

The
BOY VOLUNTEERS
WITH THE SUBMARINE FLEET



KENNETH WARD



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Kenneth Ward

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By KENNETH WARD

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Frontispiece: An Explosion followed...

An explosion followed that seemed to tear everything to pieces.[ToList](#)

THE BOY VOLUNTEERS

WITH THE
SUBMARINE FLEET

BY

KENNETH WARD

**THE NEW YORK BOOK COMPANY
NEW YORK**

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THE BOY VOLUNTEERS WITH THE SUBMARINE FLEET



CHAPTER I

THE OMINOUS WARNING ON SHIPBOARD

"Submarine two points to starboard, sir!" shouted a voice.

Instantly there was confusion; the captain sprang from the end of the bridge to the board behind the quartermaster and pushed a lever to the right.

"Ralph, come out quickly; the second officer has just shouted to the captain that a submarine is in sight," said Alfred, as he rushed into the reading room where Ralph was deeply engrossed in a book.

Ralph needed no second warning. Together with a dozen or more, who were in the room, he sprang to the door, and followed Alfred, who was now nearing the bridge.

"Can you see it?" asked Ralph excitedly.

"No; but they are pointing to the right; it seems as though we are turning around," responded Alfred.

"So we are," said Ralph. "There! what is that?" shouted Ralph, as he followed the direction pointed out by the second officer.

The captain gave another wrench to the wheel, and the ship straightened out on its course. All eyes were now directed to a point to the right, and astern, for the boat had described a half circle.

"Wait till I get the glasses," said Alfred, as he dived for the main companionway, and slid down the railing.

He was back in record time, followed by his father and mother, accompanied by Ralph's mother. Needless to say all were agitated, for they had been told on the morning of sailing that the trip might be a dangerous one, and it was only urgent business necessity that compelled Mr. Elton to take the risk.

"I can see something away back there, just like a trail of foam. I wonder whether that's what they are so excited about on the bridge?" questioned Alfred, as he lowered the glasses, and glanced up at the officers who were vigorously discussing the situation.

"Let me look," said Ralph, reaching for the glasses. He was silent for a few

moments, then, handing the glasses to Mr. Elton, he continued: "There is something coming; see if you can make it out."

Mr. Elton gazed intently, and turned to his wife, as he said: "I am afraid that is a torpedo on the way now."

Nevertheless, he made the remark quietly; those around heard the warning, and the boys glanced at the bridge. The captain again moved the wheel, and the ship swerved.

"It is a torpedo," shouted Ralph. Every one leaned over the ship's side and waited, some with terror on their faces, others pale but calm. Two or three rushed for the companionway, and several fainted.

"It's going to miss! It's going to miss!" shouted Alfred. He turned around and waved his cap to the officers on the bridge, but they were too intent watching the submarine to notice the salutation. It was evident, however, from their actions that they had no immediate fear.

It was with a thrill that the two hundred passengers, who were lined up on the port side of the steamship, saw a foamy trail, one hundred feet distant, pass alongside their vessel, and disappear in the distance, far ahead.

"There comes another one," said a voice.

It was easy to distinguish the second peril, and it seemed to come straight and true. The ship veered slightly from its course, and breathlessly the passengers watched the trail. On, on it came. The vessel again slightly changed its course, and this time the torpedo went wide of the mark.

"Now, for the next one," said Alfred.

"Ah! we are now too far ahead, and going too fast for them. Even if the submarine comes to the surface it cannot possibly catch us," said the navigating officer, who passed along and quieted the anxious ones.

Thus, for the time being, they escaped, but the vigilance was greater than ever. They would be in the danger zone for twelve hours more.



Two and a half years previous to this time, Mr. and Mrs. Elton, accompanied by their son Alfred, Mrs. Elton's sister, and her son Ralph, were traveling through Europe, and happened to be in Germany when war was declared. The boys, together with Mr. Elton's chauffeur, were on their way to Antwerp with

their car, and were pursued by the Germans as they were entering Belgium territory.

Their car was requisitioned by the Belgium government, and as the German forces entered Belgium south of Liege, they were cut off from reaching Antwerp. In the effort to make their way across the country the two boys met the Belgian forces, and were in the first battle, which was fought between the Germans and Belgians. They took part in the defense of Belgian territory with the Belgian forces, from Liege, to Louvain, Aerschott, and Malines, until the city of Antwerp was besieged, and were among the last to leave when the Belgians evacuated that place.

They were fortunate enough, however, to reach French territory with the bulk of the Belgian army, and arrived at Dunkirk, on the Channel, during that period when the British were sending over the first forces to resist the invasion of France.

The second day they visited the hangars where the British were setting up their aircraft and training the recruits for the aviation service. While approaching the grounds they were the witnesses of an accident to one of the flyers, who made a disastrous landing near them, and they were prompt enough to lift the machine from one of the men, which saved his life.

This incident was the changing point in their career, for they then determined to enter the aviation corps, if possible. Despite their efforts, they were not able to succeed, at this time, and as the father of Alfred had sent word to them to meet him in Paris, they regretfully worked their way to that city, only to learn, on arriving, that Mr. Elton was not permitted to leave Germany.

By an accidental circumstance they went to Bar-le-Duc, in eastern France, and visited the aviation grounds there. Having made themselves useful, they were favored with the privilege of making ascensions, and were instructed in the handling of the trial machines on the grounds.

On one occasion they were aloft with Lieutenant Guyon, who, owing to heart troubles, fainted while at a high altitude, and the boys brought the machine down safely. Thereafter, the lieutenant was their constant friend, and when the corps moved to Verdun they were regularly enrolled as members, and subsequently became engaged in many exciting flights. While on a scouting operation with their friend, several German machines appeared and a battle followed in which the machine was injured, and during the descent both boys were wounded.

The lieutenant was caught in the wreckage, as the machine finally plunged to

earth, and within a week died of his wounds. The boys were heart-broken at his death, and after a week at the base hospital were transferred to the American hospital in Paris. After recovery they were regularly discharged from the service, and started for home.

On their way to the Channel they became interested in the artillery branch and happened to take part in the first great French drive in the Somme region and later were with the British artillery when it began its great fight against the Germans in the region west of Bapaume.

It was there that Alfred's parents and Ralph's mother learned of their whereabouts, and, through the kindly offices of the American ambassador, were permitted to visit the battery where the boys were stationed, and where they finally prevailed upon them to accompany them home.

They sailed from Bordeaux early in the morning of the same day that the events took place which we have just related. On the day of sailing the thrilling news reached France that President Wilson had given the German minister his passports, and while such an act does not, ordinarily, mean war, the strained relations between the United States and Germany made it probable that war would follow.

As stated, Mr. Elton's business compelled him to sail, notwithstanding the danger, and they now found themselves within the danger zone prescribed by the German authorities, for, as they were sailing on a ship belonging to one of the belligerent nations, they knew that it was a prey for any submarine and subject to be sunk without warning.

Although instructions of a general nature had been issued by the captain after the vessel left port, he called the passengers together immediately after the excitement attending the appearance of the submarine had died away, and addressed them as follows:

"For the next twelve or fifteen hours we shall be in the danger zone, and it is imperative that each of you should at all times carry a life belt. I impress this on you not for the purpose of creating alarm, but because I know that people become careless. The officers will give full instructions to all of you as to the way the belts should be worn, so there will be no confusion at the last moment.

