do?” asked Harry. “The boat’s gone!”

“Suppose we try to patch up the leak,” suggested Jimmie. “Maybe we could keep the old tub afloat until the storm dies down!”

“No chance!” decided Ned. “Von Kluck and his crew would have done that if they could. We’d better get busy!”

“What’s the matter with using the small boat at the stern?”

“That’s a good idea unless it is broken too badly. Let’s have a look at it anyway,” replied Ned, hastening toward the stern.

A brief examination of the small boat indicated that it would be more seaworthy than the hull upon which they were standing. No time was lost in preparations for launching the craft.

“When folks get shipwrecked,” suggested Jimmie, “don’t they take water and food with them if they have it?”

“They surely do, little man!” cried Ned. “Hustle about and see what you can get. Try to find something in which to carry fresh water.”

Jimmie dashed back into the cabin to raid the pantry. There he found the water gaining rapidly. It was almost knee deep.

Splashing his way about with the aid of the swinging lamp the boy found several loaves of the hard, black bread with which the vessel was provisioned. These he wrapped in an oilskin coat from the captain’s room. He tucked the parcel under one arm. With his free hand he seized a huge piece of the captain’s beloved cheese.

Hastening quickly to the deck he deposited his burden in the boat. Another trip to the cabin failed to locate any vessel in which fresh water could be carried. The boy then dashed forward to the galley.

There he found a huge kettle used by the cook for boiling beef. This Jimmie filled with water from the barrel on deck. The cover of the kettle was provided with a clever device for fastening it in place. This Jimmie secured, then staggered toward the stern with his burden.

Working with desperate speed the four boys had succeeded in launching the small boat. It now hung bobbing about to a short length of painter under the schooner’s stern. It was not far below the taffrail.

Ned and Harry made a hurried trip to the cabin to secure the kits, returning just as Jimmie succeeded in placing his kettle of water aboard.

“Hurry up, Ned,” cautioned Jack. “The little wagon is just about to say ‘Goodby’! We’ll have to go some to escape the suction!”

“All aboard!” replied Ned, tossing his kit into the boat.

Harry pitched the luggage he was carrying to waiting hands. Both boys then watched for an opportune moment when the small boat swung close to the sinking stern. A quick leap carried them safely aboard.

“Oh, I forgot!” cried Ned. “I was going to bring the compass!”

“Never mind the compass now, Ned!” cried Jimmie, seizing an oar.

“No,” put in Frank, “we don’t know where we are at anyhow, and the compass wouldn’t be of any use to us in such a case as this!”

“Goodby, Lena Garlic!” shouted Jimmie a moment later as he pulled manfully at the oar. “Goodby and good luck!”

The others turned to see the schooner now with decks awash. A loud detonation marked the blowing off of the hatches by the compressed air in the hold. That incident seemed to mark the passage of the vessel.

Gradually settling by the stern the schooner quietly slipped backward, settling deeper and deeper, until a large wave overwhelmed the craft, leaving only the masts projecting above water. In another instant these, too, had disappeared, leaving but a few floating pieces of wreckage to mark the spot where the boys had only a short time before been standing.

“And goodby, Grey Eagle!” almost sobbed Ned. “No more flying in that little airship! I wish we could have saved the machine!”

This seemed to be the sentiment of all, but they knew that their sturdy aeroplane was now gone forever.

“The Germans needn’t think we’ll ever trouble them again in that airship!” declared Jimmie. “We can’t be pinched for that!”

For a moment the disappointment of their recent experiences sat heavily on all the lads. At length, however, Ned roused himself and tried to cheer his comrades. He knew that nothing could be gained by bemoaning the fate that had happened to them.

“We can’t be far from land,” the lad stated presently. “Von Kluck and his crew seemed to be heading the same way we are. They evidently knew about where they were and have made for the nearest port.”

“Let’s keep right on after them, then,” suggested Frank.

“Second the motion!” panted Jimmie, straining at his oar. “But this is hot work! Wish I had a drink of water!”

“You’ll have to go slow on the water, boys,” cautioned Ned. “That kettle holds only about three gallons, and we can’t drink sea water.”

“Let me take the oar a while, Jimmie,” volunteered Harry. “I guess you’ve worked about hard enough, anyway. You rest a bit.”

Cautiously the boys changed places. What with their kits, the bundle of bread and the cheese the little boat was carrying all that could be conveniently stowed. They were glad that no more had remained to accompany them. Soon all had

settled themselves quite comfortably.

“Now,” spoke up Jack, presently, “all we’ve got to do is to let this wind blow us along. We’ll just keep the boat straightened into the seas and take it easy. We can’t do a thing to help matters.”

“Right you are, Scout!” agreed Jimmie. “I think it’s getting gray over there,” the lad continued, pointing toward the east. “Morning will be along shortly and we can see what time it is.”

“Maybe we’ll meet some ship that will pick us up,” ventured Harry, hopefully. “There are plenty of vessels in these parts.”

“I see a smoke astern of us now, I think!” declared Frank. “It seems to be from a vessel low in the water.”

“Let me take a look,” cried Ned, standing and balancing himself by clinging to Jimmie’s shoulder. “Yes, I can see it, too! It seems to be overhauling us quite rapidly,” he added. “Maybe they’ll help us!”

Ceasing their efforts to propel the boat the boys handled the oars only enough to keep their tiny craft properly riding the seas.

“It looks to me like a tug!” stated Jimmie, presently.

“A tug wouldn’t come smashing along at that rate!” objected Ned.

“Well, then, what can it be?” queried the other. “It is too low in the water for a battleship and no freight steamer ever made such good time as they are clipping off! They’re coming up fast!”

The boys were not long left in doubt. Rapidly overhauling them the strange vessel did, indeed, seem to be at first glance a tug tearing along through the waves at a great rate. The bow was lost in a smother of foam and spray. But a tiny speck of deck house was visible. The stacks were low. Great billows of black smoke vomited forth from the short funnels came drifting down the wind.

In a short time the vessel approached near enough so that the boys could distinguish a small gun mounted at the bow.

“I know what that ship is!” announced Jimmie, directly. “That’s what they call a torpedo boat destroyer or despatch boat!”

“I believe you’re right, Jimmie,” decided Ned. “They certainly have got the speed!” he added admiringly as the craft approached.

“Get ready to hail ’em!” cried Frank. “Get out a flag!”

“Haven’t got a flag aboard this wagon!” scorned Jimmie. “What do you think this is—a dreadnaught with full equipment?”

“Then take off your shirt and wave that at ’em!”

“Just the idea!” agreed Jimmie, proceeding to follow the advice.

Bracing himself against a thwart amidships Jimmie waved the improvised distress signal. His efforts were not unavailing.

“They see you, Jimmie!” shouted Jack, presently. “There’s a man on the bridge looking at you with glasses. They’re shifting the helm!”

“I can see two or three men standing on the bridge!” announced Ned. “They are examining us pretty closely. Wonder who they are?”

The boys were not long left in doubt. Way was checked on the stranger. As the vessel drew close to the small boat a churning of foam at the stern told the lads that the engines were reversed in an effort to stop. Presently the stranger ranged alongside. A line was flung to the boys. They were towed beside the other under bare steerageway.

Fending their craft off the larger vessel Ned explained their plight to an officer. They were invited aboard the steamer. Their boat was hoisted aboard, where it was carefully stowed.

The lads found themselves upon the steel deck of a peculiarly long and narrow vessel. Guns were mounted forward and aft. Only a cursory examination was necessary to determine that they were quick firers.

“Now, boys,” said the officer who had invited them aboard, “I shall ask you to step to the cabin. The commander will hear your story.”

As the boys entered the cabin in response to the officer’s request they saw a familiar face. Beside the commander seated at the table was none other than their one time acquaintance, Mackinder.

CHAPTER XI

A FLEET OF SUBMARINES

Upon seeing Mackinder's face, Ned halted in amazement.

A smile spread over the other's countenance as he noted Ned's look of wonder. But beneath the appearance of amused indifference the lad's quick eye detected a look of care. He was not the same Mackinder.

For a brief moment nothing was said. Then the officer saluted the commander, who recognized the act. The boys were presented.

"So, my friends," the commander began, "you were adrift on the North Sea in an open boat? Have you suffered greatly?"

"No, thank you," replied Ned, acting as spokesman. "We have not been adrift very long. The vessel on which we were riding struck something which we took to be a floating mine. The crew got away quickly in one of the boats, while we left a little later in another."

The shrewd eyes of the commander narrowed perceptibly.

"And what was the name and rig of the vessel?"

"The Lena Knobloch, a schooner, of Amsterdam," replied Ned.

"And the name of her captain?" continued the commander.

"Von Kluck," the boy answered.

"Ah, a Hollander! I believe he is a peaceful trader in small cargoes. He is what the English call a 'tramp' of the sea."

"May I ask what boat this is and where you are bound?" asked Ned. "We would like to get to the United States, you know," he added.

"Yes," smiled the commander. "But you are far from that country now and we think your company delightful. This vessel is the Sturmvogel, a destroyer of the German navy. We have been doing some small tasks upon the high seas and are

returning to a base of supplies.”

“Can you put us in touch with some means whereby we can secure passage on a vessel leaving for the United States?” asked Ned.

“I am afraid that is impossible for the present,” slowly replied the other, with apparent reluctance. “We like your company, you see. We also are favored with the presence of one of your countrymen,” here he indicated Mackinder, “who has consented to pay us a brief visit.”

“Pardon me, sir!” stated Mackinder, half rising. “These are *not* countrymen of mine! I must disclaim that honor!”

“So-o-o?” drawled the other. “Then you do not know them?”

“No!” stated Mackinder positively. “They are strangers to me!”

“Then you did not mean what you said a few moments ago?”

“I was mistaken!” replied the other, briefly.

“As you please,” responded the commander with a wave of his hand. “Perhaps I misunderstood your statements concerning them!”

An order was given to the officer who had conducted the boys to the cabin. The German language was used. Saluting the officer approached Mackinder. Without a word that gentleman rose and stepped from the room.

As Mackinder was conducted from the apartment the commander motioned the boys to seats about the table. He smiled at them kindly.

“Do you know what von Kluck’s cargo consisted of?” he asked.

“Mostly cheeses,” replied Ned. “Also an airship!” he added.

“An airship?” was the questioning response. “An airship?”

Ned smiled a trifle regretfully as he related briefly the adventures of the four lads with those who have read the previous volume of this series are already familiar. He concluded by saying:

“We were trying to get ourselves and the airship back to the United States, when this man Mackinder seemed bound to delay us on some flimsy pretext. Unfortunately our Grey Eagle went down with the schooner.”

“Yes. And now you are headed directly away from your desired destination. For you, at least, the situation is unfortunate!”

“We think we are lucky to be afloat!” declared Ned.

“Yes. You are indeed fortunate in that respect. But I wish to make some inquiries,” went on the commander.

“We shall be pleased to give you any information possible,” answered the lad heartily. “We highly appreciate your kindness to us!”

“Perhaps my act of picking you up was not altogether prompted by such a noble sentiment,” smiled the other. “I want some information.”

“I hope we can help you out,” replied the boy.

“What I want to know is this: What did you do with the package?”

“What package?” puzzled Ned, unable to grasp the other’s meaning.

“The package so much desired by your friend Mackinder!”

Instantly the boys comprehended the statement. They were unable to understand how this man should know anything of the mysterious package unless Mackinder had told him. They glanced at each other in apprehension.

“Haven’t we got clear of that thing yet?” spoke up Jimmie.

“If you please, sir,” said Ned, “we don’t really know anything about the package. A package was found in our baggage when we were searched at the border between Belgium and Holland. It was stolen by some person whom we believe to be this man Mackinder, who has since been trying to get us to deliver it to him, although we have not had it.”

“I presume that you understand him to be an officer in the British army?” inquired the commander kindly.

“We heard so from von Kluck,” replied the boy.

“Do you know what was in the package?”

“No. We had not seen it until the time it was taken from our kits by the soldiers who were searching them. All we know is that it was marked ‘U-13’ on the outside. We have seen it but that once.”

“I cannot understand why Mackinder should be trying to take the package out of the possession of his own countrymen!”

“But I beg to say that we are not countrymen of his!” declared Ned. “We are citizens of the United States. Here are our passports!”

“I beg your pardon!” apologized the commander. “Circumstances seemed to indicate that you were Englishmen. The mistake is mine!”

“I admit that the mistake was natural,” said Ned. “But can you tell me if there is any connection between the package marked ‘U-13’ and the submarine vessel of the same name? If there is, why should Mackinder, an Englishman, have anything to do with the package?”

A smile greeted this query. Clearly the officer was amused.

“If, as I suspect,” he stated presently, “the package contained information valuable for the ‘U-13’ do you not understand why Mackinder would be glad to get possession of it? The ‘U-13’ is a German craft!”

“Oh, yes,” cried Ned. “And the two countries are at war!”

“And you will also understand why, under the circumstances, we must feel honored by your presence, as well as that of Mackinder, for a little time. Just now we should hate to see you go!”

“Then we are going to be prisoners?” asked Jimmie.

“Oh, no! Nothing so harsh as that!” reassured the other. “We will call it simply guests for the time being. That sounds better!”

“Would you mind telling us what Mackinder had to say about us?” inquired Ned. “We would like very much to know that!”

“Consider,” temporized the officer, “how little time there has been since we first sighted you for conversation of any sort!”

“Yes,” agreed the lad, “but he has told you something!”

“Nothing of importance!” declared the other, rising to indicate that the interview was at an end. “You will be given quarters forward, where you will receive every consideration until we reach our destination.”

“Where are you bound, Captain?” asked Jimmie.

“Our destination just now is a lonely island in the North Sea,” answered the other. “It is heavily guarded, so you will be in no danger.”

“Does Mackinder go ashore, too?” Jimmie continued.

“That has not been decided yet,” replied the commander. He touched a button, summoning an orderly. “Take these young gentlemen forward and see that they want no comfort. They are our guests!” he ordered.

In a few minutes the boys were seated at a table in the fore-castle, where they were provided with a great profusion of well-cooked food from the sailors' mess. With sharpened appetites they fell to eagerly.

Since none of the members of the crew with whom they came in contact seemed able to speak English the boys were forced to content themselves with speculating on their destination.

They knew that the torpedo boat destroyer had been headed nearly northeast when it overhauled, and picked them up. They also knew that in this direction lay the entrance to the river Elbe and the Kiel ship canal, but whether the boat was making for some port in that vicinity they were unable to learn.

Keenly as the lads regretted their lack of definite information they were not inclined to become despondent. They found it possible by using signs to carry on a sort of desultory conversation with the members of the crew, who had gathered out of curiosity in their vicinity.

At length Frank jumped from his seat with an exclamation.

"I'll bet I know where we're going!" he announced, gleefully.

"So do I!" stated Jimmie in a nonchalant manner.

"Where?" asked Frank, somewhat crestfallen. "Aw, you don't either!" he declared, after searching his comrade's face intently.

"All right," admitted Jimmie, laughing. "I just wanted to take some of that overconfidence out of your system, that's all!"

"Where do you think we are bound for, Frank?" inquired Ned.

Frank placed a finger on his lips, glancing about to make sure that no one was close enough to overhear his whispered words.

"Helgoland!" he said, cautiously.

Instantly the others jumped to their feet, slapping Frank's shoulders, shaking his hands and otherwise showing their appreciation of his shrewdness. Their enthusiasm could scarcely be restrained.

"Sherlock Shaw, The Scout Sleuth!" shouted Jimmie.

"Frank, you're the real, old-fashioned guesser!" declared Jack.

"How did you do it, Frank?" asked Harry, admiringly.

"Well, the commander said we were destined for a lonely island in the North Sea

that was heavily guarded. I guess Helgoland fits that description right enough. Besides, as I remember the geography of these parts, that's about the first land we'd strike going on this course."

"But I understand that is a sort of naval base," put in Harry. "Isn't that the island where the Germans are fitting out so many of their Zeppelins? Seems to me I read something about that in a paper."

"That's the very place!" put in Ned. "The paper said it was a lonely, rocky island, difficult of approach and quite well fortified."

"And book agents, canvassers, peddlers and rag men are not allowed there at all!" asserted Jimmie, gravely.

"Take his pie away!" shouted Jack. "He's raving again!"

"And you have to deliver all goods in the rear," added Jimmie, as Jack reached for the plate containing the lad's breakfast.

"Hurry up, let's finish this food and get out on deck, where we will be able to see something," suggested Harry. "This is interesting!"

Directly the boys were standing in the lee of a deck house eagerly scanning the horizon for some sign of the island where they expected to be landed as prisoners of war.

The gale gave no hint of abating. Indeed, the motion of the waves was much more noticeable. Jack attributed this partly to the build of the craft, whose lines were sharper than those of the *Lena Knobloch*. The sharp prow cut the water like a knife, while the slender, tapering stern slipped through the seas without making a roller of large proportions.

Presently, just as Jack declared he could see a blue smudge in the distance, indicating the presence of land, the lads were joined by Mackinder. He glanced at the group without speaking.

Speedily the vessel approached the object that had been sighted.

An officer drew near. He conducted Mackinder toward the stern.

As the craft slowed slightly to enter a harbor Jimmie grasped Ned's arm. He pointed eagerly toward several large objects on land.

"There is a whole flock of Zeppelins," he declared. "And as I live," he continued, "I see a bunch of submarines at that dock over there!"

"There must be a dozen or more!" gasped Frank, in amazement.

CHAPTER XII

A NEW "U-13" APPEARS

Eagerly the lads gazed at the strange sights before them. On their right rose several huge buildings; evidently workshops. On the left they could see a field devoted to the erection and testing of several gigantic dirigibles. Everywhere they saw bustling activity on the part of the numerous workmen. Sentries paced about with arms in readiness.

"That fleet of submarines looks to me as if Germany were preparing to destroy every ship in the world!" stated Jack presently, as the destroyer on which they stood passed the undersea craft.

"The workmen seem to be fitting out some of the divers, too!" ventured Jimmie. "See them carrying packages aboard that outside one!"

"Maybe the grocer is coming to deliver the goods in the rear!" laughed Ned. "Those packages look like groceries in disguise!"

"I'll bet Mackinder would like to see those submarines!" Harry said. "He'd give his eyes almost for one good long look at them!"

"Mackinder won't see enough to carry any news back home from this place!" declared Frank. "Didn't you see the officer take him below?"

"Yes, I did! I also saw the black look he gave us as he was being taken away from this deck house. He likes us a lot—nit!"

"I believe the commander of this craft is favorably disposed toward us," put in Ned. "He probably realizes that we want to be neutral and that our presence in this neighborhood is due to our misfortune and not to our fault. I do wish, though," the lad added, "that we could leave!"

"How much would you give to get away?" questioned Jimmie.

"I'd give a good deal!" replied Ned. "I don't like the idea of remaining on this island a prisoner for any length of time!"

“Well, if you’ll make it worth while,” Jimmie offered, “I’ll take you along as a passenger. You must behave, though!”

“Ah!” smiled Ned, thinking Jimmie was indulging in another of his jokes. “May I ask when your ship leaves?”

“I’m thinking of leaving about midnight or a little after,” stated Jimmie, gravely. “It will depend somewhat on the wind and weather. If it comes on to blow and the sea is rough I believe we’ll get out on time. However, if this breeze should die away, we may not go!”

“You’re rather reversing the order of things,” commented Ned. “Most captains want clear weather and smooth seas for their departure!”

“Well, if it remains stormy, as it has every prospect of doing and you want a swift ride, you just keep watch of your uncle!”

“Thanks!” laughed Ned. “You may surely count on me!”

“May we go along, too, Jimmie?” asked Harry.

“Sure, you may all go!” answered the lad. “But I warn you right now,” he added, “that you’ll have to work your passage!”

“That suits me!” returned Harry, greatly amused at carrying on what he considered as a pleasant joke to while away the time.

But to Jimmie, at least, the matter was not by any means to be regarded as anything but a serious proposition. The lad had quickly formulated a plan of escape. The very daring of his intended action was its best guarantee of success. Failure meant disaster, but Jimmie was prepared to risk all in the attempt.

For a time the lad said no more. His tightly shut jaws showed the determination that possessed him. The others became absorbed in observing and discussing the monster Zeppelin dirigibles, hence they said nothing more upon the subject. There was much to attract their attention.

Directly they were summoned before the commander. As they entered the cabin the Sturmvogel drew up alongside a dock.

“Young men,” the officer began as the lads entered the cabin, “I regret keenly the circumstances that seem to make it necessary for us to detain you. I understand how anxious you must be to reach your homes, but it is not possible to permit you to depart at this time. You will be given every consideration during your stay at this place.”

“Can’t we go with you when you leave here?” asked Frank.

“No, that is impossible!” the other replied, shaking his head.

“Then maybe some other vessel will call and we can get passage on it? We are not particular about the class of accommodations!”

“You forget that for some distance in every direction the sea is mined. No vessels approach this island unless they know the channels.”

“Then I guess we’ll have to be contented,” sighed the lad.

“Is Mackinder going to remain here also?” questioned Ned.

“I am very sure of it!” smiled the commander. “I believe that several members of the guard are quite prepared to insist upon his staying here until the knowledge he now possesses would be of no use to his own country. Yes,” he added, “Mackinder will remain!”

“I hope matters will be arranged so that we shall soon be able to leave for home,” stated Ned. “We are not anxious to leave good company, but we would like to get away from the scene of so much trouble. We want to remain strictly neutral, and think the best place for that is at home!”

“I haven’t a doubt of your neutrality!” declared the officer heartily. “You may be assured that I shall do everything to help you. I believe I can arrange so that certain privileges will be granted. It will not be necessary, I am sure, to confine you to one of the buildings.”

“Thank you!” replied Ned, gratefully. “You are most kind.”

“And now, if you please, we will go ashore to meet the officer in charge of this place,” stated the other. “You will like him, I’m sure.”

Congratulating themselves on the kindness shown in their behalf the boys prepared to leave the Sturmvogel. They collected the kits of the four who had left Amsterdam on the Lena Knobloch. As they gained the dock they found the small boat in which they had left the schooner. It was evidently being preserved as evidence of the circumstance of the rescue.

Already the work of provisioning and fitting the vessel was in progress. The wireless had been busily used during the last few hours of their voyage to the end that just the supplies needed were waiting at the wharf. A huge coal barge fitted with a “whirlie” had drawn up alongside. Great buckets of coal were pouring into the bunkers, while porters carried all sorts of stores and supplies

aboard. Cases of ammunition were being hoisted aboard and stowed in their proper compartments.

Stepping along the dock, dodging wagons loaded with fresh provisions and stores, the boys kept pace with their friend, the commander.

Presently they reached one of the buildings given over to the use of offices. Here they were admitted into a room, where they found the officer in command of the island.

A short conversation in German served to inform this gentleman of the situation so far as the commander of the destroyer could report. At the end of the recital the boys were addressed by the one they had been brought to visit, who had been introduced as General Gruenwold.

"I understand that you young gentlemen lost an airship when the schooner sank?" he inquired of Ned, motioning the boys to chairs.

"Yes, sir!" replied Ned. "It was, of course, a complete loss."

"Then you understand machinery pretty well?"

"We have always thought so," was the modest reply.

"And electricity?"

"Yes, sir. We understand wireless, also."

"Then I am fortunate. Perhaps you would consent to assist us in some difficult technical tasks we have on hand."

"We shall be glad to do what we may to reimburse you for our keep if you will be good enough to assist us to return to the United States!"

"Let us discuss that at another time, if you please," replied Gruenwold. "Just now we are short of practical electricians. If you will offer your services in that direction we shall be very grateful. You may be sure that we shall not be forgetful when it is possible to reciprocate."

"Thank you," replied Ned in acknowledgment of the indirect promise. "Now, if you will show us what you want done we shall be most happy to proceed. I believe we have nothing else to do."

"Here are some plans," stated the other, opening a cabinet at one side of the room. "In these compartments are plans of certain vessels. You will observe on these sheets marked 'elek.' complete diagrams of the plan of wiring. Take this one, for instance. Do you think you could understand what is meant by these

tracings?”

Ned studied the diagram for a few moments. The other boys leaned over his shoulder. Presently, after conferring with his friends, the lad announced that he understood the drawings perfectly, even though he was unable to read the explanations which were in the German language.

A smile lighted the face of Gruenwold as this statement was made. Evidently the need for completing the work was urgent.

“In that case, we will ask you to accompany this orderly on board the vessel and proceed with the work. I will write an order directing the ones in charge of the vessel to admit you and render such aid as may be necessary. Later I will send a man who can speak English.”

While the general was writing the necessary order to the ones in charge of the vessel to which he had referred the boys were busy communicating with each other by means of the mute language, in which they were quite adept. By supreme efforts they were able to suppress the excitement under which they were laboring.

“What a piece of luck!” rapidly signalled Jimmie to Ned.

“Keep cool!” cautioned Ned in reply. “Don’t give it away!”

“Insist that we stay together on the job,” returned Jimmie.

“You may be sure I shall do that!” came the answer instantly.

“I hope the storm increases!” was Jack’s contribution.

“Now, gentlemen,” announced the general, “if you are ready to proceed you may accompany this man. He will direct you to the work.”

Ned bowed in acknowledgment and the party turned to accompany the orderly, who appeared in answer to the summons of his superior.

They were led away from the dock at which the Sturmvogel lay. In a short time they had traversed a goodly distance toward the mouth of the harbor. Their destination proved to be the building adjacent to the group of submarine vessels. By inquiries both direct and indirect Ned and his companions decided that the orderly was unable to comprehend English, but for the sake of absolute safety they continued to use the sign language largely in their conversation as they proceeded.

In a short time they had been admitted to the outermost craft, which lay moored

to its fellows. Communication had been established between the vessels by means of a row of planks laid from deck to deck.

Once inside the submarine the boys made a hurried yet thorough examination of every part, taking a complete inventory of the exact state of affairs. Frank and Jimmie managed to overhaul the stores. Harry and Jack looked over the mechanical equipment. Ned, with the plans in his hands, went carefully over every detail of the electric system.

“I say, fellows,” announced Ned at length, as all the lads met beneath the hatch, “this wagon is nearly complete. It looks a lot like the ‘U-13’!”

“That’s what it does!” agreed Jimmie. “What more is needed?”

“A few pieces of wire and about an hour’s work for me.”

“Frank and I have found enough food to last a couple of months if we can count hardtack, sausage, and the supply of canned goods.”

“Jack and I,” announced Harry, “have found the engines and pumps apparently ready for duty in a moment. My idea is that they are trying to get this vessel ready for a cruise at the first possible moment.”

“It looks as if they are expecting a crew from some place and want the boat ready for duty as soon as the crew arrives!” stated Ned.

Further conversation was cut short by the arrival of the orderly.

“Essen?” he inquired, pointing at his mouth and rubbing his belt.

“Don’t say it twice!” cried Jimmie. “We heard you the first time!”

The boys prepared to follow the orderly, who evidently intended to escort them to the mess hall, where they would secure dinner.

As they turned toward the iron ladder leading to the hatch Jimmie, who had followed close upon the orderly’s heels, cried out:

“Hello, Mackinder, where you from?”

CHAPTER XIII

A THREATENING SITUATION

“Who’s there, Jimmie?” asked Ned, pressing forward.

“Nobody now,” answered the other. “I thought I saw our friend Mackinder looking down the hatchway, but possibly I was mistaken. At any rate he’s gone now and we’d better hurry on for dinner.”

“Mackinder’s a prisoner here,” stated Ned, positively.

“Maybe he broke loose,” suggested Harry.

“All right, I’m going up to the deck and look about,” said Ned.

As the boys reached the narrow confines of the small deck at the top of the conning tower they saw a figure hastening along the foot planks that led from vessel to vessel. The fleeing person was now almost at the building on the wharf. In a moment the shelter of this structure had been gained. The figure dodged out of sight.

“Now, that’s a funny thing to do!” mused Ned. “I wonder just what the fellow wanted. Are you sure it was Mackinder, Jimmie?”

“No, I’m not,” admitted the lad. “Of course, the face was in shadow as he looked down the hatch. I’m not positive, but thought it was he.”

“Well, let’s not bother about it any more,” said Ned, apparently dismissing the subject. “We’re too hungry for any more mysteries!”

As only hungry boys can the five attacked the ample dinner provided for them. The dishes were strange but appetizing. Jimmie declared that he intended to remain in that location for some time in order to become acquainted with the chef. He said that he would be the envy of the entire Wolf Patrol if he could cook in German style.

After dinner the boys gathered in the lee of a small building, where they would

be protected from the chilling blasts. Puffy squalls, bearing dashes of snow, sleet or rain, came threshing out of the west. It appeared to the lads that the weather was growing decidedly worse.

In spite of the inclement weather a number of the hardy workmen were indulging in out of door sports during their rest hour.

For some time the lads watched the games as the hardy men relaxed their work-tensed muscles. The sullen booming of surf on the rocky coast constantly sounded in their ears.

“There goes our late rescuer!” announced Jimmie presently.

“Where?” asked Frank. “Whom do you mean?”

“The Sturmvogel!” answered Jimmie, pointing toward the harbor, where could be seen the speedy destroyer slipping quietly out to sea.

“Here’s hoping you have a good voyage, friend!” said Frank.

“Yes,” added Jimmie, “we’ll see you a little later!”

“That reminds me,” put in Ned, “we might as well get back to the ‘U-13’ and begin work. There’s no use delaying the game!”

“That’s right,” agreed Harry. “These fellows are probably in a hurry for that submarine. We might as well be decent.”

“Wait a minute,” suggested Jimmie. “You’ve given me an idea! Your mention of the name of a certain undersea craft started a train of thought in my alleged brain. Take it easy for a moment!”

“Yes,” cried Jack, in mock sympathy, “stand back! Give him air! If Jimmie is really going to think, let’s give him lots of room!”

“Aw, you go on!” scorned Jimmie. “I’ve got a right to think if I want to, haven’t I? I guess that’s my privilege!”

“Not unless you have a union card!” protested Jack, laughing.

“That’s all right,” retorted Jimmie with a grin as he wrinkled a freckled nose at the other. “I was going to think about a scab, anyhow, so I don’t need a card. Besides, this is on overtime!”

“All right, you win!” declared Jack, submissively. “Go ahead!”

“If you’ll promise to never, never tell, I’ll let you in on the scheme!” whispered Jimmie, glancing about to make sure that no strangers were within earshot. “Do

you solemnly promise?”

“I do!” answered the boys in chorus, anxious to receive the news.

“Then here it is: If we could paint the name ‘U-13’ on that tub there’s nothing to prevent our getting away in it!”

“Hush, Jimmie!” cautioned Ned, in a startled tone.

“Hush nothing!” declared the other boldly. “It’s now or never! The destroyer’s gone—everything’s gone that could chase us. Mackinder’s loose on this island. He’ll make us trouble if we stay. If we go now we are safe from pursuit until another German boat comes in unless they flash the news by wireless. In that case, we have an even chance of getting away. If we don’t go now tell me when we can get home?”

“I guess you’re right, Jimmie, but how are you going to work it?”

“Simply putter along this afternoon,” explained the lad, “fixing the wiring and so on. If necessary, rip out some and replace it. We can get in one another’s way enough to kill a lot of time. After supper we’ll manage to slip back to the submarine, paint ‘U-13’ on the side, every man to his post, let go lines easy and skedaddle for the open sea.”

“It sounds easy enough,” assented Harry.

“Yes, unless you happen to get caught!” agreed Ned.

“What is there to catch us?” asked Jimmie, bristling at this hint of opposition. “The guards are all wise to the fact that the channel is mined. They will be sleepy and lazy. They know that the torpedoes are not aboard yet and believe it impossible for the submarine to leave without a crew. The weather looks as if it were going to be rough. What more can you want? It looks to me as if we’d never have another chance like it!”