"And now, another thing, which you must remember. More lives are lost through undue excitement than from the real danger, in case of trouble. We are here for the purpose of giving due warning and assistance, and every man in the ship's crew will be faithful to his duty. Do not rush about and become excited,

because that unduly alarms those about you, I will give you ample warning. Five short blasts on the ship's whistle will call you to the boats. When you hear that go to your cabins quickly, seize such clothing as you have prepared for such an event, and if you have not strapped on the life belt do so at once.

"It should be the first duty of the men to aid the women and children, see that the belts are properly put on, and assist them to the deck. Once there, go as quickly as possible to the davits and await orders, for the officers and men will be there to direct and take charge of the passengers. Should the boat be so badly hit that it is impossible for all the passengers to get into the boat before the vessel goes down, the men must see to it that every one goes overboard and clears the ship's side.

"Many women will, even in this extremity, refuse to jump overboard without their husbands, but in such cases there must be no hesitancy on the part of the men. Do not argue, but push them overboard, and the life belts will hold them in position in the water until the waiting boats can rescue them. There will be no danger of drowning under those conditions, but be sure to jump as far from the vessel as possible."

It was not such a speech as tended to relieve nervousness, but it certainly made every one within hearing very thoughtful. Women, and men, as well, turned white, and many of them timidly examined the tiny life belts which were handed out.

"It seems that we get into trouble wherever we go," said Alfred, not in a spirit of alarm, however, but more because he felt a deep concern for his father and mother.

"Oh, Ralph, isn't this terrible!" said his mother, as she came forward.

"It certainly is; but this is something like the experiences we have had for over two years, and it doesn't make it seem so bad;—do you think so?" he added, addressing Alfred.

"I wouldn't be at all worried, Auntie," responded Alfred. "Here comes mother; I hope she is not broken up or worried."

"No," replied Mrs. Elton. "It is dreadful, but it is no worse for us than for others. I am glad the captain spoke as plainly as he did. We must understand and do our duty."

"Now, Mother, you and Auntie go to the ladies' room and stay there. If anything happens we will know where to find you," said Ralph.

"But I want you to come and stay with us," replied Mrs. Elton.

"We cannot do that," replied Alfred. "We have fine glasses and every one should be on the watch. It takes a great many eyes to see in all directions."

"Alfred is right," said Mr. Elton. "I will remain with you; but do not be alarmed for the present."

"Wait until I get my binoculars," said Ralph, as he rushed down to the cabin.

He was up at once, and together they ran forward to the bridge, as the second officer descended.

"Can we be of service to you in any way?" said Alfred, pointing to their glasses.

"Indeed, you can," said the officer.

At that moment the captain, leaning over the rail of the bridge, shouted: "Come up, boys; those are the right kind of weapons. We ought to have dozens more of the same kind."

The boys fairly stumbled up the steep, narrow ladder that led to the bridge.

"At your service," said Ralph.

The captain smiled, as he said: "Take positions at the end of the bridge."

The boys walked across to the other side, and Ralph elevated his glasses.

A moment later the captain, in his walk to and fro, stopped before the boys. "You have evidently had occasion to use the binoculars before, but probably not while at sea," he observed.

"No," replied Ralph; "we used them in flying machines and while serving in the artillery, but this is really the first opportunity we have had to use them on shipboard."

"Then a little instruction will be of service to you and to all of us," said the captain. "I noticed that you were sweeping the sea to the rear. That is not necessary, for at our speed a torpedo boat would not be able to catch us. All your time should be devoted to scanning that quadrant from straight ahead to a point but a little astern of your left quarter, as it is from that section, and the corresponding section on the right side of the vessel that we expect the enemy; do you understand what I mean?"

"I think so," replied Ralph. "But suppose a submarine should be well ahead of

us and submerge, and then wait until we have passed. In that case couldn't it again come up and send a torpedo into the stern of the ship?"

"That might be possible, but not probable. A submarine is absolutely in the dark when completely submerged," said the captain. "It must come to the surface sufficiently near to bring its periscope out of the water, and that would reveal its presence to us. It would be a pretty hard job for a navigator in a submarine to calculate when the boat had passed sufficiently near to know the opportune time to come to the surface and give us the shot."

"But couldn't they come near enough to take a chance? They might come up 500 feet away or 2,000. At either distance they could land a torpedo, couldn't they?" asked Alfred.

"Quite true; but the submarine might not know whether we were armed or not, and it would not take the risk of exposure in that reckless manner," replied the captain.

"But we are not armed, are we?" asked Ralph.

"No; our guns will be ready for us on the return trip," answered the captain. After a moment he continued: "Let me also give you a hint as to the particular manner of using the glasses to get a correct view. Do not attempt to take in the entire field at one sweep. Sight at a point near the ship, say at a distance of a quarter of a mile; then slowly raise the glasses so that your view grows more and more distant and finally the focal point reaches the horizon. Then turn a point to the right or to the left, and bring down the forward end of the glasses until the view is again concentrated on the point nearest the ship."

"That is something like making observations on a flying machine," replied Alfred, "only in that case the glass is held stationary, as the machine moves along, and in that way objects can be seen much better than by sweeping it around continuously. We learned that from Lieutenant Guyon."

"Quite true; I see you are well qualified to observe. But to continue: after you have thus made the first observation as I have explained, the glasses should be held horizontally to take in the view at the horizon, and then swept around at that angle to the right or to the left, depressing it at each swing. That is called sweeping the sea."

"I know two men who have glasses," said Ralph. "Shall I get them?"

"Yes, if you can; this is the kind of service which is appreciated," said the captain.

Ralph sprang down the ladder, and ran along the deck. He was absent for some time, but soon appeared with two men.

"Come on," said Ralph, as he ascended the ladder. The men hesitated for a moment, and followed, as an officer appeared and invited them to come up.



CHAPTER II

THE TORPEDOED SHIP

During the next hour or more every field glass on board ship was put into use, and many were the weary arms that used them until the luncheon hour arrived at one o'clock. The captain, knowing how trying the constant watching must be to civilians who are not used to this work, appointed two watches, so they might relieve each other every hour.

The boys went to the dining room, and as Mr. Elton and his family sat at the captain's table, the latter took occasion during the meal to refer to Ralph and Alfred's services on the bridge in commendatory terms, which was greatly appreciated by their parents.

"I am curious to know," said Ralph, "what the officer meant when he said 'two points to starboard.'"

"That is explained in this way," replied the captain. "The compass is divided into thirty-two points, or eight points in each quadrant."

"I remember you spoke about a quadrant when we were on the bridge. What is a quadrant?" asked Alfred.

"I should have said, in the beginning, that the compass is divided into four parts, one line running, we will say, east and west, and the other line north and south. In that way there are four cardinal points. You will understand, therefore, that from the north cardinal point to the east cardinal point, which represents one quadrant, are eight points, and so on, from the cardinal point east to south, are eight more points," responded the captain.

"Then when the officer said 'two points to starboard,' did he mean two points from one of the cardinal points?" asked Ralph.

"No, he had reference to two points from the line ahead, or for the time being, he took the line upon which we were traveling, as one of the cardinal lines, and when he said two points he described a line which was just one-fourth of the distance around the circle or quadrant to the east," answered the captain.