“Right you are, Mr. Wolf!” declared Frank. “I, for one, am willing to take a chance. I’ll go with you to the limit!”

“Here, too!” heartily agreed Ned. “How about it, boys?”

Eagerly the others signified their willingness to undertake the task suggested. They felt no compunction over the seizure of the boat.

“Now, we’ll have to do some tall thinking before night comes!” stated Jimmie. “Each of us’ll have his station and we must know just what to do at the proper time. I had this in mind ever since we came up the harbor past those boats. I

noticed particularly the buoys marking the safe channel leading into this harbor.”

“Good for you!” cried Ned, administering an affectionate slap upon Jimmie’s shoulder. “I knew you had something up your sleeve!”

“So did I!” added Jack. “I couldn’t guess what it was, though!”

“It was my arm!” declared Jimmie, with mock gravity. “Now, let’s go back to this ‘Untervasserbootschiff’ and stall around a while.”

“Correct!” cried Harry. “We’ll rehearse for this evening. We shall depend on Jimmie to be the pilot, though!”

“Leave it to me!” declared the younger lad. “I know where the buoys are! I have them all located in my head!”

“But we must be mighty careful,” declared Ned. “We don’t know how much English these fellows understand. They must not suspect!”

“Mum’s the word!” put in Frank. “Everybody mum!”

First visiting the warehouse at the wharf, where they procured a quantity of supplies, such as might be needed to carry out the work which they were supposed to be doing, the lads proceeded aboard the submarine.

Upon their arrival they found a painter at work inscribing the vessel with identifying marks. He had proceeded so far as to place “U-1—” on each side of the vessel. Jimmie joyfully declared that fortune was playing into their hands in this respect, and that if something would compel the man to quit work for a while the disguise could be quickly made.

At Ned’s request Harry began fitting wires from the storage batteries to the motors used for propelling the vessel. The boys were startled to hear him utter an exclamation of dismay. They found upon inquiry that he had endeavored to strip the insulation from a wire by using his pocket knife and had cut a finger badly.

“Pooh, pooh!” stated Jimmie, upon discovering the wound. “Don’t make so much fuss over a little thing like that. We’ll soon have you fixed up. Here, just hold the wound closed with your other hand while I hunt up some bandages. You’ll be all right in a minute!”

But Harry declared that the wound pained excessively. He refused to treat the matter lightly, but gathered up the tools with which he had been working. These he deposited in a canvas bag in which they had been brought aboard the vessel.

Presently Jimmie located a first aid kit among the stores. He was not long in

cleansing and bandaging the wound.

“There you are!” he stated. “Just as good as new! Now go lie down for a little while. I’ll finish this job if I know enough.”

Chatting together in a somewhat nervous manner the boys anxiously awaited the approach of evening. As the time wore on their restlessness increased. Again and again they carefully went over each detail of their proposed plan for escape in the submarine.

It was decided that Jimmie should take the wheel while Harry stood watch at the engines. The others were assigned to various other duties at favorable positions. Nothing remained except to wait for night.

A short time before darkness settled an orderly visited the craft. He was able to converse slightly in English.

“How are you getting along, boys?” he asked, as he stepped down the iron ladder. “Can we put the torpedoes aboard tomorrow?”

“Yes, I think you will be able to place the torpedoes after tomorrow morning,” replied Ned. “We will have our work all done then.”

“That is good!” was the other’s comment. “Where is Mackinder?” was his next question. “He will have to come ashore now!” he added.

“Mackinder?” was Ned’s startled response. “He’s not here.”

“But he was here!” firmly declared the orderly. “He was seen by one of the sentries to come aboard this vessel, and has not since been noticed going ashore, although a close watch has been kept!”

“We haven’t seen him at all!” stated Ned, just as firmly.

“We shall have to search the vessel!” affirmed the orderly. “You will please remain aboard for a short time.”

Quickly ascending the ladder the man summoned another soldier from the shore. Together the two made a hasty examination of the boat.

Unable to discover any trace of the missing prisoner they shook their heads as if greatly puzzled. Now and again they glanced at the boys, exchanging at the same time comments in German.

“Come with us,” finally said the first visitor.

Obediently the lads followed ashore. They were conducted to the office building,

where they were shown into the presence of General Gruenwold at once. In a few words the orderly stated the case.

“This looks serious, boys,” commented the General. “Can you not explain the whereabouts of Mackinder? He is a prisoner, you know!”

“We know nothing of the man!” declared Ned, earnestly. “We don’t like him and surely would not think of assisting him to escape!”

“If you please, sir,” began the orderly, “it is the opinion of my comrade and myself that the boys have done away with Mackinder!”

“What!” almost shouted Gruenwold, rising from his chair.

“Yes, sir,” continued the man. “There was found in the boat much blood. A hammer in their tool kit was also blood-stained. We think they possibly made away with him and might have dropped his body into the harbor very quietly without being seen from shore!”

“This is serious, indeed!” gasped Gruenwold. “We shall investigate this in the morning. Meanwhile, search the vessel again. The boys will be put in the guardhouse until tomorrow.”

Protests on the part of the lads were unavailing. Gruenwold was determined in his decision. Ned’s explanation of the presence of the blood in the vessel was listened to, but without influencing the general.

Directly the lads found themselves in a room used for the accommodation of such prisoners as might need confinement for a time. The island boasted no regular prison, but a house not far from the water had been utilized for the purpose. A guard paced a beat in the vicinity.

Disappointed and angry at the turn of affairs the lads made but a poor supper of the food that was brought to them. Presently they composed themselves to sleep on the floor.

A tapping at the window attracted their attention.

CHAPTER XIV

HELPED BY AN ENEMY

“What’s that?” inquired Ned, startled at the unexpected sound.

“Loose board, I guess,” replied Jimmie, rather disgruntled at the turn affairs had taken. “The wind’s ripping everything loose!”

Again the tapping was repeated in an insistent manner.

“I’m going to see what’s going on here!” declared Ned, rising from his position. “Some one is trying to communicate with us!”

“Some bloomin’ Dutchman’s tryin’ to ask us whether we want sausage with our pancakes for breakfast!” growled Jimmie. “Let ’em alone!”

Disregarding this statement the older lad proceeded toward the window, where fitful gusts of sleet beat. Outside the darkness covered everything. Only an occasional point of light indicated a sentry hut.

“Who’s there?” demanded Ned in a low tone.

“Sh-h-h!” came a hiss from the darkness. “Open the window!”

Ned fumbled a moment at the fastening. Presently he found the catch sliding the sash back in its channel. An exclamation escaped him as he did so. The face of the visitor was none other than that of their missing acquaintance, Mackinder. Ned was astounded.

“Thought you were dead!” he cried in amazement.

“Hush!” cautioned the other. “Not so loud. Now, if you lads want to get out of here this is your time. Everybody’s busy or asleep!”

“How do you know we want to get out of here?” demanded Jimmie in a low tone as he approached the opening.

“Don’t you suppose I have eyes? I saw what you were up to!”

“Oh, you did, eh? Then what do you want us to do?”

“If you want to get away from this place according to your plan, now is the time to take action,” replied Mackinder in a whisper. “If you prefer to wait until tomorrow and stand trial for an offense of which you are innocent I cannot offer any objection of course.”

“Ned, I think we’d better make our getaway while the going’s good!”

“Second the motion!” declared Harry, who had softly approached the window. “Let’s make a noise like a drum!”

“I’m with you!” stated Frank, raising a foot to the window sill.

“Easy there!” cautioned Jimmie. “Mind your step!”

Frank was through the window in an instant. He landed on the earth with Mackinder’s assistance without noise. Quickly the others followed. Ned took the precaution to slide the window shut.

Cautiously the little group of six made their way in the direction of the wharf where the submarines were moored. Mackinder took the lead as if familiar with the ground. Once he paused, extending a warning hand to Jimmie, who was directly behind him. The lad performed a similar service for those in the rear. A sentry was approaching.

Mackinder sank upon the ground. Although the night was too dark for the lads to see this action they were close enough to be aware of the movement. Instantly all followed suit.

In a moment they breathed more freely. The sentry had passed within a few paces of their position. Evidently his feeling of security in the isolation of the island had made him somewhat negligent of his duties. He proceeded against the storm with head bent low.

Again Mackinder rose to his feet. Cautiously he crept forward.

On tiptoe the party gained the shelter of the warehouse.

“Gee!” declared Jimmie as the edge of the wharf was gained, “I clean forgot my kit! What shall we do?”

“Hush!” warned Ned. “Don’t even dare think of your kit!”

“I should say not!” put in Harry. “Think of your head instead!”

“And the mines at the harbor entrance,” added Frank.

“All right!” submissively agreed Jimmie. “I’ll keep quiet!”

The wind had risen to such an extent that walking on the narrow planking was not only uncertain but extremely dangerous. Mackinder solved the problem by dropping to all fours. The boys followed suit.

Directly they gained the submarine, the hatch was placed quietly in position for prompt closing and the lines which held the boat were let go.

Owing to the movement of the boats caused by the roughened surface of the harbor creakings and groanings of the fenders had served to drown any noise the party had made in crossing the narrow bridge of planks.

Jimmie held the wheel as Ned gave the signal for casting off the lines. A touch of Harry’s hand on the lever started the engines. The submarine began to move. Suddenly a loud splash alongside attracted the attention of all. Frank came scuttling down the ladder.

“Now I’ve done it!” he gasped. “I forgot to shove the plank back onto the next boat and it fell into the water as we started!”

“Wonder if the guard has heard it!” speculated Ned. “Let me up!”

Under protests from his companions the lad mounted the iron ladder and thrust his head through the hatch.

“I hear someone running along the dock!” he announced presently. “I’ll bet they have heard that noise! I see a light!” he added.

“What are they doing?” inquired Jimmie, holding the boat directly in the center of the channel as he peered anxiously ahead.

“A fellow with a lantern is running out along the planks,” replied Ned. “They’ve got to the outside boat now. Now they’re turning back.”

“Better get that hatch closed so we can dive,” admonished Jimmie. “This is our time for getting out of sight in a hurry!”

“There goes their searchlight!” shouted Frank, who had crowded up the ladder close beside Ned. “They’re going to spot us in a hurry!”

“Ah,” cried Ned as a sullen roar came to their ears. “They’re taking a chance shot at us from that cannon on the hill. Let’s dive!”

Quickly the two boys adjusted the hatch. As they signaled to their companions that this task was completed Harry and Jack turned the deflecting rudders. The half-manned submarine slowly began to descend.

“Get some water into the tanks quick, Harry!” called Jimmie.

“Pump’s going right now!” declared the other. “We’re going down!”

“Take a look through the periscope, Ned,” requested the pilot, “and let me know what you can make out. Can you see any buoys ahead?”

“Try to see if they’ve located us with their searchlight,” suggested Mackinder. “Maybe they are getting our range with that gun!”

“Never mind about that searchlight,” snapped Jimmie. “I want to find out what’s ahead, not what’s behind us. We’ll run this boat!”

“I simply wanted to know,” objected Mackinder somewhat ruffled at the lad’s peremptory manner. “No objection, is there?”

“All the objection in the world!” declared Jimmie. “You’re quite welcome aboard as a passenger, but we’ll navigate the vessel, please!”

Scarcely knowing whether to be amused or defiant at this attitude Mackinder chose the wiser course and refrained from further comment.

Although the boys could not be sure that the persons on the island were making efforts to hinder their escape they felt the better course was to remain beneath the surface until well out of the harbor.

Directly Jimmie called the attention of his comrades to an object in the water at no great distance ahead. The rays of the searchlight with which the submarine was provided indistinctly revealed a huge bulk slightly above the level at which they were traveling.

“What is that, a ship?” asked Harry wonderingly.

“I’ll bet a cookie that’s a mine!” declared Jimmie positively. “I’m going to give it a little more leeway, anyhow. It pays to be safe!”

Ned was working the periscope in an effort to locate the buoys as directed by Jimmie. Occasionally he turned the glass toward the group of buildings they had just left.

“They’re shooting at us, I guess!” he stated presently. “I can see the flash of that cannon. It seems to be pointed this way!”

“Let ’em shoot, they can’t see anything but the periscope and they’d have an awful time hitting that!” boasted Jimmie.

Scarcely had the lad spoken before the vessel was shaken by the force of a

mighty concussion. A gigantic wave tossed the craft up and forward with a heave that threw the boys off their feet.

“What was that?” gasped Jimmie glancing at his companions with a terrified face. “Has one of the fuel tanks blown up?”

“Nothing doing!” replied Harry. “I think that cannon hit the mine we just passed. I’m glad we were no closer!”

“We’ll soon be out of their range!” stated Jimmie. “Shut up your periscope and we’ll go deeper. Give us a little more speed, Harry!”

In an hour Jimmie declared that they should be out of sight of the island altogether. The engines had been working at full speed ahead. Harry nursed the machinery constantly, knowing that it was new and would, therefore, require considerable care. Their urgent need for speed induced the lads to crowd the machinery to the limit, and Harry was gratified to note that every part responded properly to its task.

“Well, Mackinder,” stated Ned as the tension on their nerves began to relax with the increasing distance traveled, “we’re surely grateful to you for suggesting that we get away as you did!”

“My motive was largely a selfish one, I must confess,” returned Mackinder. “I wanted very badly to get away from that island.”

“How did they ever get hold of you, anyhow?” questioned Jack.

“I left Amsterdam the same evening you did. After the Lena Knobloch went past us as she did I knew there was little use trying to delay you. Therefore, my aide and myself left at once on a train for Rotterdam. There we found a fishing boat which we thought would answer our purpose. We induced the captain to take us aboard, intending to cross to England. After traveling some distance the storm overtook us. We were blown far out of our course. The vessel was badly battered. The crew left in a panic, leaving me on board. Just in time the German destroyer came along and took me off. That’s it in a nutshell.”

“Yes, and then when you discovered us in our little boat you went and told the captain of the destroyer a lot of nonsense, didn’t you?” questioned Jimmie in a somewhat aggressive manner. “Why did you do it?”

“I only told him that you had at one time a package that belonged to me. I wanted the package badly. I thought he would assist me.”

“That wasn’t a very nice way to go about it,” declared Jimmie with emphasis.

“After searching our baggage twice, and after we had told you how the package was in our kits without our knowledge, also that it had been stolen away from our possession, why didn’t you believe us?”

“There is an old saying that all is fair in love and war!” replied Mackinder. “You know that my country and Germany are at war. As an officer in the British army, it is my duty to do everything possible to assist my country. I believe that package contains information that my country could use. That is my justification for my acts, and I hope you boys are fair-minded enough to hold no resentment.”

“I’m just fair-minded enough to be neutral,” declared Jimmie, “if I have to fight for the right to remain that way. I’m just a little sore at you for supposing that four boys who are citizens of a neutral country would be carrying information around for another country at war!”

“I’m sorry you feel that way,” said Mackinder. “I assure you there was nothing personal in my acts. I simply tried to do my best!”

“Well, you did a lot, at that!” returned the lad.

“All right, folks, let’s drop the subject,” spoke up Ned. “I feel that the air in here is getting bad. Suppose we go to the surface.”

“Right you are,” agreed Harry. “Let’s rise and fill the tanks!”

Jimmie, in compliance with this wish, steered the craft upward.

At the surface the boys found the water much smoother than they had expected would be the case. Jimmie declared that he intended painting the balance of the name “U-13” on the vessel while the other lads were occupied in airing out the vessel and refilling the compressed air tanks.

Slung in a boatswain’s chair over the sloping deck the lad soon completed this task. Feeling a considerable degree of elation at the success of his undertaking Jimmie returned with his brush and paint.

“If you’re ready now we’ll dive again and proceed!”

“Wait a minute, Mackinder’s still on deck!” stated Jack.

“He wasn’t there when I came below!” protested Jimmie.

CHAPTER XV

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Ned looked at Jimmie in astonishment. He could scarcely credit his senses. He began ascending the iron ladder leading to the deck.

Eagerly the lad glanced about the upper portion of the submarine which now showed black and gleaming above the surface of the water.

“Harry,” he called down the hatchway, “didn’t Mackinder say he was coming on deck to see if he could be of service to Jimmie?”

“He certainly did!” answered Harry. “Then we went on working at the pumps. I was busy with the starboard pump because it wasn’t working just as it should. I saw him start up the ladder!”

“And I saw him when he was about half way up!” put in Jack.

“I’m equally certain he didn’t return, but it may be well enough to stop a minute to search the interior. Perhaps he came back.”

In a moment all five boys were busily going over every corner of the craft. From stem to stern they ransacked every place where it would have been at all possible for their guest to have hidden.

At length they met in the space directly below the hatchway.

“Find anything?” queried Ned glancing about the group.

“Not a hint of anything at all resembling an Englishman!” stated Jimmie. “Perhaps it would be a good idea to put an ad. in the paper.”

“Yes,” scorned Jack. “Like this: ‘Lost—one perfectly good Englishman. Finder please return to the “U-13” and receive reward!’”

“Sure!” agreed Jimmie. “Have them charge it, please!”

“Hush this nonsense, boys!” cried Ned. “This may be serious!”

“Well, where is he?” protested Jimmie. “We haven’t got him!”

“Maybe he fell overboard!” suggested Ned. “Let’s have a look.”

Again the lad mounted the ladder. As he reached the small deck he peered anxiously about the vessel seeking what he hoped he might not find.

The others came crowding after their chum, filling the space.

“There he goes!” cried Jimmie pointing away to the north.

“Where?” inquired Ned looking in the direction indicated. “Oh, I see him,” the lad went on. “He’s swimming a good stroke, too!”

“Is he crazy or just disgusted with the company on board the ‘U-13’?”

“Perhaps he thinks he’ll be picked up by that boat!” stated Jimmie again directing the attention of his comrades to a small fishing craft. “They seem to be heading a course that will reach Mackinder.”

“He was wise enough to take one of the life preservers,” said Harry indicating a space from which a buoy was missing.

“Sure enough!” agreed Ned. “He’s no fool at any rate!”

“Let’s wait a while to see if they pick him up,” suggested Jimmie.

“If they don’t get him, we’ll chase over there and take him aboard again. What do you say?” asked Ned of the others.

There was no dissenting voice raised to this suggestion. Eagerly the lads watched the boat momentarily drawing nearer the swimmer.

In a short time the boat rounded to, losing her way in the water. A sharp skiff was quickly launched over the side. Into this tumbled two men. They soon covered the distance between their vessel and the swimmer. Without difficulty they succeeded in assisting Mackinder into the skiff, then put quickly back to the sailing vessel.

“Ah, he’s safe at any rate!” gladly stated Ned. “Now we can go on and finish our voyage in peace! I’m glad he’s gone!”

“So am I!” declared Jimmie. “He’s a good fellow as one might say, but he’s too awfully stuck on getting some information for that bloomin’ Hinglish Harmy, don’t you know!”

“That’s hardly fair, Jimmie!” laughed Ned. “He didn’t drop his ‘H’s’ and he did only what he considered his duty.”

“He will probably get that fisherman to set him ashore on English soil as soon as possible,” conjectured Jack. “Suppose we follow them.”

“What for?” asked Harry. “Why should we chase after those chaps?”

“Unless we do something of the sort, we’ll have to go at it blindly!” urged Jack. “We don’t really know where we are!”

“That’s so,” admitted Harry reluctantly. “We haven’t a chart nor a course. We don’t know how far we are from anywhere at all!”

“We might keep on steering just as we started,” stated Frank. “I believe southeast was the course we used coming away from Helgoland.”

“That course would surely bring us up somewhere,” put in Ned, “but it would be much better if we could find out exactly where we are. Then we could steer a course with intelligence.”

“Aw, what do we need of a chart?” scorned Jimmie. “We know that England lies to the southwest of us. It’s big enough so we can’t miss it. If we blunder into the coast we can just cruise along a ways until we come to some place or other and then head in.”

“That’s a good idea, too,” agreed Frank. “When we get to a port we can turn the submarine over to the English authorities as a prize of war. They’ll probably be glad enough to get the machine.”

“Then we’ll head for the little old U. S. A.!” cried Jimmie.

“You’re right we will. When we get there, we’ll chase ourselves out to Long Island. The first thing I’ll do will be to get the factory started on another engine like the Grey Eagle’s!” declared Harry.

“Good enough! Now let’s be ‘wenting’!” added Jimmie.

“But, boys,” objected Ned, “this hit or miss fashion of navigating is not correct. Something may happen to change our course. If we don’t know what we are doing, we might get into lots of trouble!”

“Maybe you’re right, Ned!” assented Frank. “What shall we do?”

“I think we’d better cruise carefully along on the surface until we see a ship. We can ask them for our latitude and longitude. From that we’ll be able to lay a course to any point.”

“Maybe they’ll give us a chart, too!” put in Harry.

“All right, then, here goes!” shouted Jimmie preparing to slide down the ladder. “Somebody’ll have to keep on deck.”

Harry at once followed Jimmie into the interior. The engines responded to his touch. The new “U-13” sprang forward half submerged.

“We’ve got plenty of gas in the tanks, Harry,” stated Jimmie to his chum as the latter moved about the interior looking after the machinery. “We’re making only about fifteen miles now by this log.”

“I’ll give them another touch,” responded Harry. “The sooner we get there, the quicker we’ll arrive, so here goes!”

The increased speed of the engines urged the submarine ahead at a goodly rate. Jimmie presently declared that the log indicator showed a good twenty-five miles an hour. Those on the little deck above the conning tower found the increased speed uncomfortable by reason of the dashing spray, but all felt that this was not unendurable.

“Sail, ho!” Ned presently called down the hatchway.

“Where away?” asked Harry, looking up at his comrade.

“Almost dead ahead!” replied Ned. “We’re overhauling them fast. It looks to be a three masted ship as nearly as I can make out!”

“Hold your course, Jimmie!” directed Jack. “We’ll come up close enough to hail them in a little while just as we are heading!”

In a few minutes the ship was so close that all could make out the details of her rigging. It was a large three masted square-rigged vessel evidently in ballast for the hull was high out of water.

“I believe they see us!” announced Frank, using a pair of binoculars he had found among the fittings of the submarine.

“Can you make out the flag at the peak?” asked Jack.

“Yes, I think so. I believe it is the British flag.”

“Then, they’ll be glad to help us out, especially if they find that we intend to turn the ‘U-13’ over to their government!”

“I don’t know about that!” doubted Frank. “I see men running aloft. It looks as if they’re rigging out studding sail booms on the main yards. And I see others on the topsail yards,” declared the boy.

“Why, in that case, they’re trying to get away from us!”

“It certainly looks that way. Now I can see men setting the studding sails on the booms. They are putting on every rag the old hooker will carry!” cried the lad excitedly.

“I know why,” stated Harry. “They think we’re a German submarine chasing them and they’re trying to get away!”

“Let’s run up a white flag, then,” urged Ned. “They ought to know what that means. They’ll stop for that!”

In response to this suggestion the lads quickly overhauled the flag locker finding just what they sought. The white flag was at once brought to the deck where it was bent on to the halliards. It fluttered gaily at the top of the short flagstaff. Some difficulty was experienced in securing the staff because of an improperly fitting socket.

“Do they seem to be making any change?” inquired Harry presently.

“Yes,” answered Ned. “They’re crowding on more sail!”

“Then we might as well give it up!” stated the other. “They’ll never stop for us. Our only hope is to dive and come up close to some vessel so they can’t get away before we ask the questions.”

“Maybe that would be a good idea,” admitted Ned. “Anyhow, we’ll have to take down this flag. The signal staff don’t fit!”

Disappointed because their efforts had been unavailing, the lads regretfully folded the flag. It was restored to its proper place.

Harry, however, continued to urge the engines forward in the hope of eventually overhauling the ship. This seemed to be within the range of possibilities, but the boys all knew the maxim concerning a stern chase, and were somewhat discouraged. Knowing that their intentions were of the best, they felt slightly aggrieved that the other did not stop.

“I see a smoke away ahead of the ship!” announced Frank after a few moments. “I can’t tell which way they are headed, though!”

“At this rate of traveling, we’ll soon find out!” declared Jack.

Evidently the smoke had been discovered by those aboard the sailing vessel, for the course was altered slightly in that direction.

This change was noted by the boys. Jimmie shifted the helm slightly in order to

keep the submarine directly in the track of the ship.

“I wonder what that other vessel can be,” puzzled Ned. “Let me take the glasses a moment, Frank. I wish we were higher in the water,” he added, “then we could get a better range of vision.”

Long and earnestly the boy inspected the strange vessel. Presently he returned the glasses to Frank with a sigh.

“What is it?” asked Jack with keen interest.

“I believe it is a warship of some sort!” replied Ned.

“Then they’ll capture us and take us to port mighty quick!”

“I guess they’ll capture us all right!” put in Frank. “I can see the sailing vessel making signals. They’ve got a string of flags flying from the foretopmast head. I don’t know what they mean, but they’re calls for help, or I’ll miss my guess! They are something like the U. S. flags!”

Those on board the steamer had evidently seen the string of flags or else by the peculiar actions of the sailing vessel guessed that something was wrong, for the boys saw that their course was at once altered. From the clouds of dense black smoke pouring from the funnels they knew that the stokers were being urged to their best efforts.

In a short space of time the combined speeds of the two vessels brought them close together. As the other approached, Harry shut off the power of the engines, checking them to little more than steerageway.

As the steamer passed the ship Ned could see that some communication had been made between the two. The steamer came quickly on.

“Pass me up that white flag again, Harry,” requested Ned. “I think they’re coming up to speak to us, and I’d just as soon have that handy. Maybe these fellows might misunderstand our motives, too!”

“I wish now I hadn’t painted that ‘U-13’ quite so plainly on the sides!” grumbled Jimmie. “I’ll bet they’ve seen that!”

“Of course, they’ve seen it, but if we show a white flag they won’t do anything to us. They’ll let us ask questions!”

In answer to this statement, a shot echoed across the water. A ball striking the crest of a wave sent a cloud of spray over the “U-13.”

CHAPTER XVI

A STRANGE DISCOVERY

“Get down that hatchway!” ordered Ned, wiping the spray from his face. “Those fellows see the name ‘U-13’!”

“Won’t they observe the white flag if we put it up?” asked Jack.

“I don’t believe they will!” Ned stated. “Better get below!”

As if to emphasize the boy’s opinion another report echoed over the space of water separating the battleship from the new “U-13.”

This time the shell had been aimed a trifle too high. It went directly over the lads on the diminutive deck. Instinctively they all ducked their heads as the missile screamed wickedly in its useless flight.

If anything was needed to decide the matter, this last offering seemed to serve the purpose. All three lads hastened down the ladder without further parley. Ned lingered a moment to close the hatch.

“Hang onto your hats!” cried Jimmie the next instant.

“Let’s get down quick!” urged Jack. “Those fellows up there seem to mean business. My stars!” he added breathlessly, “that last one was certainly a beauty! They are getting the range, too!”

Already Harry had started the pumps, filling the ballast tanks with water to assist the “U-13” in the evolution of the dive. The rudders were deflected to their extreme range. With decks inclined to an alarming angle, the submarine fled toward the bottom like a hunted creature. Until the gauges showed a depth of twelve fathoms, Jimmie held the levers in position. Then he brought the craft to an even keel.

“It’s plain to be seen that we’ll not get much help from any ship on the North Sea!” declared Jack at length, as the ballast tanks were found to trim the vessel. “They’re scared of us, I believe!”

“They haven’t any reason to be scared of us!” stoutly protested Jimmie. “We have never done a thing to them. We’re absolutely neutral!”

“It seems to be one thing to be neutral,” laughed Ned, “and quite another thing to convince other folks of the fact!”

“They might at least have given us a chance to explain!” grumbled Jimmie. “We had a white flag flying for them to see!”

“Yes,” argued Ned, “but did you stop to think that we were showing ourselves in a bad light? Remember the newspaper accounts of all the damage done by a submarine? I’m not surprised they ran away.”

“And then we come along in a submarine! Of course, we couldn’t expect them to wait for a German undersea craft to come popping out of the ocean and waltz up alongside so they could say: ‘Good morning, Mr. Dutchman! Won’t you please accept this fine ship?’” added Jack.

“Well, I’m it!” declared Jimmie, joining in the laugh that followed Jack’s facetious remark. “The joke’s on me, all right! If I hadn’t painted that figure ‘three’ in the name, we would have been on our way to England by this time! Oh, well,” the boy added, “we’ll get to England before long, anyhow, so I should worry!”

“It all shows, boys,” spoke up Ned, “that we’ve got to be mighty careful about our appearance and the company we keep. We have gotten into this scrape largely because we were found in possession of goods we had no business to have. This last incident came about because we pretended to be something we were not!”

“I think that ought to be a good lesson to us,” stated Jimmie. “It will be for me, I know! I’m sure I’ll take it to heart!”

“I’m mighty glad we’re away from that inquisitive gunboat!” put in Frank. “Now, what’s the next thing for us to do?”

“I move that we keep below the surface for a while. If we hold on a general southeasterly course, as has been suggested, we can’t fail to bring up somewhere on the English coast.”

“That sounds like the most reasonable plan,” agreed Frank. “I propose that we put on speed and hurry along. Let’s get somewhere!”

“Here we go!” cried Harry, increasing the speed with a touch on the levers. “Let’s keep a sharp lookout, though!”

About half past three o'clock the boys decided to rise to the surface for the necessary airing of the vessel and storing of another supply of fresh air in the tanks provided for that purpose.

In furtherance of this plan, the rudders were shifted while Harry slowed the engines. Directly the craft ascended. The gauges indicated a depth of about eight fathoms when Jimmie, who was at the helm, requested that the rudders be again deflected.

"What's the matter?" questioned Ned, stepping forward.

"I can see the light reflected down through the water, and there's a big shadow up there!" declared Jimmie.

"What do you think it can be?" asked Ned wonderingly.

"Probably it's a big vessel of some sort. It may be a war ship, or it may be only a cargo carrier. In either event I don't want to get tangled up in the propellers. Let's sheer off a bit."

"All right," agreed Ned. "I'll go to the periscope. Maybe I can find out something as we rise slowly to the surface."

Cautiously creeping nearer the surface, the lads put the periscope into action. By its aid Ned made out that the craft was an armed vessel. The new "U-13" lay just submerged about a ship's length to starboard of the stranger. They maintained about the same speed.

Ned declared that he could make out the British flag at the stern of the other vessel. He stated that he could also notice a number of people aboard the steamer.

"Can you see what they look like?" asked Jimmie.

"They are regular sailors and marines," answered Ned. "Why," went on the lad excitedly, "that looks like Mackinder at the rail!"

Curiously the others crowded about the object glass of the periscope. Each declared in turn that they recognized Mackinder.

"Now, I wonder what he's doing aboard that vessel!" mused Jack.

"Quite likely this ship met the fishing boat and took him off so as to save the other the trouble of going clear back to England!"

"No doubt that's it," agreed Jack. "But look!" he continued, "he's discovered us! See him pointing toward us!"

“Better get ready to dive, then,” cautioned Harry. “If he’s able, he’ll get them to shoot at us. If they hit the ‘U-13’ it’ll be a long way to Tipperary for us! We don’t know how thick this armor is!”

“Down we go!” shouted Jimmie, seizing the wheel. “Lively, now!”

Even as the boy spoke, a muffled roar was distinctly heard by the lads in the submarine. A crash that reverberated through every portion of the vessel told that they had been hit by a projectile.

With a quick, startled glance at his companions, Ned hastened aft to examine the possible damage. He could discover no leak.

“I guess we’re lucky, after all!” he stated presently. “We’re not taking in water, so I’m sure they didn’t do very much damage.”

“It might have been more serious, though!” commented Jack.

“Maybe the shot just carried away some of the light work like railings and so on around the deck. I don’t think the shot struck the hull, or we’d have heard more racket,” went on Ned.

“Let’s keep below the surface for a while. Maybe we can get away from those fellows far enough to be out of their sight while we change air. They’re not the least bit sociable!”