"Then we might say that the keel of the ship is one of the cardinal lines, and the bridge, which runs across the ship is the other line?" asked Alfred.

"That is a very homely and plain way of putting it," replied the captain.

An hour thereafter, while the boys were on the bridge, they noticed the first signs of excitement on the part of the officers. A message had been handed the captain a few moments before. Of course, all were curious to know the news it contained, but no one seemed to be bold enough to ask any questions.

The Points of the Compass

*The Points of the Compass*ToList

As the second watch appeared at the bridge the boys descended and rejoined their parents. A voice was heard outside summoning the passengers on deck. They were ranged along the deck house, and the second officer appeared.

"I wish to make an announcement, and give further instructions. In order that there may be no confusion, in the event the enemy should attack us and compel the passengers to take to the boats, I am going to assign places to all of you, so that the moment you hear the five bells you will know where to go, ready to man the boats. Now, notice the numbers on the boats, which you see are swung out on the davits ready to be launched. Be particular to note where your boat is located, and its number. When you come up the companionway from your cabin, fix in your mind whether your own boat is on the right or on the left side; some are liable to become confused in coming up.

"Boat No. 1; Mr. Elton, how many are in your party?"

"Five," was the answer.

"Then three more will be assigned; Mr. Wardlaw, wife and daughter; that will complete the first boat. No. 2," continued the officer, as he made the assignments. This was continued until the entire list was completed.

Four seamen were then designated for each of the boats, and the steward was directed to prepare emergency food for the different boats, and by direct orders the food was actually placed in the boats.

It was really with a sigh of relief from the suspense that the boys awaited the signal for their term of duty on the bridge. They were in their places instantly, and seized the glasses. It was now four o'clock in the afternoon. They were moving toward the setting sun. The sky was free of clouds and the ocean fairly smooth. It was an ideal sea for observation. The boys were on the port or left

side of the ship.

"Ralph," said Alfred under his breath, as he moved toward Ralph, and laid his hand on his arm, without lowering his glasses, "look over there! there!—two or three points,——"

"I see it,—yes,—Captain, what is that, a half-mile off to the left?" interrupted Ralph.

The captain shot a glance in the direction indicated. "Three points to port!" he said, as he sprang to the wheel and gave a signal to the engineer. As he came back to the point of observation, he said:

"Young eyes are very sharp. You have beaten the watch on the top mast."

The officer in charge of the telephone beckoned to the captain. The latter rushed over, and the boys saw him nod.

"How far are they from us?" asked Alfred.

"Two miles," was the answer.

"Two miles!" said Ralph in astonishment. "Why, I thought I was stretching it when I said a half mile."

"To be more exact, the range finder in the crow's nest makes the distance 10,980 feet," said the captain.

"Well, they can't hit us at that distance," said Ralph, "can they?"

"No; we can easily avoid that fellow, but he may have appeared as a ruse," said the captain, glancing to starboard, with an anxious air.

The first officer standing near, although intently watching the submarine in the distance, remarked: "It is now the custom for two or more of the undersea boats to operate in unison; the one we are now looking at may be a decoy."

"What do you mean by 'decoy'" asked Ralph, in astonishment. "Is it likely that they would expect us to steer right into them?"

The Submarine Decoy

The Submarine Decoy[ToList](#)

"No; their idea is to have one of the submarines show up in front, knowing that the intercepted vessel will turn to avoid it. Then the other submarine, with

nothing but its periscope above the water, and on the other side of the sailing course of the ship, will be in position, the moment the turn is made, to deliver the shot. That is why the captain has gone to the other side, as you will notice the vessel is now going to starboard," said the officer.

The ship had now turned so that it was broadside to the distant submarine. Not only its conning tower was now visible, but a long black object fore and aft could be plainly observed.

"Three points to port!" shouted the captain.

The quartermaster swung the wheel around, and the ship seemed to heel over, so suddenly did the rudder act.

"One point to starboard, and full speed ahead!" was the next order from the captain.

It seemed that the order had no more than been executed than he again sang out:

"Two points to port!"

"What is that for?" asked Alfred.

"He is zig-zagging the ship through the sea," replied the officer.

"What for?" inquired Ralph.

"There is another submarine three points to starboard astern."

"Then,—then the captain,——"

"Yes; the one behind us is near enough to reach us if we keep on a straight course, but the captain has manoeuvred so as to bring him directly in our wake, and continually changed the target so that the submarine cannot aim with accuracy," interrupted the officer.

The passengers on the decks below did not need to be told that something unusual was happening. The changing course of the ship, the unusual activity on the bridge, the leveling of the glasses to the port side and to the stern by the different groups, were sufficient warnings of the presence of the dread monsters.

The submarine on the port side was now coming forward with all the speed it possessed, and again the captain turned the ship another point to starboard. The funnels were belching smoke, and sparks flying from the top. The engineers were putting on forced draft and the ship seemed to be trembling as it shot through the smooth sea. It was an ideal condition for the launching of a torpedo.

"Torpedo coming on starboard side!" shouted a voice.

Every one now rushed to the right side of the bridge. There was a shriek below. From an unexpected quarter the third submarine's periscope was visible, and a foamy trail, straight as a mark, began to lengthen out toward their vessel.

"Reverse! Reverse engines!" shouted the captain. The order was executed, but too late. The trail came nearer and grew broader. Some of the passengers put their hands over their eyes, others stood like fixed statues. The captain placed his hand to his brow, but quickly turned.

"Order the men to the boat!" he said in a quiet voice, as he stepped forward and seized the handle of the boat's whistle.

No sooner had the order been given when a terrific crash followed. The bridge seemed to have been seized with a giant hand and it vibrated with an intense force. A hundred feet from the stern of the ship a great mass of water shot upward and fragments of the deck were hoisted up and scattered around.

The ship at first swayed to port and then quickly swung back to starboard, but did not again roll back to port. The captain shook his head. There was a perceptible list in the position of the ship.

"Take your position in the boats!" he shouted to the men on the bridge, and as he did so he quickly pulled the lever,—one, two, three, four, five.

By the time the last blast sounded the seamen were at the boats assigned to them. The engines had stopped. The passengers, all except those who had fainted, had left the deck. Ralph and Alfred made a dash for the waiting room. Their parents were not there. Down they went to the cabins, passing on the way the crowded hallways and the unutterable confusion which resulted from the order to hurriedly leave the ship.

They found their parents in the cabin, and, due to the forethought of Mr. Elton, the lifebuoys had been adjusted, and their valuables secured beforehand. Others, however, were not so fortunate. Across the way were several women and children.

"Let me help you," said Alfred, as he entered the first cabin. "I will take care of the baby," he remarked, as he picked it up, while the mother was almost frantic.

"I will take the other one," shouted Ralph.

"We can't stop here another minute," said Alfred. "Do you see how the ship is

leaning over?"

"Come on, Mother," cried Ralph; "follow us or we may not be able to go up the stairs."

Alfred crowded close behind Ralph, and Mr. Elton assisted the two women along the passageway. All arrived on deck, the boys with the two children in their arms.

"Where is No. 8?" "I can't find No. 9," said another. "What has become of the girl?" shrieked one; "Are we going to turn over?" asked a trembling voice. The officers were going to and fro, mingling with the passengers.

"What is your boat number?" asks one officer. "This way; that is the place you are assigned to."

Mr. Elton and his party reached No. 1 without accident, and all but the boys were safely placed in the boat.