“Full speed ahead, Harry!” cried Frank. “Let’s hurry on!”

“Better take it easy,” cautioned Jimmie. “We may not be out of the woods yet. Let’s just go along slowly for a while.”

“Aw, go on!” scorned Frank. “What’s there out here to bother?”

“Sure!” chimed in Jack. “We’re away out in the North Sea where we can find nothing but warships and sailing vessels and such!”

“Maybe we might run into the real ‘U-13’,” countered Jimmie. “Then, what would you do if you should meet that fellow?”

“Why, put on steam and run away from him, of course!”

“All right, go ahead if you want to,” submitted Jimmie unwillingly, “but I don’t think it wise. It’s taking considerable risk!”

Since the majority seemed to be in favor of more speed, the engines were again urged to greater effort. Suddenly all were startled by a cry from Jimmie. The boat swerved sharply to starboard, rolling until the deck was at an acute angle.

Harry reached for the levers, prepared to stand by the engines for orders from the pilot.

Directly Jimmie rang a stop bell. The vessel came again to an even keel. The boys were once more able to stand upright.

“What’s the matter, Jimmie?” cried Ned, as he scrambled to his feet. “Is it a whale, or did you nearly have a collision?”

“Collision is exactly the word!” declared the other. “I saw the masts of a ship standing right in our path. I got this little craft turned just in time! That’s what we get for blundering along so fast!”

“What kind of a ship is it?” asked Frank, peering from one porthole after another. “Are you sure it was the mast of a vessel?”

“Why, certainly, I am sure!” was Jimmie’s decisive answer. “Don’t I know a ship’s masts? I surely do!” the lad answered his own question.

“Let’s swing around and see what it was,” proposed Frank.

“All right, turn the deflecting rudders and down we go!”

Swinging in a broad circle, the submarine was directed downward to a level equal with that of the hull of the ship, whose masts had so nearly proven disastrous to the boys. As the craft sank deeper the crew watched with a great deal of curiosity from the thick glasses over the portholes. Carefully they studied every detail of rig.

Although the sunshine penetrated to some distance below the surface, they found that at the depth where the hull lay a semi-twilight prevailed. The upper portions of the masts had been clearly visible, but the decks lay in a haze that prevented their seeing well.

“Looks like the ship is almost new!” stated Frank.

“Possibly it has been sunk only a short time,” ventured Jack.

“Can you make out what ship it is?” asked Ned.

“Wait a minute until we pass the stern again,” said Frank.

“I can see it!” declared Harry in a moment. “It’s the Wanderer of Sydney! That will be an Australian vessel!”

“And that great gap in the port side indicates that the sinking was the work of our namesake!” stated Ned. “This is another victim of the German ‘U-13’.

Probably it is only one of many!”

“No wonder the other fellows don’t seem inclined to be any too sociable!” said Jack. “They really cannot be blamed!”

“Right you are, Jack,” responded Ned. “When anyone hits at the pocketbook we’re apt to consider everybody under suspicion.”

“Let’s get closer and examine the damage done by the torpedo,” suggested Frank. “I’d like to observe the effects of the attack.”

Shortly the misnamed “U-13” was creeping alongside the hull of the sunken vessel. Jimmie handled the wheel dexterously, ever alert for possible danger. Harry stood by the engines, ready at a moment’s notice to assist in executing any maneuver desired.

“Looks as if the whole side of the ship had been torn away,” stated Ned, as the submarine crept slowly past the jagged wound.

“Those torpedoes surely are powerful,” agreed Frank. “I hope everybody got away from the ship before the explosion took place.”

“They probably gave the crew plenty of time to escape if this is the work of the ‘U-13’,” commented Ned. “You say they gave the crew on your vessel ample time to get safely away?”

“Yes, but the men let themselves become panic-stricken. They lost their heads and consumed a good deal of time. Besides that, they forgot they were civilized. One of them hit me an awful clip.”

“And pretty nearly left you on board to be drowned!”

“These fellows did the same thing!” announced Jack, peering out.

“Did what?” queried Ned, wondering what the other meant.

“Left a man aboard when the ship sank,” stated Jack, pointing through the little port hole. “There he is, walking about!”

Clearly the boys saw a figure apparently crossing the deck.

CHAPTER XVII

ALONE AND HELPLESS

“Good night!” almost shrieked Frank. “That’s uncanny! Whoever heard of a man walking about at the bottom of the ocean?”

“Where did he come from, Jack?” asked Ned.

“I saw that figure come out of the companionway,” stated Jack. “I thought I was mistaken at first, because of the dim light. I looked again as you boys were talking. Then I saw that it was the figure of a man, apparently. He seems to be carrying something in his arms!”

“There he goes over the side of the vessel!” whispered Harry in an awestruck voice. “What sort of deal is this, anyway?”

“Did you notice the knapsack thing he was wearing on his back?” asked Frank. “If I was superstitious, I’d say it was the ghost of a soldier who had been drowned and was seeking his way back home!”

“We don’t take any stock in that ghost business!” declared Ned stoutly. “Some things may look supernatural because we don’t understand them, but there’s always an explanation if we seek it!”

“What is your explanation of this thing, Ned?” questioned Jack.

“Probably some mass of seaweed or some other substance got caught in a current and lodged against the cabin on the Wanderer. When we circled about the wreck we set up counter currents that may have released this mass. It then floated along in the current to finally sink on the other side of this submerged hull. That’s all there is to it!”

“I wonder what sort of a current is bringing the bloomin’ thing back again!” announced Jack as Ned concluded his explanation. “It’s moving its lower edges most remarkably like a man walking!”

Ned’s look of bewilderment increased. Clearly the boy was puzzled. Even he,

himself, was not quite satisfied with the explanation of the strange sight which had greeted the boys.

Slowly forging ahead, the submarine passed toward the stern of the Wanderer, shutting the strange figure out of sight.

“Turn around the stern again, Jimmie,” requested Ned. “Go easy on the engines, and we’ll have a look from a new angle. This is getting rather spooky, I must say. I want to examine into it!”

Again the false “U-13” rounded the stern of the wreck. Slowly the craft nosed along the port side to a point abreast the mizzen chains. Directly at a signal from the pilot, Harry shut off power altogether.

The strange magnetism that seems to exist in all objects at sea slowly drew the submarine toward the ship. Its drift had been sufficient to bring the vessel to a point abreast the main rigging before it stopped.

By this time the craft had approached close to the wreck. A very slight jar told the boys that their vessel had touched the other. Eagerly all watched from the portholes, now but a short space above the level of the rail across which they looked. Directly all was still. At this depth, no movement of water was discernible.

Feeling awed by the strangeness of the situation, the boys refrained from speech. They watched for the reappearance of the strange figure.

Soon Jimmie hissed a warning. He reached out a hand to turn the switch controlling the lights. The boat lay in utter darkness.

A figure stepped out of the Wanderer’s companionway.

It appeared to be that of a person of medium build. The boys could now see that it was clothed in what seemed to be a diver’s suit. The helmet, however, was not connected to any air pipe. Neither was there a line leading upward to indicate the presence of assistance. A hump on the shoulders, giving the impression of a knapsack, afforded much wonderment and increased the mysterious look of the newcomer.

“Sh-h-h!” warned Ned in a sibilant hiss, as the figure came directly toward their position. “Keep quiet!” he whispered.

A few steps carried the stranger to the rail. The boys saw him give a start of amazement as he prepared to go over the side of the ship. Clearly the strange diver was surprised to see the craft in that position. He stepped back a pace, then

came gingerly forward.

Evidently the man was astonished to observe the “U-13”. He climbed slowly into the main shrouds. From that position he surveyed the craft more completely. Again he returned to the deck.

During this examination the lads had remained quietly at their posts, not caring to make their presence known until they were sure of the identity of the other. They still remained with their faces at the portholes, where they observed, so far as possible, every move of the stranger.

Directly they observed the diver pick up the burden he had brought from the cabin. He hastened to the rail of the wreck. In a moment he had clambered overboard, letting himself down by means of a line secured to a belaying pin at the mainmast.

“That’s funny!” observed Ned, as the other disappeared from view. “What do you suppose made him scuttle out of sight so hurriedly?”

“Maybe he, like the warship, saw our name—‘U-13’—on the side of the vessel!” ventured Jimmie. “They all run away from that!”

“It surely doesn’t make us many friends!” declared Ned.

“You’re right!” answered the other. “It’s the original killjoy!”

“Let’s dive a little deeper,” suggested Jack. “Perhaps we can find out where this new chap is going with those bundles.”

“Perhaps we’ll find out how he got here!” added Frank.

“And while you fellows are ‘perhapsing’,” put in Jimmie, “I’ll say that perhaps we’d better stick out! Perhaps he doesn’t want us nosing around his property, and perhaps he’ll touch off a bomb!”

“What’s the matter with you lately?” inquired Frank. “You’re getting to be a regular little ‘fraid-cat’! You never used to be so timid about sticking your nose into other people’s business!”

“I’m not afraid to go looking into things now, only I’ve got a hunch that we’d better not do it, that’s all!” answered the lad. “Just because I happen to want to leave a fellow alone is no sign I’m a ‘fraid-cat’. If you lads want to go anywhere, you tell me the name of the place. I’m game to stick with you until they turn out the lights!”

“Spoken like a man, Jimmie!” declared Frank. “That sounds like the old Jimmie

we used to know. Now, let's go down a ways."

Harry sprang to the levers. A few shifts of the control brought the storage batteries to work operating the pumps. With the additional water admitted by this process, the false "U-13" sank until far below the level of the rail of the wreck. Still deeper and deeper it settled.

Presently the boys at the port holes could discover the bends of the sides, indicating that they were nearly to the ocean floor. In another moment a slight bump told them that the craft rested on bottom.

"I saw a flash of light just now!" stated Jimmie.

"Where did it come from?" asked Ned, stepping forward.

"Just ahead of us on this side of the ship. The shadow lies heavily there, so I can't make out what's located in that place!"

The boys had not long to wait, however, to discover the cause of the flash which Jimmie had seen. Almost following the boy's words came a dazzling beam of light, piercing the dark shadow like an arrow. For a moment the boys were blinded as the searchlight's flame played on the forward part of their vessel.

Presently the light shifted. It was turned against the side of the sunken Wanderer. Up and down the light traveled, revealing the rugged sides of the hull, with its covering of barnacles below what had been the water line. Outward the beam went, showing nothing but ocean floor. Fishes were illuminated and dazzled by the strong ray.

Finally the light returned to the false "U-13", where it settled for a moment. Directly the light was turned off.

Jimmie had been shading his eyes with a protecting hand. He was, therefore, not so much blinded by the glare as the others had been.

"There they go!" he cried, as the light was removed from the port hole through which it had been shining. "They're rising!"

"Who can it be, I wonder?" questioned Ned.

"I'll never tell you!" declared Jimmie. "Oh, yes, I will, too!" he amended his statement. "If you want to know, it's the 'U-13'!"

"The 'U-13'?" questioned the lads in chorus.

"The 'U-13'!" positively stated Jimmie. "Here," he cried, turning a switch leading to the searchlight. "Take a look!"

The powerful storage batteries on the vessel occupied by the boys generated a ray of light that pierced the darkness of the undersea world with ease. Sharply outlined in the circle of flame the lads clearly saw the form of a submarine vessel similar in many respects to their own. There was the same sharp prow, the same tapering stern with conning tower, keel, port lights, and every essential feature of the vessel upon which they were located.

Outlined upon the side, in letters fully the same size as those upon their own vessel, the lads saw distinctly the mark "U-13."

"What do you know about that?" gasped Frank. "That's fierce!"

"Is it the same vessel you saw off Land's End, Frank?" asked Ned.

"I'm sure I can't say," returned the other. "I think it is! Of course, we're somewhat below it. Besides the difference in perspective from this angle the water has a great deal to do with changing the appearance of everything. The general outlines appear similar, however."

"Then we're in a ticklish position!" declared Ned. "Suppose those fellows take it into their head to torpedo us?"

"If they do," stated Frank decisively, "they'll play havoc!"

"They're going over the wreck!" stated Jimmie in a whisper.

"Let's rise a little and see which way they head for," proposed Frank. "We can then go in the opposite direction for a while."

"I think we'd better slide right along to the southwest," stated Jimmie. "I know I'm meeting a good deal of opposition, but I've a hunch that we'll be better off if we get right away from this spot!"

"Been reading that dream book again, little man?" asked Ned, with a laugh. "Sorry, Jimmie, but the majority seems to be against you!"

"All right, Boss!" returned Jimmie with a smile. "I'm game to stick with the bunch! You'll find me right here smiling all the while!"

"Jimmie," gravely stated Ned, "I wish we could all get some of that sunny disposition of yours. We need a lot of your optimism."

"Thanks!" was Jimmie's reply, delivered with an excess of politeness. "Now, I'm at the wheel, Captain. Where to, sir?"

"Let's rise first and see what the other is doing!"

“Ding, ding!” cried Jimmie. “Touch up the mule, Harry!”

Harry’s manipulations of the levers brought the false “U-13” rapidly to a level with the Wanderer’s deck. Through the port lights the boys could see the other submarine across the sunken ship. It seemed to be gradually descending toward the bottom.

“Let’s follow them and see where they go!” proposed Jack.

“At your service, sir!” cried Jimmie, saluting. “We’ll proceed to proceed!” he added with a grin. “Here goes after the real ‘U-13’!”

“Go ahead slowly, Harry,” cautioned Ned. “We don’t want to overtake them yet. We’re in the shadow here, so they probably won’t see us if we hang back a little. Just give the wheel a little kick.”

Slowly the vessel carried the boys over the sunken Australian. They were passing between the main and mizzen rigging at a level slightly lower than that of the main yard.

“What’s that just ahead of us?” queried Jack, at the porthole.

“I don’t see anything,” replied Ned. “What and where is it?”

“Right here,” declared Jack, pointing. “No, you’re too late! I thought it looked like a snake in the water at first, but I see it was only a piece of rope hanging from the rigging. It’s all right!”

“Possibly it has been hanging down all the time but the current caused by the passage of the other vessel swung it outward,” ventured Ned. “It will no doubt slip past in a moment!”

But this prediction was not fulfilled. With a sudden lurch, the stern of the false “U-13” rose, tilting the deck sharply forward.

With a groan the propellers stopped.

CHAPTER XVIII

HELP FROM A STRANGER

Harry uttered a sharp cry as he stumbled forward along the steep incline of the floor. It seemed as if some huge power had grasped the stern of the craft, raising it until the vessel tilted forward at an angle which rendered walking impossible.

All the boys were thrown toward the forward end of the vessel, where Jimmie was located. Ned and Jack lost their footing. They rolled awkwardly to the forward bulkhead. Harry and Frank managed to remain upright by hurriedly grasping at parts of the machinery or at stanchions. Their progress was undignified as well as sudden.

“What’s up?” sharply questioned Jimmie, regaining his feet.

“The stern’s up!” facetiously replied Jack, also struggling to a standing position. “Is anybody hurt?” the boy continued.

A brief examination disclosed the fact that beyond a few minor bruises none of the boys had been seriously injured. Their first care was for each other. All were glad to find no one badly hurt.

“What on earth can have happened to us?” asked Ned, peering from a port light on the starboard side. “Did we collide with something?”

“I don’t believe we did,” returned Harry. “There wasn’t any bump as if we’d run into another object. We just stopped!”

“And then the stern went up into the air and stayed there!” put in Jack. “Something’s got us by the stern and won’t let go!”

“I think I know what it is!” announced Frank. “What is it they call these fishermen with a big net dragging around?”

“Fishermen!” answered Jimmie, with a grin.

“Stop your nonsense!” ordered Frank, administering a friendly punch to his red-

headed comrade. "I mean the fellows with a big drag net!"

"Trawlers is the word you want, Frank!" said Jimmie.

"That's it!" agreed Frank. "I'll bet we're tangled in one of their nets. Maybe we can't get loose again, either," he added.

"Don't you believe it!" scorned Jimmie. "If it was a fisherman had hold of us, we'd be yanked around pretty lively. I think it is that rope we saw hanging in front of the port light!"