"Come on, boys," said Mr. Elton. "But where is the mother of the children?" he asked, as he saw the boys were unaccompanied.

"Take the baby," said Alfred, as he passed it to his mother.

Ralph handed the little girl to one of the seamen, and sprang after Alfred. There was now a dangerous list, and Mrs. Elton noticed it.

"Is there any danger if our boys go below to the stateroom?" she asked the petty officer, who was holding the rope connected with the tackle of their boat.

"She'll have to sway over a great deal further to go down," he remarked.

This comforted her for the moment. Passengers were still coming up from the companionways; some were being dragged along, and others acted like drunken men and women. It was a terribly trying sight.

An old man shambled forward as he emerged from the cabin door, glanced along at the filled boats held in the davit, tried to speak, and fell headlong on the deck. A surgeon near by rushed up, turned him over, felt of his heart and pulse, shook his head, and drew the body close up to the side of the cabin wall. Then the officer made a search to ascertain the name of the man, and extracted papers from his pockets.

Meanwhile, the boys had not returned, and the ship was turning over on its side more and more.

"Launch the boats!" ordered the captain.

"But our boys! our boys!" shrieked Ralph's mother, but as she arose she was forcibly restrained. The captain did not hear, and at the command the boats went down. Even then a half-dozen passengers emerged from the door too late, and one of them, notwithstanding the warning, was without a life belt.

The ship's deck was now at an angle of fully thirty degrees,—as steep as the ordinary roof. Those emerging from the cabin on the port side could not maintain a footing, but were compelled to slide down to the side railing. This was the situation when Ralph and Alfred reached the door which led to the deck from the companionway. They were carrying the woman whose children they had rescued, as she was in a frenzy, and struggled with the boys. The moment the inclined deck was reached Alfred said:

"See that she goes overboard, and I will go down for that little girl," and he crawled back into the ship.

Ralph finally succeeded in loosening the woman's hold, and together they slid down the deck. The woman was now uncontrollable. She threw her arms about wildly, and cried for her children. Ralph pointed to the boats below, but this did not quiet her. Taking advantage of the moment when both hands were free, Ralph, by a terrific effort, pushed her across the railing, and, with a loud shriek, she shot downward.

Ralph looked around, and caught a momentary sight of his parents in the boat below. Mrs. Elton was calling for Alfred. Ralph nodded his head and tried to crawl back up the inclined deck, but it was useless. An arm then appeared through the door opening, then a head, and he knew it must be Alfred.

"Can't you help me up?" shouted Ralph.

Alfred disengaged himself and extended his body down along the deck. This enabled Ralph to seize hold of his legs and draw himself up into the doorway.

Once there he saw the trouble that Alfred had to contend with. Lying half-way up the stairs was a poor cripple, half dead with fright, and the little girl, not much better. Laboriously, he had assisted, first one and then the other, and was about exhausted when Ralph came to the rescue.



CHAPTER III

PRISONERS ON BOARD OF A SUBMARINE

The captain was still on deck, together with the first officer, both of them being at that time on the upper side of the vessel. They made the most careful examination of the staterooms and searched every corner to be sure that no one lingered behind. Coming forward they witnessed the struggles of the boys with the cripple and the girl, but the ship was now too far over on its side to permit them to render assistance.

The cripple was soon brought to the door, and, without ceremony, pushed down the incline. The little girl followed, but before the boys could reach the railing the poor cripple slipped over the railing and disappeared. The boys held the child aloft for a moment, and then dropped her into the waves.

"Jump as far as you can!" shouted the captain.

Ralph placed a foot on the railing, and, looking back at Alfred, said: "Here goes! Come on!"

Both boys landed at almost the same time. The little girl was aroused by the cold water, and was wildly floundering about, but the cripple lay upon the surface of the water, with face upturned, limp and still. They glanced about; where were the boats? They could not be far away.

"I am afraid he's done for," said Alfred, as he glanced toward the cripple.

"Well, we might as well stay near him; he might be all right," replied Ralph.

"Move away from the ship quickly," said a voice in the water, not far away.

It was the captain. He was the last one to dive, after he had seen every passenger safely off the ship.

"We have no time to lose; take care of yourselves; I will help the little girl," he continued, as he threw the child on his back, and began to strike out.

The sea had been calm up to this time, but no sooner had the captain ceased speaking than a tremendous wave almost engulfed them; they seemed to be carried up, and then were forced down by a giant swell. Another wave followed and then another, until, finally, the oscillations of the waves seemed to be

growing less and less.

"Where is the ship?" cried Alfred.

"She's gone down; that's what made the waves," said the captain.

The cripple's hand was raised up, and his eyes began to roll.

"This fellow's all right, after all," said Ralph. "I'll help him. I wonder where the boats are?"

The sun, which was going down while all this had been taking place, had now disappeared, and there was that gray, lead-like appearance on the waves that comes just before twilight.

"Keep up your courage, boys; we shall soon have plenty of boats looking for us," said the captain.

Within less than a minute thereafter two boats could be seen bobbing up and down not far away, heading straight for those in the water. Ralph was the first one caught by the strong arm of a seaman, and then the little girl, now fully recovered from her fright, received the care of a woman in the boat.

Alfred assisted the cripple into the other boat, and the captain ordered all the passengers transferred to the boat which had just come up.

The boys then noticed that only three seamen remained, together with the captain and first officer.

"You may remain with us," said the captain, addressing Ralph and Alfred.

This was, indeed, a compliment to them, which was appreciated.

"I know father, mother and auntie are all right," said Alfred. "Do you think they saw us get off?" he added anxiously.

"They were standing by when you jumped, but when the ship made the last lurch, just before she went down the seamen knew that they must pull away to avoid being sucked under. It might have been too dark for them actually to have seen you get away, at the distance they were from the ship, but I don't think they will expect to see us before morning."

"Why, do you intend to stay here all night?" asked Ralph.

"No, but each boat crew has had instructions to make for the nearest port, as rapidly as possible," replied the captain.

"Where are we now?" asked Alfred.

"In the Bay of Biscay, about one hundred and fifty miles from the nearest land," answered the captain.

"How long will it take us to reach land?" asked Ralph.

"Possibly two days, or more; that depends on the weather and the conditions in the bay. This is the most turbulent body of water anywhere on the Atlantic coast line, but it has been remarkably smooth during the past twenty-four hours," answered the captain.

"What is the name of the place that we are heading for?" asked Ralph.

"St. Nazaire; a French town at the mouth of the river Loire," was the reply.

It was now quite dark, and a haze prevented the occupants of the boat from making any observation of the stars, hence the sailing, or rather, the rowing, had to be conducted by compass entirely, the order being given by the captain to steer east by north, a term which indicates that the course was exactly two points north of a line running due east and west.

Three miles an hour at the outside, would be considered good speed. Sails would have been useless without a wind, and there was not the slightest breeze, but about midnight there was an apparent rocking in the little boat that indicated a wind. Occasionally, there would be a jerk, as the boat would be thrown from one side to the other. The captain was awake and alert, but the boys were lying in the bottom of the vessel near the stern.

It was a trying, weary night, and when the sun arose the sea was one panorama of short, choppy waves. The seamen were tired with rowing, and it was evident that no great effort was being made to hurry the boat along.

"It does seem to me that the sun is coming up on the wrong side this morning," remarked Alfred, as they were partaking of the food prepared and stowed in the boat's lockers.

"I imagine you are turned around somewhat," replied the captain. "The wind is now coming from the east, and you see the sun almost ahead of us. We are being carried west faster than the rowers can take us eastward, hence we are practically standing still, or rather going back, and they are now merely holding the boat so as to give us steerage way and prevent us from going into the troughs between the waves."

"Have you sighted either of the other boats?" asked Alfred.

"No; but one of the men observed a light at two this morning, three points to

starboard, which was, possibly, one of our companions, but since that time we have searched the seas fruitlessly," answered the captain.

"I don't know why it is that if all of the boats steer to the same point that they should be scattered in this way," said Alfred. "Can you explain it, Captain?"

"It would not be so if in the open sea, or in mid-ocean; there they would be likely to keep together, or not separated more than three or four miles; but it is quite another thing in this great bay," replied the captain.

"Why should it be different here?" asked Ralph.

"If you will take a map of the western part of Europe, you will notice three great projecting headlands, or points on the western shore of the continent of Europe, namely, Iceland, in the north, and the Spanish peninsula in the south. Midway between you will notice Ireland and the British Isles. The great Gulf stream comes down from the north, passes Iceland, that is one branch, hugs the coast of Ireland, and strikes the point of land which projects out northwesterly from the main Spanish land, so that a sort of maelstrom is set up in the bay."

"How far are we from that point of land?" asked Ralph.

"About two hundred miles northeast; and I may also say that we are just about in the middle of the Bay of Biscay, and at that point where the sea is always more quiet than at any other part," answered the captain.

Map Showing the Scene of the Wanderings of the Boys

ToList

"Ship to starboard, sir," sang out the forward watch.

The captain turned to the right and, after a brief glance, lowered his hand. The boys looked at him in wonder. Evidently the sight of the vessel did not give him pleasure. It was a low-lying craft, with two short masts.

"That looks like a submarine," shouted Ralph.

"You are right," replied the captain.

The submarine was coming forward rapidly, and within fifteen minutes it was within hailing distance. They now had an opportunity to examine the ugly thing with the long black back and the conning tower midway between the ends.

"Are those the periscopes?" asked Alfred. "I didn't know they carried two of them."

"That is the practice now," said one seamen.

The submarine came straight toward them, then sheered off and stopped alongside less than thirty feet from the boat. One of the seamen tossed a rope, which was grasped by a marine on the undersea boat, and in that manner they were drawn close up to the side of the submarine.

An officer now came forward, and in French invited the captain to step aboard. There was a broad smile on the officer's face, as he recognized the captain of the vessel which they had torpedoed the night before. With a respectful bow he requested the captain to turn over the ship's papers. The captain was, of course, powerless, but he refused to do so on the plea that he did not have them with him.

"Search the boat!" commanded the officer to several of his crew.

The captain was about to go back to his boat when the officer remarked:

"We prefer the pleasure of your company for the present, sir."

The captain folded his arms, and stood straight before the officer, as two marines jumped into the boat, and began the search. Eventually, a leather case was found, on which was inscribed the ship's name. It was tossed up to the officer, who, after receiving it, entered the conning tower, where he remained for

some time.

When he reappeared he said: "I shall have to detain you," and, glancing down into the boat, continued: "The two young men in the stern will also come aboard."

The boys were astounded at this new turn of affairs. Slowly they arose, and stepped on the narrow platform which projected out from the side of the submarine.

"There may be some reason why you should wish to detain me, but there is no excuse for making these young men prisoners; they are Americans returning home, and cannot be considered as belligerents," said the captain.

The lieutenant looked at the captain and turned his gaze on the boys a few moments before replying: "In what business were they engaged while on the continent?"

The captain started slightly, while the officer toyed with his mustache, and peered at the boys.

"We haven't engaged in any particular business on the continent," said Ralph.

"No; flying isn't engaging in any business, is it?" inquired the officer.

"Well," said Alfred, "we took part in the Red Cross service, were with the infantry, served a time with the flying corps, then had a little experience with the transportation service, helped them out in the artillery, and did the best we could everywhere we went, if that's what you wish to know."

The officer gave the boys a cynical glance, and nodded to one of the marines. The latter stepped forward and began searching the boys, Ralph being the first to undergo the ordeal; several letters, a few trinkets, a knife and a purse, containing all the boy possessed, were removed. The coat when thrown back revealed a cross, suspended by a ribbon, the decoration which had been bestowed on the boys after their last flight at Verdun.

Alfred handed over the contents of his pockets. The German officer glanced at the medals, and made another motion. The seamen then pushed them into the conning tower and the boys saw a narrow flight of stairs to which they were directed, the captain following.

Down into the bowels of a submarine! A warm, peculiar, oily odor greeted them as they descended, but the air was not at all unpleasant and breathing was easy. Glancing about they saw confused masses of mechanism, tanks, pipes,

valves, levers, wheels, clock-faced dial plates and other contrivances, all huddled together, with barely room to pass from one place to another. Electric bulbs were everywhere visible, lighting up the interior.

Suddenly there was a slight tremor in the vessel, indicating that some machinery was in motion. Once at the bottom they stood there until the seaman stepped forward and opened a small door through which there was barely room to pass, and he motioned them to enter. They did so, and found themselves in a compartment which did not seem to be more than five by six feet in size, and even in this small space mechanism was noticed. The moment the door closed they were in total darkness.

"This is a nice place to get into," said Ralph.

"I wonder if they are going to keep us cooped up like this without a light?" said Alfred.

After an interval of ten minutes a rumbling was heard, which continued, a rhythmic motion followed in unison with the sounds generated by the machinery.

"That is the propeller," said the captain.

Voices were heard occasionally, but words could not be distinguished. Confined as they were the air seemed to be pure and in abundance at all times, and while there was not the faintest signs of closeness, there was an eternal monotony,—an existence in which there was nothing to do but breathe and think.

How long they were thus confined, without a single thing to break the stillness, they could not conceive. It seemed that hours had gone by, during which time there was nothing to disturb them, except the one steady whirr, broken occasionally by some remark by one or the other.

Then came an unexpected hum of voices; the machinery seemed to stop for a moment, and when it was again continued it had a different melody. The wheels, if such they were, seemed to turn with smoothness, and they felt a sudden inclination in the seats on which they were sitting.

"What do you suppose has happened?" asked Ralph.

"The electric mechanism has been hitched to the propeller, and, if I am not mistaken, we are going down," said the captain.

"It did feel as though the forward end dipped down a moment ago," said Alfred.

Another wait for a half-hour, and then a most peculiar sound reached their ears. Simultaneously, the ship seemed to stop and go on. Again voices were heard, and the same reaction in the hull of the submarine was felt, accompanied by the dull noise, as before.

"They have just fired two torpedoes," said the captain.



CHAPTER IV

THE TERRORS IN THE DARK ROOM OF AN UNDERSEA BOAT

Imagine yourself locked in a compartment, barely large enough to stretch yourself out straight, in a ship under the sea, in total darkness, knowing that should any one of the hundreds of things within that ship go wrong, it would mean a plunge to the bottom of the sea, beyond the help of all human aid.