"I believe you're right, Jimmie!" Ned put in as he gazed through the heavy glass on the port side. "I can see that we're swinging close to the mainmast. There is no motion to the boat, so that makes me think your solution is about right. Now to get loose!"

"Yes, I agree with you!" stated Harry. "But how? If your assumption is correct, we've got a big piece of line wound around the outboard end of the shaft. It is probably more or less tangled up in the propeller also. We can't turn the engines over!"

"Maybe we could throw out the clutch and turn the shaft backwards enough to unwind the line!" suggested Frank.

"I'm in favor of rising to the surface if the slack of line will permit," offered Jack. "We could then open the hatchway. It would be easy enough from there to clear the line from the screw."

"That's probably the best way out of it," commented Ned. "Suppose we try that. Harry, can we rise as Jack suggests?"

"I don't know," came Harry's hesitating reply. "I'll try!"

Accordingly the boy clambered from his position near the forward bulkhead to the compartment amidships, where the pumps were located. A shift of valves followed by a touch on the levers connecting the storage batteries with the electric pumps started the process of emptying the ballast tanks.

Almost instantly the forward end of the craft began to rise. Very shortly the deck was in a level position. Then, as Harry continued to empty the water ballast, Frank and Ned, assisted by Jimmie and Jack, threw the clutch on the propeller shaft out of contact in order to permit the tail shaft to turn without moving the engines.

They then endeavored to turn the portion of the shaft which projected through

the stern bearing in the back up motion to free the propeller. They hoped thus to release the rope which they believed to be wound around the outboard portion of the shaft.

Strive as they might, however, the shaft stubbornly refused to move. Their utmost efforts were unavailing.

At length, out of breath and exhausted, Ned sank back upon a locker. He looked at his companions with a curious expression.

“What’s the matter, Ned?” inquired Jack anxiously. “Are you ill?”

“I feel badly, boys,” replied Ned. “Unless we can devise some means to free that line from the shaft, we are in a pretty tight fix!”

“How near the surface can you bring the boat, Harry?” asked Frank.

“The gauges show that we’re about two and a half fathoms down at present,” replied Harry. “I have pumped a lot more water out than would ordinarily be required to bring us to the surface.”

“Then we must be held by that line!” declared Ned.

“Let’s try some other maneuver with the ship before we give up!” put in Jack. “We’re not half through our experiments yet!”

“All right, what’ll you try?” asked Ned in a despairing tone.

“I don’t know,” was the answer. “But we’re going to do something to help get us out of this fix. How would it do to fill the tanks to sink us as far as we can go? Then we could empty them in a hurry, which would make the boat rise swiftly. The jounce would perhaps break the line and let us up so we could get some fresh air.”

“If we don’t get some fresh air pretty soon, we’ll have to do something desperate. The reserve tank is nearly exhausted!”

In compliance with Jack’s suggestion, the ballast tanks were again filled. Gradually the “U-13” descended to the bottom. As the deck began to tilt forward, as it had done when the craft was first stopped, Harry threw into operation every pump that could be used to empty the water from the ballast tanks. The boat rose rapidly.

With a jerk that nearly threw the boys off their feet, the “U-13” came to a rest. The gauges still showed the same depth as before.

Ned’s face turned ashen as he sank upon a locker. The others gathered around

him, expressing sympathy. The boy was clearly distressed.

“Never mind, Ned!” spoke up Frank. “We’re coming out all right! The only trouble is that we haven’t tried the right thing yet!”

“But I can’t seem to think of a thing to do in this case,” protested the other. “I’m all out of ideas! I’m sorry that we tried to follow that other submarine. I wish we had taken Jimmie’s advice!”

“Never mind that now, Ned. We’re close to the surface. If it becomes necessary, I will volunteer to be shot out of the torpedo tube. I can rise to the surface, swim about until I get my wind again, and then dive and cut the rope. That will release the whole ship!”

“Jimmie, that’s awfully good of you to offer that, but I feel that I should be the one to do it,” was Ned’s reply.

“No, sir!” declared Jimmie promptly. “You’re in no condition to attempt anything like that. You’re worried, and your heart action is not right just now. My mind is a blank, and my heart is as sound as a bullet! I’m just the one for the job!”

As if the matter were understood, Jimmie began divesting himself of his clothing. He deposited his jacket on the locker beside Ned.

“Harry,” he said, turning to his chum, “will you see that the torpedo tube is connected up and in working order? You might try a discharge for practice. We can spare a little of this air!”

By the time Jimmie had stripped and secured a knife to a belt about his waist, Harry pronounced the tube ready for operation.

“Now, fellows,” said Jimmie, shaking hands with his chums, “there’s about one chance in a million that I won’t get through this all right. If you are not up to the surface in five minutes, you may know that I’ve failed. Then you’d better send out another lad!”

“Me next!” shouted Jack, beginning to remove his shoes.

Harry was peering from the heavy glass protecting the forward porthole. As Jimmie stepped forward to enter the torpedo tube, Harry held up a warning hand. He turned an anxious face to his friends.

“There’s something outside here!” he announced in an anxious tone. “I saw it once, but didn’t get a clear view!”

“What did it look like?” asked Jimmie. “Is it alive?”

“I’m not sure, but I think it’s another submarine!”

“Probably the real ‘U-13’ come up to look us over. Never mind those fellows. I’m going ahead and cut this wagon loose!”

“Wait a minute!” cried Ned. “I see the craft over here to starboard. It’s a peculiar vessel, too! I think I see a man!”

“I see him, too!” declared Frank from a porthole a short distance aft. “Do you suppose he’s trying to get us to descend again?”

“Maybe that’s it! Let’s try it, anyway!” offered Harry.

“Go ahead!” agreed Ned in a tone that showed he was again taking heart. “Let’s act on the suggestion. We can try our scheme later!”

Harry’s hand had already found the levers. In a moment the ballast tanks were being filled with water. Gradually the vessel sank.

As the light grew more dim at the increased depth, Jimmie declared he could see the other vessel descending at about the same speed.

Presently the two craft were at the limit of their travel. The visitor rested on the deck of the Wanderer, while the ‘U-13’, in which the boys were imprisoned, hung again at an angle from the line.

Directly the lads saw the figure that had formerly attracted their attention. It was climbing the main shrouds of the wrecked ship. When the man reached a position level with their craft he began making signs and motions. In his hand he flourished a knife.

“Looks rather bad for us!” commented Jack.

“Don’t you get him?” asked Jimmie impatiently. “He understands our predicament and intends to help us! He motioned out that he is going to climb the rigging until he can find the rope. Then he’ll slide down it until he lands on our stern. If we’ll agree not to start the engines while he’s there, he’ll cut the rope. But we must be ready at the ballast tanks to let the vessel settle slowly to the deck of the ship, so he can get off and clear the line from the propeller!”

“I don’t believe it!” stated Jack. “I think he meant to cut the line as soon as he gets to it and let us settle down slowly. What would be the sense of his riding around the ocean seated on the stern of a disabled submarine? He’s got too much sense for that!”

“Maybe you’re right!” admitted Jimmie. “Let’s float the boat on an even keel and see. I’m going to dress again!”

Even as the lad hastened to put on his clothes the boys felt a sudden dip made by the submarine. Gradually they descended.

“Hurrah, he did it!” exultantly cried Ned. “Now, where has he gone? I do hope he’ll free the propeller wheel at once!”

“We could rise to the surface even if the propeller is stuck!” declared Harry. “I can pump the ballast all out of the tanks!”

“But if we do that we’ll have to dive overboard to clear the wheel!” protested Frank. “I know that water is good and cold!”

“Wait a minute, boys, and see what the fellow does,” cautioned Ned. “Maybe he wants to help us, so it wouldn’t be nice to run away!”

“Here he is, now!” cried Jack from his position near a porthole. “He’s looking through the glass, and making motions again!”

“I know what he wants!” declared Harry. “He’s making motions for us to unscrew a pipe! He wants us to let in a lot of the ocean!”

“Wait a minute, Harry!” put in Ned. “He’s walking toward his own boat. Let’s see what he’s going to do!”

In a short time their rescuer had reached the side of his own vessel. He stepped into an open door in the side and disappeared.

“An air lock!” cried Ned. “Did you see that, boys?”

“Just like the little old Sea Lion we used in the China Sea!”

“Here he comes again with a line!” announced Harry. “Now what?”

The boys heard a hammering and thumping near one of the sea cocks.

CHAPTER XIX

MACKINDER AGAIN

Even as the five boys glanced at each other with startled and wondering looks, the thumping ceased abruptly. In a short space it was resumed. Instinctively the boys gathered near the spot.

While they stood there trying to determine the cause for the strange procedure, the noise ceased. They heard a tapping at one of the portholes. Jimmie rushed across the compartment to investigate.

“Hey, fellows, come over here a minute!” he called out.

“What have you found now?” questioned Ned, obeying the request.

“Here’s this chap, and he’s making all sorts of signals!”

“That’s funny!” puzzled Ned. “Can you make out what he wants?”

“He’s making his hands go in the strangest way! I’m sure I can’t interpret such motions unless he wants us to turn around while he places a bomb or something close enough to blow us out of the water.”

“I know what he wants!” shouted Harry, who had been closely observing the stranger’s repetition of the strange motions. “He wants us to open the valve leading from that sea cock where he has been working!”

“Fine business!” scorned Jimmie. “Open up the sea cock and let the ocean come running all over our nice carpets! I guess not!”

“I’m going to try it, anyway!” declared Harry. “If a little water does come in, the pumps will take care of it before it becomes dangerous. At least, it’s well worth trying!”

“Go ahead, then, but don’t blame me if anything happens!”

Harry moved to the vicinity of the spot where the stranger had been occupied but a few moments before. Jimmie was at the porthole.

A turn of the valve resulted in a sudden short inrush of water.

This ceased abruptly, bringing forth an exultant cry from Harry, while the other boys crowded around, speculating on the cause.

“I’ve got it!” cried Harry, dancing about the compartment. “I know what he’s going to do. Go to the porthole, Jimmie, and see where our friend is now. Tell me just what he’s doing. I’m going to stand guard over this valve here for a while in case something happens.”

“He’s going back into his little cage!” stated Jimmie from his position. “He’s just shutting the outer door.”

“Stand by to see something happen now, boys!” announced Harry.

“What’s going to happen, Harry?” asked Jack.

Before Harry could answer, a sputter of water and air was observed at the open valve. A small quantity of water was blown out of the pipe. Following this came a rush of sweet, pure air that was very grateful to the boys after they had been using the vitiated atmosphere of their craft.

In fact, the lads were much nearer the complete exhaustion of their supply of usable atmosphere than they really comprehended.

“Um-m-m!” exclaimed Jimmie, inhaling great draughts of the incoming current. “Smell that, will you? It’s just like a posy bed!”

“That’s quite remarkable!” declared Ned, as he, too, sniffed the new atmosphere. “It does really seem to carry the odor of flowers!”

“Maybe it’s a sort of gas that he’s unloading on us to render us unconscious, so he can capture the whole outfit!” conjectured Jack.

“I don’t believe it!” protested Ned. “I’m quite convinced that this is pure air. He seems to have quite a lot of it stored up!”

“Let’s pump out some of this foul air and change with the new!”

“Go ahead!” consented Ned. “It’s a good move, I’m sure!”

In a short time the boys began to feel the effects of the inflow of vitalized atmosphere. They were livelier, with less depression.

Directly their attention was attracted to the porthole again by a tapping. The stranger was once more trying to convey some information by signs. He repeated the motions of a short time before.

“I got you!” cried Harry, holding up a hand as a sign of understanding. “He wants us to shut the valve off. Perhaps he’s given us all the nice fresh air that he feels it possible to spare!”

“Shut the valve, then,” directed Ned.

“What’s next?” spoke up Jimmie, listening to a slight hammering outside of the hull. “He’s disconnecting the pipe now!”

“Better wait a bit and see what he wants us to do,” cautioned Ned. “Maybe he’s going to cut the line out of our propeller.”

The lad’s prediction was correct. In a very few moments they could hear the stranger working away at the encumbering line which held their propeller in a vise-like grip.

Not many minutes passed before the stranger again appeared at the porthole. Making a few signals easily comprehended by all, he repaired to his own craft, entering and closing the door of the air lock.

Almost immediately the other craft began to ascend perpendicularly.

“Guess we may as well make a mooch!” stated Jimmie, as he watched the other submarine rise out of their range of vision. “We’re done here!”

“All right, let’s get going!” agreed Harry, stepping toward the levers and preparing to start the motors at the pilot’s command.

At once Jimmie sprang to the wheel. He gave a pull at the bell cord, jangling out a “go ahead” signal to Harry. As the latter touched the levers a startling crash at the stern of the craft was heard.

The motors spun the shaft around futilely without making headway.

With blanched faces the lads glanced about the craft. Harry’s hand instinctively sought the levers again to turn off the current.

“What’s the matter?” called Jimmie from his position.

“I don’t know!” declared Harry. “It sounded as if that fellow had tied a can to us and we’d set it going! What did he do?”

“Let’s pump the ballast out and rise straight to the surface,” suggested Ned. “I noticed that he did that. Maybe there’s a reason!”

Harry lost no time in acting on this suggestion. The electric pumps were not long in emptying the ballast tanks. With this weight removed, the boat quickly shot

upward to the surface.

As the conning tower portholes rose above the surface, the boys noticed that the afternoon was far spent. Darkness already was gathering.

Ned was working frantically at the clamps securing the hatch cover. With a cry of delight he swung the cover out of position, admitting a cool breeze. The wind had died down, leaving the surface of the ocean comparatively smooth. Sufficient breeze was moving, however, to serve the purpose of airing out the interior of the craft without putting the great fans into commission. All the boys came to the tiny deck.

Lying but a few fathoms from their port side they discerned the other submarine. Clearly distinguishable on the sides were the great letters "U-13" painted in almost exact duplicate of those on their own boat.

"What do you know about that?" was Jimmie's surprised exclamation. "If that fellow isn't a dead ringer for this ship, I'm a Dutchman!"

"He surely does look a whole lot like us!" agreed Ned.

"I say, Frank," put in Harry eagerly, "is that the fellow that sank the ship you were on? Can you identify it now?"

Frank shook his head hesitatingly before he answered slowly: "Boys, I hate to say it, but it looks as like the other as two peas. I would not like to make an affidavit, but I'm willing to say that it bears a most remarkable resemblance to that other one, if it is 'other'!"

"Then, I guess we're done for!" despaired Jack. "If that's a German craft, we may as well hoist the white flag now and surrender!"

"Think they'll take us back to Germany?" asked Ned quizzically.

"I'm sure of it!" declared the boy. "And we won't stand much show, either, when they find that we've stolen this ship away from Helgoland!"

"Goodness!" exclaimed Ned suddenly. "I declare I'd actually forgotten that we were on board a stolen submarine. That does make it look rather dubious for us. We are in a pretty mess!" he added.

"Here comes someone now!" announced Jimmie. "Watch the hatch!"

A movement of the hatch cover on the other vessel indicated that someone was about to appear on deck. Slowly a figure stepped forth.

The stranger was of medium build, and wore a suit of blue with a round hat to

match. He was carefully dressed. After taking a long survey of the group on the deck of the false "U-13," he waved a hand in welcome.

"He wants us to come over and pay him a visit!" stated Jimmie.

"Why don't you accept, then?" inquired Ned. "We're into it now and may as well be sociable. Being balky won't help matters any!"

"I would if we had a boat," announced the other.

"Maybe the real 'U-13' there has a boat they'd spare," suggested Jack. "Why don't you hail and ask him if he won't send a boat?"

"Hail him yourself if you want to! Maybe he don't talk English!"

"Try him on United States then!" laughed Jack. "I would!"

"Help yourself!" said Jimmie, leaning back against the rail.

"Ahoy the submarine!" shouted Jack in response to this suggestion. "We haven't a boat or we'd come over. Can you send a boat to us?"