The danger to them was just as great while on the surface of the water, for the guns mounted on most vessels at this time, would make the submarine a legitimate prey. One shot would be sufficient, for ingenuity has not yet found a way to quickly stop a leak in a submarine. Such a vessel, when once struck, dare not dive, for that would quickly fill the interior of the vessel with water.

It must, in that case, remain afloat, subject to the hail of shot which must follow, their only salvation in that event would be to hoist the white flag. Few, if any submarine commanders have done so, and even should that occur, it would not prevent the hull from being riddled before the fact could be made known. The three-inch guns mounted on most of the merchantmen, with an effective range of three miles, could tear the weak hull of a submarine to pieces at a single shot, and all would be sure to go down before help could arrive from the attacking steamer.

"The machinery seems to go very slow now," remarked Ralph.

"They may be cautiously coming to the top," replied the captain.

"Did you hear that peculiar noise?" said Alfred, as he laid his hand on the captain's arm.

"That was plainly a shot from a ship," said the captain.

"Do you think we could hear firing through all this metal?" asked Ralph.

"Much easier than if we were on deck," answered the captain.

"Why do you think so?" asked Alfred.

"Because water is a better conductor of sound than air," was the reply.

"Do you mean that we can hear it better than if the sound came through the air?" queried Alfred.

"The sound can be heard not only much plainer, but also much sooner than through the air," answered the captain.

"I think we are going down again," remarked Ralph.

"No doubt of it," answered the captain quietly.

"Do you think they have hit us?" eagerly inquired Ralph.

The captain did not reply. Alfred reached his hand forward and grasped the captain's hand. "You needn't fear to tell us if you think we are going down for the last time."

"You are a brave boy!" said the captain. "I do not know what to answer. I have never been on a submarine when it was struck by a bullet; but it seemed to me as though something struck our shell, and if it did there is no help for us, for the devils would gloat on our misery, and would not think of liberating us, to give us a chance for our lives."

Fifteen minutes elapsed before the captain continued: "This gives me some hope."

"What is it?" quickly inquired Ralph.

"We are still on an even keel," was the answer.

"Does that mean that we are safe?" asked Alfred.

"Yes, if the shell of the submarine had been pierced, and we were really going down it would not be long before the hull would lose its equipoise and turn around, or it might stand on end, due to the distribution of water throughout the interior," was the reply.

"I understand now," said Alfred. "You think we are still floating, but do you think we are on the surface?"

"We are, undoubtedly, submerged, for it is evident that the smooth motion of the propeller comes from the electric motors and not from the internal combustion engines, which are used solely while running on the surface," remarked the captain.

After hours more of interminable waiting, they heard a noise close at hand. With something like a snap the door opened and a flood of light streamed into their compartment from the electric bulbs without, and, looking up, they saw, at

the ceiling of their room, a small electric bulb.

"Why is it we didn't hunt for that?" whispered Ralph, looking up.

"But I can't see any way to turn it on," said Alfred.

"That lights only from the outside," said the attendant. "Here is something to eat," he continued in English.

"What time is it?" asked the captain.

"Half past one o'clock," was the reply.

They had been in that cramped prison pen five hours.

"Did you torpedo another ship?" queried the captain.

"We tried to; but a torpedo boat destroyer came up too close," he answered.

"How many shots did it fire?" asked Ralph.

"Two," was the laconic reply.

"How long have we been submerged?"

"Two hours," answered the man. "As I came down the report from the periscope showed a clear sea, and we are now about to resume surface travel and repair one of the periscopes."

The boys glanced at each other and at the captain.

"Yes," remarked the captain, "that was a pretty close call."

The attendant left them without closing the door, and as the prisoners glanced about, nothing was to be seen of the stairway which led to the conning tower. Men were noticed at work, each being stationed at some particular machine or set of machinery. Then, with a bang, something like a trap door swung aside and the stairway was revealed, and a peculiar light streamed in through the hatch opening.

"It's the sun," said Ralph, in ecstasy.

"I never thought we'd see that again," said Alfred, almost overcome.

"May we walk around?" asked the captain, as he approached an under officer.

"There isn't much chance for exercising here," was the reply, "but I think you will be given top liberty after awhile," replied the man.

"Will they let us go?" asked Ralph eagerly.

"No; he didn't say that; he meant they would give us liberty to walk on the top deck for a short time," replied the captain.

Shortly thereafter the lieutenant in command of the submarine appeared at the foot of the hatchway and informed the captain that they were at liberty to ascend. Never did the sun appear to be more beautiful or inviting, although there was a perceptible chill in the atmosphere. The submarine was moving along at a speed of twelve knots an hour. Four men were engaged in taking down a bent and partially ruptured periscope tube.

The captain glanced at it and drew the attention of the boys to its structure. It was the tall periscope that received the shot, which struck it about four feet from the top.

"It must have been hit on the water line," said the captain, addressing the lieutenant.

The latter merely nodded, but made no remarks in response.

They were permitted to walk to and fro for an hour, when the order came to descend, and they again entered their prison. As before, they were subjected to total darkness, but there was no necessity for this deprivation, and it is not clear why an enemy should treat prisoners in this manner, for such actions necessarily leave only resentments and do no good whatever.

It was a long, long, dreary afternoon and night, which they tried to while away in sleeping, for conversation, under the circumstances, soon became irksome. When they awoke, or, rather, when all were again alert and felt as though the night must have passed, the captain was the first to break the silence, as he said:

"We have been resting quietly for more than an hour, I should say, probably lying in wait in one of the steamer lanes for new victims."

"Isn't it likely we are on the bottom of the ocean? Don't they go down sometimes and wait there?" asked Ralph.

"Yes; but not in deep water, such as is found in this bay. At no place is it less than 150 fathoms, and in the central portion, where our ship went down it is more than 2,000 fathoms."

"Why, that's two miles deep, or more," said Alfred.

"Yes, the Bay of Biscay is one of the deep holes in the Atlantic coast line of Europe. The average depth of the Irish Sea, St. George Channel, the English Channel and the North Sea is only about 250 feet, and there are thousands of

places in the North Sea, particularly, like the Dogger Banks, where the water is not more than a hundred feet deep," remarked the captain.

"Then the submarines could easily rest on the bottom if the depth is not more than one hundred feet?" asked Alfred.

"Submarines have, in several cases, gone down as far as 200 feet below the surface, but it is at a great risk," said the captain.

"You mean risk from the pressure of the water?" said Ralph.

"Yes," was the reply.

"What would be the pressure of the water on a submarine at that depth?" asked Alfred.

"Pressure is calculated on the square inch of surface; for every twenty-eight inches the pressure is equal to one pound. If, therefore, 200 is multiplied by 12 and then divided by 28, the quotient will represent the number of pounds on each square inch," answered the captain.

"Why multiply 200 by twelve?" asked Ralph.

"Because there are twelve inches in a foot," said the captain.

"Oh, yes; I didn't happen to think of it; well, 200 by 12,—that's 2,400, and divided by 28, is——"

"Eighty-five," interrupted Alfred. "Well, that's not very much."

"Quite true," rejoined the captain; "but how many square inches are there in a square foot?"

"One hundred and forty-four," replied Alfred.

"Then, eighty-five times one hundred and forty-four makes quite a sum," continued the captain.

"Whew,——" said Ralph with a half whistle in his tone, "why, if I have made it out right, it's over 12,000 pounds. No wonder it isn't safe to stay down very long, if at all, at that depth."