Waving an arm as if comprehending the lad's statement and inquiry the figure on the other vessel clambered quickly to the after deck. After a moment's fumbling at what appeared to be a lock, he lifted a cover. In a short time the boys saw him drag from its place a small, light, steel boat.

This was at once launched over the side. Running out upon a light iron ladder the man dropped into the rowboat. He sculled the small craft quickly over the intervening distance and was soon alongside.

"Come aboard, sir," invited Ned, reaching out a hand to assist.

"Good night!" ejaculated Jimmie. "How did you ever get here so quickly, Mackinder? We thought you were aboard that warship!"

"I've been here a long time!" laughed the other, looking at the lad.

"You've made a quick trip, all right!" returned Jimmie.

The others crowded forward with eager, questioning looks. Upon the face of each was to be seen amazement, wonder and perplexity.

"Come aboard, Mackinder," invited Ned. "We'd like to hear an explanation of the strange goings on hereabouts. Can you help us?"

"First, I'd like to hear your explanations," stated the newcomer. "But before you start your story, please tell me why you call me Mackinder."

“Isn’t that your name?” asked Jimmie. “Tell us that!”

“Yes, that’s my name, you know!” replied the stranger, smilingly. “But how did you happen to know it? I’m rather puzzled, you know!”

“Why, you told us yourself on the train running into Amsterdam!” stated Jimmie, with rising indignation. “Then we called you by that name while you were trying to delay our start. Also Captain von Kluck used that name when he referred to you. I guess it’s your name all right!”

“I don’t deny that!” stated the newcomer. “What puzzles me is how you chaps know it so quickly, don’t you know.”

“It don’t make much difference how we know the name so quickly,” went on Jimmie. “We’d know you anywhere we saw you. We’d especially recognize that hand with the scar! That’s a dead giveaway!”

The newcomer glanced quickly at his right hand, which Jimmie had indicated. As he brought it up to view, the boys could see a jagged scar running clear across the back. They had seen such a scar before.

With an accusing finger pointing at the disfigurement, Jimmie snapped out in crisp accents that indicated plainly his excitement:

“That’s the same hand that tied and gagged me in the warehouse in Amsterdam, and the same hand that I saw shoved into the window of the frontier hut to get the ‘U-13’ package. Deny it if you can!”

“I am not going to deny anything, you know!” returned the other coolly. “You seem so positive about it there’s little use denying!”

“You bet there’s no use denying anything like that!” declared Jimmie with some heat. “You can’t deny that you tried to sic the German torpedo boat destroyer onto us, either. You can’t deny that you sneaked away from this very submarine when I was painting the name on the bow. You’d better not try to deny that you showed us to the British gunboat a while ago and got them to fire at us. If you start denying anything,” the boy went on, “I’m going to deny that I’m neutral!”

With a laugh the newcomer threw back his head in amused fashion.

“Have your own way about it, you know,” he replied, “but I’m going to tell you one thing. I’m not Mackinder!”

CHAPTER XX

A MYSTERIOUS CRAFT

The surprise of the lads at this declaration of their visitor was profound. They stared at the stranger who bore such a striking resemblance to Mackinder and who had just declared that he was not that person. Speechless at the apparent untruth, they could only stare.

Seeing their looks of astonishment at his declaration, the man laughed loudly, apparently enjoying hugely the joke that the boys could not see. Supporting himself against the rail, he gave vent to peals of merriment at the expense of the five young lads.

“So you don’t believe me, eh?” he inquired at length, controlling himself with an effort. “I can’t blame you, don’t you know!”

“Say, Mackinder, you ought to be in vaudeville!” declared Jimmie in reply. “For a lightning change artist, you’re decidedly it!”

“Thank you!” acknowledged Mackinder, choosing to accept the boy’s words as a compliment. “You’re almost too kind, don’t you know!”

“And then,” the boy went on, “as a monologue artist, you’d certainly have them all backed off the boards. I know a place in New York where you could draw down your two fifty per without half trying!”

“An engagement, do you mean?” queried the man, with interest.

“Just that!” stated Jimmie. “And then, there’s another place up the Hudson a ways where you ought to be making little ones out of big ones. They give a fellow a long engagement there and supply costumes!”

“All of which means that you’re spoofing me a bit, don’t you know!” returned their visitor without resentment. He was apparently enjoying the situation hugely, and meant to make the most of it.

Seeing that his words failed to arouse or draw out the other, Jimmie turned

disgustedly away to lean over the rail.

Ned began to question their guest, but was interrupted by Jimmie, who announced that he saw a steamer's smoke on the horizon.

"This water is quite thickly sprinkled with vessels of all sorts," said the alleged Mackinder. "Perhaps we'd better get out, you know!"

"What do you make that vessel out to be?" asked Ned.

"It doesn't make any difference what it is," replied the other, "we shall be better off if they don't find us! We don't need them!"

"Very well," put in Jimmie, "then we'll get up steam on this wagon and slide along. I'm going to say this to you, though, that Mackinder or no Mackinder, we're very grateful for your help. If we get an opportunity to reciprocate, we'll be only too glad to do it!"

With this, the boy turned and offered his hand to the man. It was grasped with a hearty grip that conveyed a sense of friendliness.

"You can help me right now," was the response. "Come aboard my vessel and give me a hand on a little project I have under way."

"I don't think we'd better do that right now," stated Jimmie. "You see, we're neutral, and we don't want to take sides either way!"

"So am I neutral! I care nothing for this awful war except to see it stop. I shall do nothing for either side, so rest easy on that score. But your propellor is broken by having that line jammed in it. You cannot navigate your vessel, and would better come aboard mine!"

Doubting this statement, Jimmie clambered into the small boat and sculled toward the stern of the false "U-13". There he could look into the water to a depth sufficient to confirm the other's statement.

"It's no use, boys," he declared, returning to the conning tower. "The blades of the propellor are damaged beyond use. We might as well go!"

Securing a line to the bow of the false "U-13" the man proposed to tow it to a safe place where it could be anchored to await repairs. Two trips were necessary to transfer the boys to the craft which had been of such signal service in their hour of extreme need.

Led by their recent guest, who was now their host, the lads descended into the interior of the vessel. Here a strange sight met their gaze. In cages canaries were

twittering gaily while all about the bulkheads had been fastened pots of plants, some of which were in bloom.

“Now I understand why the air you so kindly pumped into our vessel had the odor of flowers and growing things!” declared Ned as he turned to their host. “You have things fixed pretty cozy here!”

“Just a touch now and again to make it look home-like!” said the man. “I prefer the sight of a flower to that of a cold steel bulkhead. Besides, it’s more healthful to have a few plants about.”

Harry was lost in admiration of the machinery which he declared to be far superior to that of the vessel they had lately abandoned.

With a touch their strange host sent the craft forward at a good speed. He explained to the lads a gyroscope arrangement by which he controlled the steering gear that kept the vessel on any chosen course and at any desired depth after once being adjusted.

“And now, if you please, Mr. Mackinder,” questioned Jimmie at length, “will you be so good as to tell us what your mission may be?”

“Certainly!” replied the other frankly. “I see the steamer is not following us so I will take plenty of time to give you details.”

“Thanks!” drily responded the lad. “We’ll appreciate it!”

With a laugh the man seated himself on a locker and motioned the lads to do likewise. They listened intently as he proceeded:

“You perhaps all realize that the possession of wealth is the desire of almost every human being. I am not different from the rest in that respect at least. Owing to some family trouble which I shall not at this time detail, I was not given the advantages that accrue ordinarily to heirs. I think you will understand what I mean?”

“You were left out in the cold when they passed the dough?” asked Jimmie with a knowing look. “Just shoved one side?”

“That’s about it!” replied the man. “But I resolved to get some money, nevertheless. I had a fertile imagination, some education and a very small amount of money. I did not want to take so cheap a way as to rob or cheat my fellow men. I was not shrewd enough to enter the business world. Therefore, I turned my attention to lost or buried treasure.”

Jimmie delivered a broad wink toward Ned. It was not lost by their observant entertainer, who laughed much to the boy's confusion.

"Amongst other inventions that were in my brain was an instrument for detecting the presence of gold similar to the instrument called a compass. In this instance electricity had nothing to do with its action.

"To make a long story short, you know, I finally succeeded in perfecting the arrangement. It was an amusing circumstance that I had a very hard struggle preserving my last gold piece with which to test the device," he went on with a laugh at the recollection of his trials.

"At last, I thought I had my instrument perfected. I next needed only something on which to practice. With my precious treasure carefully guarded I succeeded in reaching the Gulf of Mexico, where it is said so much pirate gold has been buried. Wonderful to relate, I actually located and recovered a small amount. It was not large but helped me to fit out a vessel in which to make other cruises."

"And it really worked?" inquired Jimmie in a tone of unbelief.

"How well I shall presently demonstrate, you know," was the reply. "But I found that the crew was tricky. They helped me get a treasure aboard then calmly turned pirates themselves and ran away with the treasure. For nearly a year I had hard luck. Then I succeeded in locating a large sum of gold that had been buried by a man's grandfather.

"My past experiences had taught me that I could not trust anyone. Therefore I determined to prosecute my search in other channels.

"Piece by piece in different shops I had this vessel constructed after my own designs. The pieces were assembled in a part of the Gulf of Mexico little frequented. There I tried out the undersea boat, named it the 'U-13'—the 'U' standing for Undersea and the '13' in defiance of the popular superstition. But I found a new difficulty.

"The instrument, although working perfectly on land, was not reliable under the ocean, for as you know there is a large amount of suspended gold in sea water. That made the instrument unreliable."

"What did you want to go under water for, anyway?" asked Ned.

"Gold!" was the curt reply. "So I had to construct another device that would neutralize the local attraction of the sea water just on the same principle that the mariner has the two iron balls near his compass to overcome the local attraction

on his vessel.

“Then I was prepared to pursue my quest for treasure undisturbed. My first venture was the recovery of a large sum from a sunken ship in Havana harbor. This provided me sufficient funds so that I put stores aboard and came across to seek for the vessels of the Spanish Armada.”

“How did you get across the Atlantic?” asked Jimmie incredulously.

“In this vessel!” was the reply. “And most of the way under water, too, you know! I didn’t want anyone to see me!”

“But you had to come up once in a while to get air!”

“Oh, no! Here is a contrivance,” indicating a huge box-like affair, “with which I separate the oxygen from the hydrogen by electricity. Water, as you know, is composed of two gases—oxygen and hydrogen. Two atoms of hydrogen combined with one atom of oxygen and make a tiny bit of water. By the aid of this special device I segregate the two gases, use the oxygen and discharge the hydrogen overboard.”

“I’m going to take my hat off to you!” declared Jimmie. “But you had to have some means to prevent discomfort from the storage batteries!”

“Not with these!” smiled the other. “I’m using, without permission, of course, a new storage battery that does away with the lead-sulphuric acid type of battery. The inventor is a man whose name is familiar to you all. He uses a nickel, iron oxide and steel combination in a solution of potash. This battery, instead of causing inflammation or even proving deadly as is the case with the old type, is actually a benefit to a person. It is exactly opposite in its effect to the old style.”

“And you manage to make a cruise of days and days under water?”

“Surely!” smiled their host. “There’s nothing to prevent it!”

“That’s going some!” declared Jimmie. “But I don’t believe you managed to dig up a lot of gold from the bottom of the ocean!”

“What is there to hinder?” questioned the other.

“Everything!” declared Jimmie. “In the first place there is all the water about. Then, too, it would be easier to take this instrument into the regions where gold is usually discovered on land. You could prospect with it in almost the positive knowledge that you would locate a vein. Digging then would be easy.”

“Yes, but I don’t like to dig!” laughed the other. “Perhaps I’m too lazy to do that

sort of thing!”

“There’s something queer here that I don’t quite get,” stated Jimmie. “Can’t you explain a little more in detail?”

“Why, certainly, I’ll be glad to elucidate!” was the answer. “You have in mind the securing of free gold in nuggets and dust. I go about it in quite another way. My purpose is to recover the minted coins that have been placed aboard ships. When the ships sink, no diver yet has been able to reach those in deep water. Therefore, most of the gold that has been carried to the bottom in sunken vessels is forever lost. I intend to recover a great deal of it!”

“Then when you know approximately where the vessel was wrecked or sunk,” put in Ned, “you go to that neighborhood. Your instrument indicates the presence of gold and you follow its directions until the exact spot is reached. Then you step out and carry the money aboard your own craft. Is that the correct explanation?”

“You have it exactly. And I have done pretty well so far!”

“I don’t believe it!” declared Jimmie flatly. “The whole thing sounds mighty fishy—not meaning any disrespect,” he added addressing the man who sat leaning back against a bulkhead.

“But I assure you that what I have said is absolutely true!”

“I’m from Missouri!” stated Jimmie in a tone of doubt.

Their host stepped to a locker which he opened.

“Great Frozen Hot Boxes!” cried Jimmie.

CHAPTER XXI

A MYSTERY EXPLAINED

“Why, boys, look at this!” cried Jimmie, his voice rising to a shriek then trailing off into a whisper. “Did you ever see the like?”

“Let’s see!” put in Frank, crowding forward. “What is it?”

Eagerly the boys gathered around the open compartment. They heard distinctly the tinkle of coins as Jimmie seized a handful and let them slip one by one back into place. Again and again the boy dived his hands into the yellow mass of metal. He raised handfuls of coin to look at them a moment, then let them drop from his grasp.

“Good Night!” he ejaculated at length, turning a round-eyed face to the man who stood smiling beside the group. “Why, you must have enough here to buy a farm and build a fence clear around it!”

“Quite likely I have!” declared the other quietly. “But there are two or three other wrecked vessels that I wish to visit before I stop. I have the exact locations charted and have examined the interiors.”

“Why didn’t you take the gold away with you, then?”

“For the very simple reason that I found one pair of hands not enough to perform the task. I could have taken the gold away from the sunken wrecks, but the matter of getting it ashore was another thing!”

“Why, what’s to prevent?” asked Ned wonderingly.

“Several things!” declared the other. “In the first place the peculiar phase of human nature that makes every man mad when he sees a lot of money would operate against my plan of taking the gold ashore. Who could I hire to move the heavy stuff with any assurance of their honesty if they once found out what might be in the packages?”

“That’s so!” admitted Ned thoughtfully. “Human nature is crooked!”

“My plan has been to find some one who needs the money and who would work on a percentage basis—share and share alike. We can then get the money ashore, negotiate the older coins that possess more than their face value, bank the current coins and be prepared to use the wealth exactly as we see fit. So long as it remains under water it is safe.”

“But I can’t understand how you get it aboard!” declared Jimmie.

“I have a tank of compressed air fixed to the back of a special diving suit,” explained the man. “There’s also a search light and a small storage battery provided. In this suit I step out through the air lock onto the wreck. The rest is easy. I return with the load of gold the same way I went out. The submarine is anchored. The whole thing is simple!”

“Sure enough!” exclaimed Jimmie. “Why didn’t I remember our arrangement on the Sea Lion? And then, too, we saw you walking about on the decks of the Wanderer! I guess I’m going daffy!”

“What do you say, boys, will you join the expedition?”

“We don’t stand much chance of getting home right away,” stated Ned. “I guess we might as well—” what he would say was cut short by the sound of a cannon shot booming through the gathering darkness.

“What’s that?” inquired Jack anxiously, jumping to his feet.

“I’ll bet it’s that bloomin’ steamer we saw!” cried Jimmie. “That must be another of those gun boats and they’re chasing us!”

“I’ll go up to the deck and see!” offered Ned.

“Be careful, don’t let them get you!” warned Jack.

“I’ll watch out for that,” laughed Ned, mounting the iron ladder.

Directly the little group at the foot of the ladder were startled to hear their companion’s voice. A note of anxiety vibrated through his words.

“Boys,” Ned cried, “there’s a gunboat out there, and I think I see another submarine. It looks to be like the ‘U-13’ for all the world. What shall we do?”

“Here,” urged Jimmie, “take the glasses and have a good look. If it is that Dutchman, I’m for beating it out of here mighty quick!”

For a tense moment Ned gazed through the glasses at the strange vessels. At length he lowered the binoculars and turned toward his companions. With a shake of his head and a quick indrawing of breath, he said:

“It’s the ‘U-13’ as sure as can be!”

“Let’s go!” was Jimmie’s only comment as he turned toward the switchboard with outstretched hand.

“I’m with you!” declared Ned, quickly descending the ladder to join the group. “Go ahead slow, though. Don’t break the hawser, or we’d lose the other vessel.”

“Perhaps we would do better to abandon your vessel,” Mackinder suggested as he prepared to go on deck. “Let me have the glasses, if you please. I’ll look them over.”

Jimmie paused, with his hand on the starting switch.

Suddenly all were startled by a cry from their host.

“Go ahead! go ahead!” he shouted down the hatchway. “That other fellow has launched a torpedo at us!”

“Let go the line, then!” urged Ned. “We’ll have to run for it! Full speed, Jimmie!” he added.

Mackinder was casting off the hawser with rapid motions. Jimmie, in response to Ned’s command, threw the switch over. The “U-13” began to gather headway.

All were startled to hear the report of a cannon shot. This was followed almost instantly by a shriek from the man on deck.

“Mackinder’s hit!” gasped Ned, turning a blanched face to his chums. “What shall we do?”

As if in answer to his query, the voice of Mackinder reached the ears of the lads.

“Bring an axe!” he shouted. “I’m fast in the bight!”

Wrenching an axe from its pocket on the bulkhead, Ned sprang up the ladder at his best speed. On deck he found Mackinder caught in a bight of the hawser by which the other vessel had been towed. His leg was jammed against the fairleader. Only one glance was required to show the boy that serious injury had been done.

Without waiting for words, the lad stepped to the side of the fallen man. Swinging his axe quickly, he struck at the taut bond of hemp. A shower of sparks followed the ringing thud of the axe upon the steel deck.

Mackinder dropped back upon the deck, limp and helpless, as the singing of the parted line told of his release.

With tender solicitude the boys mounted the ladder to assist their injured friend to the room below. Scarcely had the boys gained the deck when they were startled by a terrific explosion. As Ned afterward declared, it seemed as if they had been caught in a volcano of water.

“What has happened?” queried Jack, releasing his hold upon Mackinder.

A flood of sea water descending upon the little deck prevented an answer to his question. In a moment the lads were able to look about.

“Where’s our ‘U-13’?” asked Harry.

“Gone!” stated Ned, his voice trembling. “I’ll bet that German torpedoed it! I’m glad we are on this ‘U-13’!”

Echoing this sentiment, the lads hastily proceeded to lower Mackinder through the hatchway. This done, the injured man was deposited on a couch, the hatch was closed, and Ned began first-aid ministrations.

“What course shall I hold?” asked Jimmie.

“Better head on a southwest course,” stated Ned, briefly glancing up from his work over Mackinder’s leg.

“I can do that all right,” responded Jimmie. “The gunboat and the submarine can fight it out alone.”

“We’ve got a clear field, Jimmie, so shove the little wagon along for all she’s worth,” put in Jack.

Mackinder had been exercising wonderful command of himself, but in spite of his best efforts a groan now and again escaped. The injured leg was proving a painful matter.

“We’ll do all we can for you, Mackinder,” Ned offered, “but we need better skill than is available here. Would it not be best to make at once for some port where we can secure the services of a surgeon?”

Mackinder’s only reply was a nod. His teeth were closed tightly to suppress the cry of anguish from his hurt.

“Keep on the surface, boys,” urged Ned as he went about making the man comfortable with such simple means as were at hand. “I believe we are not far from the coast.”

Surrendering the wheel to Frank, and with Jack at the engines, Jimmie insisted upon mounting to the deck again to look about them.

Cool and sweet the air gushed down the little open hatchway upon the injured man. Under its influence and aided by the ministrations of Ned, the proprietor of the third “U-13” rapidly gained control of himself.

“Head west southwest,” he instructed Ned. “We’ll be mighty apt to find the mouth of the Thames on that course. There are many places I’d rather go, but you are right—we must have a surgeon!”

Giving the course to Harry, Ned proceeded to do everything in his power to ease the hurt of their friend.

“On deck, there!” announced Jimmie presently, his face at the hatchway.

“Hello!” answered Ned. “What is it?”

“I see a light about a point off the port bow!”

“What do you make it out to be?”

“I think it is a lighthouse!” declared Jimmie.

“Margate!” murmured Mackinder. “We are safe enough now, but be careful about the money, boys!”

“Sail ho!” rang out Jimmie’s voice again.

CHAPTER XXII

MORE MYSTERY

“What do you see now, Jimmie?” asked Ned anxiously, stepping to the foot of the ladder.

“There’s a small steamer coming up rapidly from the starboard side,” replied the lookout.

“Perhaps we’d better dive again,” suggested Ned.

“Aw, go on!” protested Jimmie. “What’s the use of diving every time anything comes along? We’re neutral!”

“We are, yes,” agreed Ned, “but this ‘U-13’ name is not neutral, and if the steamer is an English vessel they’ll probably not stop to ask questions.”

“Why not swing a white light at ’em, then?”

“That’s a good idea, too!” agreed Ned. “If they seem to be heading toward us, just get a white flag going.”

“They are not showing any light at all,” announced Jimmie. “They’re just sneaking along like an express train.”

“Let us know at once if anything happens,” Ned responded, turning back to his patient.

The boys had not long to wait.

Out of the gathering darkness Jimmie saw a burst of flame which lighted up a portion of the approaching steamer. A bright flash in a wave some distance in advance of the “U-13” next attracted his attention. The sharp roar of a cannon came to the ears of all.

“Are they shooting at us?” asked Ned, again approaching the ladder.

“Don’t know!” Jimmie replied briefly. “I saw the flash and heard the noise. There was a splash some distance ahead of us in the water. Maybe they can’t aim

straight.”

Ned mounted the rungs of the ladder without further delay. He closed his eyes as he did so, the better to accommodate his vision to the change from the light below to the darkness outside. In a moment he was peering in the direction indicated by Jimmie.

“Can you make her out?”

“Yes,” replied Ned. “I can just see a sort of thick place in the darkness. My eyes will be all right soon.”

“I don’t believe they were shooting at us at all!” commented Jimmie, musingly. “They can’t see us!”

As if to disprove this statement, another flash lighted up the forward portion of the other vessel.

Ned grasped Jimmie’s arm and pointed straight ahead.

Skiping from wave to wave, throwing up a fountain of spray from each, the shot from the steamer plowed its way across the path of the “U-13,” passing so close that the boys were struck by the flying drops of water.

“That means that we are to stop!” declared Ned. “Next time they’ll shoot *at* us!”

“And hit us, too!” excitedly put in the other.

Without waiting for orders from Ned, the lad leaned over the coaming of the little hatch.

“Shut her off, Jack!” he cried. “Back on your engines. That guy thinks we are Germans!”

Jack at once complied with the request, and soon the “U-13” was gently rolling in the trough of the sea.

Frank sprang from the wheel to the ladder, mounting to the deck just as a beam of flame from a powerful searchlight aboard the steamer swept the “U-13” from end to end.

In the glare of the light the three boys stood plainly visible. They could not, however, distinguish the details of the other vessel because of the flaming eye regarding them with unwinking stare.

For a few moments they stood close to each other, uncertain what to do. At length a voice hailed them.

“Submarine, ahoy! What vessel is that?”

“Shall I tell them our name?” asked Ned anxiously.

“No,” urged Jimmie. “Don’t say ‘U-13’!”

“They’ve seen it on the side, anyhow!” scorned Frank.

“Don’t let them think we’re Germans. Don’t you see they’re English?” queried Jimmie.

“It doesn’t signify they’re English, even if they do speak the language,” returned Ned. “Can’t you answer?”

“Ahoy, there!” came an impatient voice.

“Steamer, ahoy!” replied Ned. “We’re a peaceful submarine manned by neutral noncombatants!”

“A likely yarn, indeed!” laughed the stranger. “Stand by to receive a boat. I shall send an officer aboard to investigate.”

“All right, Captain,” consented Ned. “Glad to meet you!”

Still standing under the unwinking eye of the searchlight, the little group waited expectantly for the arrival of the boarding party.

A splash of oars preceded the boat which soon shot out of the darkness.

In another moment an officer in uniform had mounted the little deck. Wonderingly he glanced about the group, now augmented by the arrival of Jack and Harry.

“Where is your commander?” he inquired somewhat stiffly, addressing no one in particular.

Indicating Ned, the boys silently waited.

“Are you in charge of this vessel?” asked the officer, with just a trace of amusement.

“I am and I am not,” replied Ned, with dignity.

“That’s very enlightening, I’m sure,” returned the other. “But time is short, and I must see the person who is in charge, and that at once.”

“The owner is lying in the cabin with a broken leg which he received as we were escaping from a German submarine,” explained Ned. “We boys are trying to get to some port where we can secure the services of a surgeon.”

“Oh,” exclaimed the officer, “escaping from a German?”

“Yes, sir. They torpedoed another submarine that we were towing, and in casting off the towing line the gentleman below was caught in the line. His leg is badly broken.”

“Who is this other person?”

“He gave us the name of Mackinder.”

A frown settled over the face of their questioner. Stepping forward, with flashing eyes he addressed Ned in a low voice vibrant with emotion.

“Now, if you have all the lies out of your system,” he gritted, “we’ll listen to the real story.”

“That is the real story!” protested Ned. “Step below, if you don’t believe me, and you may see for yourself.”

“We have already seen enough to discredit such a wild yarn as that!” declared the other. “Too many of our brave sailors have been killed and set adrift by the ‘U-13.’ Besides, the man you mention is certainly not in the cabin. I can swear to that. Now, will you tell me the truth?”

“I say, Mister,” put in Jimmie, “suppose you go fifty-fifty with us. Who are you, and what right have you to stop us?”

A short laugh was the man’s only answer. He turned to hail the vessel from which he had just come.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MYSTERY OF THE "U-13"

"Ahoy!" his hail rang out over the waters. "Send another boat aboard us. I will transfer the crew of this vessel!"

"Yes, you will!" scornfully replied Jimmie. "You'll do a lot, you will. We have something to say about that!"

"I am more astonished than I can say," the officer replied as he gazed at the lad. "I had supposed that Boy Scouts would not under any circumstances lend themselves to a project of an unworthy character."

"Well, who has done all that?" bristled Jimmie, wrinkling a freckled nose at the man. "You're taking a lot for granted, I must say! Who are you, anyhow?"

"You'll find out quickly enough!" was the answer.

Turning at the sound of approaching oars, the officer quickly issued a few short commands.

In obedience to his orders, the boys were required to enter the small boat without even an opportunity of going below.

"Dodson," ordered the officer, "take a couple of men and search the vessel for others. We were informed there were but five, but they may have confederates."

Wonderingly the lads sat in the boat as they were rowed across the intervening distance to the steamer. Scarcely had they set foot on deck before a line was passed to the submarine and the vessel was under way, towing their recent habitation.

An orderly conducted the lads directly to the cabin, where they were greeted by an officer seated at the head of a table. He arose as they entered and extended a hand to each.

Motioning to seats, the officer again busied himself with some papers on the

table. For some time the boys glanced expectantly at each other, waiting for the officer to open the anticipated conversation.

Impatiently the boys waited, listening to the regular throbbing of the steamer's propellers that told they were again under way.

At length the silence was broken by the arrival of an orderly. Saluting, he reported briefly to the officer. A nod dismissed him.

"Boys," began the officer in a kindly tone, "we find ourselves rather puzzled by some mysterious circumstances which we hope you can explain. Will you assist us?"

"I assume from the looks of things aboard that you are English," answered Ned. "Am I correct?"

"You are. This is a scout vessel doing patrol duty along the coast. In common with others, we have been on the sharp lookout for a submarine named 'U-13,' which has been doing considerable damage to our shipping. We capture it without difficulty, to find it manned by Boy Scouts instead of Germans, as we had expected. Can you explain that?"

"Yes!" laughed Ned. "That is easy. The boat you have captured is owned by a private individual named Mackinder, who has been amusing himself in a perfectly innocent pastime. He, like ourselves, is neutral, but unfortunately has gotten into rather compromising situations."

"Mackinder?" repeated the officer, wonderingly.

"Yes, sir," continued Ned. "He rescued us from our disabled submarine. He is now aboard his vessel with a broken leg."

"We had him brought aboard this vessel, and find that his leg is really broken," explained the officer. "But," he continued, "you have not quite explained your presence on a submarine."

"That is easy—" began Ned. He was interrupted by a sign from the officer.

"Just a moment," the other said. "We will have Mackinder in here, and perhaps he can explain a little of the mystery himself."

At a command from the man two orderlies approached. In a few moments the boys observed four sailors bearing a mattress upon which lay their late host.

At the same moment a group approached from the after part of the cabin. Glancing from one group to the other, the boys rose to their feet with

exclamations of surprise.

“Well, Great Frozen Hot Boxes!” cried Jimmie. “How did you get here, Mackinder?”

A man from the small group behind the officer stepped forward, smiling.

“I was picked up by the fishing boat you probably saw when I swam away from the submarine you captured. They transferred me to this craft. We have since been looking for you.”

“Well, I’m glad to see you, anyway,” returned the lad. “But you couldn’t prevent our leaving Holland, even if you did try good and hard. Have you found that package yet?”

The smile quickly faded from the face of the other.

“No, I haven’t,” he answered in a low voice. “I find that you boys have gotten me into a lot of trouble, too.”

“Trouble?” puzzled Ned. “How have we done that?”

“By secreting that package,” explained Mackinder. “You see, I was detailed to duty on the Holland frontier. When I saw that package, and knew that you had recently come from the German lines, I assumed, of course, that it contained information for the German submarine that has been causing so much havoc amongst the English shipping. Without waiting for orders, I tried to follow you and gain possession of the object. Now it seems I am disobeying regulations by absenting myself from my post of duty without leave. Further, I was seen aboard or coming from a German vessel. Hence circumstances look bad for me. I’m due for a court martial as soon as we land at Margate, which must be close aboard by now.”

All were startled to hear a groan escape the man lying upon the mattress. He had raised himself upon one elbow.

“Oh, Robert!” he cried. “Not that!”

“Tom!” gasped Mackinder. Soon the two men were shaking hands at a great rate, tears in their eyes.

“Boys,” Mackinder announced at length, “I must introduce my brother Tom.”

“We have had the pleasure of meeting the gentleman,” stated Ned. “In fact, we owe our lives to his kindness.”

“But, see here,” demanded Jimmie, stepping forward, “this needs an explanation.

Which one of you fellows was at the little cabin on the Holland border?"

Tom Mackinder smiled, in spite of the pain of his crushed leg. He turned his glance toward his brother, whose hand he held.

"We both were there, Jimmie," he said. "I took the package from the window. You see," he continued, "it contained plans of my submarine, with which you are familiar. I tried to sell the plans to Germany, but found they had beaten me. So upon my return trip I slipped the package into your baggage, thinking to escape search and detention at the border. I have it here now."

As he ceased speaking he drew from his pocket the same flat package the boys had seen before.

"Hurrah!" cried Jimmie. "Now we can explain how your brother came to be captured by the Germans, and how under his direction we stole the other 'U-13' and escaped from Helgoland."

"If what you say is true, young man," put in the officer, "the anticipated court martial may never convene."

"We can prove it!" protested Jimmie vigorously.

"Then we have solved the Mystery of the 'U-13'!" declared the officer, with evident relief.

"And now we'll head for the little old U. S. A. and peaceful neutrality!" was Jimmie's joyful comment.

"But you'll first arrange to care for your share of the cargo aboard my boat," interposed the injured Mackinder.

He would not entertain any of the objections raised by the boys, but insisted that they share in the treasure which had been recovered from the ocean's grasp.

A few days later as the boys watched the chalk cliffs of Dover slip away into the eastern horizon Jimmie turned from the rail of the steamer upon which they had taken passage.

"Good by, England, and good by the Mackinders," he said. "I'm glad we are out of the war zone at last and that we solved the Mystery of the 'U-13'."

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