"I have often wondered how it is that the submarine could rest on the bottom or come up at will," said Alfred.

"All submarines are lighter than the water in which they float," answered the captain. "They are provided with tanks holding compressed air. Now, in order to submerge, the only thing necessary is to permit enough water to flow into special

tanks within the submarine, until the combined weight of the water, hull and mechanism, is the same as the amount of water that the ship displaces. If an added quantity of water is now added, it will go down, and remain under water until the air in the compressed tanks is used to force out a quantity of water from the special tanks."

"But is that the only way they can go down?" asked Ralph.

"Oh, no; a submarine can submerge without doing that, but in such a case power must be used," answered the captain.

"What! push it down by power?" asked Alfred.

"Exactly; these vessels have fins, the same as fish, so arranged that if they are properly turned and the ship moves forward, it will dive, and continue to go down at an angle as long as the fins are properly set. If the vessel should stop moving the submarine would come to the top, because it is lighter than the water," responded the captain.



CHAPTER V

SOME OF THE MYSTERIES OF A SUBMARINE

With a click the door of their prison cabin opened and a seaman informed them that their breakfast was ready. They passed through the narrow door, and edged their way along a tortuous path that led to the rear, where they entered what might be called a miniature galley, on one side of which was a narrow shelf containing food of various descriptions.

There was room only for the attendant to pass while they were seated. An abundance of the best food was served, cereals, and even fruit, forming part of the menu. Each of these vessels carry from twenty-two to thirty men, but there were in sight in the dining room only ten, besides the cook and waiter.

After the meal, the captain inquired of the officer at the main hatch whether they would be permitted to go on deck.

"I have no orders," he replied.

Meanwhile, the boys had an opportunity to investigate the mysteries of the interior, for it was well lighted.

"What are those long drums ahead there?" asked Alfred.

"I think they are the casings which carry the torpedoes," replied the captain. "If you look beyond you will see the rear ends of the tubes which receive the torpedoes. The cylinders in sight hold the torpedoes until they are ready to be placed in the tubes and shot out of them."

"You have orders to go on deck," the under officer at the bottom of the hatch now informed them.

This was an invitation to which they quickly responded. They ascended, and found the sun hidden, and the sea about them calm. Glancing across the broad expanse of water, not a sail was in sight. It was a cold, gray morning, ordinarily uninviting weather, but after the house of confinement it was enjoyed to the fullest extent.

"Down below!" shouted a voice.

The boys looked around in surprise, for they had been on deck less than ten

minutes.

"Clear the deck!" shouted the same voice. The boys, with the captain, were hustled forward into the conning tower, and the iron door closed with a bang. The boys were permitted to stop only long enough to see two men turn eight swinging bolts, which hung about the margins of the doors, and quickly screw them up against the jamb.

The lieutenant was leaning over a narrow table on which was a chart, and gazing through a crystal-covered port in the front of the conning tower. A bell tinkled, machinery began to turn and impart its vibration to the ship, and it was again a living thing. It glided forward with the same rhythmic noises for a half-hour, and then two bells were heard.

The character of the sounds from the machinery changed; they seemed to move forward with less effort, and as they felt the same inclination in the motion of the ship, all were now satisfied that she was again submerging. Fortunately, they were not confined to their room, and, although no verbal orders had been given for the various operations required to handle the vessel, the prisoners had an opportunity to judge of what was going on.

Thus, when the signal was given to change the motive power from the internal combustion engines to electricity, they could see the engine stop, and an attendant shift the clutch which engaged the electric motors. A dial swinging over a card alongside a pair of levers indicated the direction of movement, while another gave not only the inclination of the ship, but its speed as well.

These things were very fascinating to the boys, but their attention was now attracted to a still more interesting scene. A bell forward gave two short, quick snaps. Four men sprang forward and stood at attention, two on each side of the tube at the right of the hold.

"The indicator shows that the submarine is turning," said the captain. The boys watched the indicator; it had swung around almost half-way.

"There,—look at the inclinometer," said Ralph. "It is moving upward——"

"Ting! ting!" Two more sharp bells forward. The cylinder was off the torpedo, and it lay before them exposed.

Three bells more; and now there was feverish haste. An oval door in the wall ahead was swung open, revealing a round, black hole.

"That is the torpedo tube," said the captain quietly.

The torpedo was moved back three feet, and then again carried forward on its truck so that the end of the torpedo entered the tube.

One bell more. The torpedo moved into the tube, the breech block, which in this case was the oval door, closed, and the crew stood at attention. While thus waiting the boys glanced at the inclinometer and at the direction indicator.

"See it swing back and forth," said Alfred. "It seems to act queerly."

"Not at all," replied the captain. "Evidently we are chasing a ship which is zig-zagging, as we did, for the direction dial is constantly moving."

While thus conversing they were startled by the signal of four bells. One of the men, reaching forward, touched a button, and the signal could be heard in the conning tower. That was, evidently, to inform the commander there that all was in readiness. Everything was expectancy now. The ship still manoeuvred.

Then, without a warning of any kind, there was a singular dull sound, which seemed to shake the submarine from stem to stern.

"They have fired it," said Alfred.

"And they are putting in another one."

"If I am not mistaken it is the last one they have," suggested the captain.

"Why do you think so?" asked Alfred.

"I notice that all the cylinders with the open ends are without torpedoes, and you will notice that the one they are now putting in is the last one with the closed end," responded the captain.

"I am glad they haven't any more of them," said Ralph.

Three bells again sounded; the officer at the gun responded, and during the next two minutes of suspense, the boys were quiet, waiting for the next shot. It soon came; the ship shook as before, the breech block opened, the shell behind the torpedo was extracted, the door closed and the men stood at attention.

When the officer, who had handled the torpedoes, walked down the steps from the conning tower, the boys noticed him shake his head sadly.

"Did you notice that?" asked the captain.

"Do you mean the way he shook his head?" said Alfred.

"Yes; I am curious to get your views about that action of the officer," remarked the captain.

"That is, why he shook his head?" interjected Ralph.

"Yes," answered the captain. "Do you think he looked discouraged because the shot failed in its mission, or because it went home successfully? That is the problem."

The boys were quiet for a few moments. Ralph was the first to speak: "Well, I'll bet the torpedo didn't hit the ship, and he feels cut up over it, as it was the last one they had."

"I don't agree with you," rejoined Alfred. "It struck the ship and sunk it, and the fellow feels so badly about it that he shook his head the way he did when he thought of the suffering it caused. Don't you agree with me?" said Alfred, addressing the captain.

The captain could not repress a slight laugh as: he answered: "I must confess you advance good arguments in both directions; but really, I am of the opinion that either torpedo didn't get in its work."

"Why do you think the first one failed?"

"If the first one had succeeded, they would not have shot the second, would they?" replied the captain.

"No; I don't think they would, seeing they had only one more left," remarked Ralph. "But why do you think the last one was no more successful?"

"I infer it from the following circumstances: It takes, on an average, a minute for a torpedo to reach its mark, after it leaves the torpedo tube. The officer in the tower is in a position where he can see the effect of the shot. If the torpedo struck, however favorable the blow, it would take at least fifteen or twenty minutes for the ship to go down. Sometimes the bulkheads will keep the ship afloat an hour or more. In fact, there are records of ships which have been torpedoed, that were actually towed into harbors and saved," answered the captain.

"But I do not see how that is any sign that the torpedo missed," replied Alfred inquiringly.

"Probably you did not notice the period that elapsed after the last shot, and the time the officer came down the tower hatch?" remarked the captain.

"No, I did not observe," replied Alfred.

"You remember, do you not, that as soon as the last torpedo was launched, the

officer went up into the conning tower, and that within a minute, or not exceeding two minutes, he again came down the stairway, and shook his head in such a disconsolate manner?" continued the captain.

"Well, yes; you may be right in that," responded Alfred.

"Then, I inferred this," said the captain, "that the lieutenant had had ample opportunity to observe whether or not the shot went home, and, as it had not landed, he reported to the officer the failure. If the shot had struck he would have known it before the officer left the conning tower to come down. Do you get my idea?" asked the captain.

"That seems to answer the question, to my mind, that it wasn't a hit," said Ralph.

"Well, it doesn't quite satisfy me," replied Alfred. "The lieutenant might have told him that the shot hit the ship, and that it was going down, and that's what made him feel so badly about it."

The captain could not help feeling amused at Alfred's argument, as he replied: "I must admit that your view is logical, and I am also willing to assent that the question is one, which, in the absence of actual knowledge, could be settled in one way only."

"How is that?" asked Ralph.

"By knowing the mental condition and attitude of the officer who came down the hatchway. If he happened to be a humane person he would regret the loss of life, and show it, probably, by his actions. On the other hand, if he should be devoid of the finer feelings, and be a mere slave to duty, it is more than likely that he would shake his head discouragingly, to learn that the torpedo failed in its mission," was the captain's final word on the subject.

"Now that they are out of torpedoes, what do you suppose they will do?" asked Ralph.

"Go home; I suppose," replied Alfred.

"Unless they have a base somewhere on the coast," replied the captain.

"Where is the most likely place for such a base?" asked Ralph.

"That is the enigma, of course. It has been believed that the Germans have a base somewhere along the northern coast of Spain," said the captain.

"What are the reasons for thinking so?" asked Alfred.

"One of them is that some of the Spaniards are said to be more or less friendly to the Germans, and, furthermore, there are few ports or harbors on the north coast, hence the shipping to Spain in the southern waters of the Bay of Biscay is very small, a condition which would help to keep a base along the coast line at one or more points."

"But we ought to know in the next day or two whether they have such a base," said Ralph.

"Yes; it will be the opportunity now for us to make some observation which will tell us whether we are going to Germany, or not," said the captain with a grin.

Situated, as they were, below decks, with no instruments but the direction indicator, and the inclinometer in sight, it was impossible to judge of the direction they were going, for it was evident that the submarine was now moving ahead at full speed.

"It will be, probably, twenty-four hours before we are able to get any information as to our destination," said the captain.

"Do you intend to ask some of the men?" inquired Alfred.

"No; that would be fruitless. It is not at all likely they will venture any information upon a subject of that character," replied the captain.

"Then how would it be possible to learn anything about where we are going?" asked Ralph.

"We are now somewhere in the Bay of Biscay, and I infer that we must be about a hundred and fifty miles from the Spanish coast. To reach that at the rate we are going, would take at least ten hours, for I assume that the vessel is capable of at least ten miles an hour. Then, we must take into consideration the possible meeting with vessels, in which case we must submerge, and thus go much slower," said the captain.

"Then, if they have a base anywhere along the coast we ought to be there before tomorrow at this time?" ventured Alfred.

"That is exactly what I mean," answered the captain.

CHAPTER VI

GROPING THROUGH THE ENGLISH CHANNEL

There was a steady pulsation of the engines during the entire afternoon without cessation until five o'clock, when the submarine submerged and continued under water for an hour. The three captives had now learned a great many of the manoeuvres incident to the diving operations, the signals accompanying each action, and studied with the greatest diligence and care the direction indicator and inclinometer.

"I have been noticing the indicator for the last hour," said Ralph, "and it didn't change once. Are we going due north?"

"The indicator that you see is not for the purpose of showing the points of the compass, but to tell whether or not there is a turning movement in the ship. If, for instance, the rudder should be turned to starboard or to port, the dial would swing in such a position as to show how much of a turn has been made, and no more," responded the captain.

"Suppose then, that after making a quarter turn, the ship should again go ahead on a straight line, what would happen to the dial?" asked Alfred.

"In that case the dial would again indicate that by coming back to its original position,—or, in other words, the dial would show that the ship had then assumed a new direction of sailing, and if it again changed to the right or to the left the indicator would reveal this to the observer," remarked the captain.

"I wish we had a compass," said Ralph.

"Unfortunately, they have taken our watches and pocket compasses," said the captain. "We may contrive, later on, to get a glimpse of the steering compass."

"Do you know where it is?" eagerly inquired Alfred.

"The navigating officer's instrument is in the conning tower, but it is usual, too, to have a similar instrument below, and I am sure it is located to the left of the cook's galley. It would not be safe, however, for either of us to be spying around in that quarter," responded the captain.

That night they were again locked in their narrow apartment. As they had been provided with a good meal it was not such an unpleasant experience, and they

were also comforted by the feeling that the submarine was now engaged in a no more perilous duty than trying to reach some port.

That night was followed by a trying day of waiting. Singularly, they had not been permitted to ascend the hatchway stairs since the first day of their capture.

"A glance at the sun would be enough to tell us the direction," remarked the captain after they left the table at the lunch hour.

"I suppose they are keeping us down here for that purpose," suggested Alfred.

"I have thought," replied the captain, "that the very fact of keeping us in ignorance of the direction they are going is the best indication that we are making for a concealed base."

When they retired the second night the captain remarked: "It is now plain to my mind that we are on the way to Germany, or, possibly, to a base somewhere at a greater distance than Spain."

"How long would it take to make the trip to Germany?" asked Alfred.

"If we circled the British Isles and came in by way of Norway, it would mean a run of 1,400 miles. To go by way of the Channel would be about 800 miles. It would make but little difference in point of time," answered the captain.

"Why wouldn't it take longer to travel 1,400 miles?" asked Ralph.

"Because on the long route we would be able to travel four-fifths of the way on the surface, and would not have to avoid mines and nets. The Channel route is a dangerous one, requiring the utmost caution," said the captain.

The second morning Alfred was outside, as usual, consulting the instruments, when a voice remarked in response to an inquiry: "48, 10." He paid no attention to it at the time, but later on, in a conversation, remarked to the captain:

"Some one in the conning tower, this morning, said '48, 10.' What do you suppose he meant by that?"

"Glad you remembered that. Are you sure the figures you give are correct?" asked the captain eagerly.

"Sure of it," was Alfred's reply.

"Then we are near the English Channel. Good; I am glad to know that. Did you hear them refer to any other figures?" asked the captain.

"What would the other figures be?" asked Ralph.

"Of course, I can only guess. The figures you have given me unquestionably represent forty-eight degrees and ten minutes north latitude. What interests me most is to get our position east and west," said the captain.

"About what longitude are we in?" asked Ralph.

"If we are less than five degrees west we must be in the English Channel, and it would appear that they are taking the shortest route. If we should be seven or eight degrees west I should regard it as a pretty sure symptom that we are going to encircle the British Isles," remarked the captain.

Late that afternoon Ralph rushed into their little cabin and said:

"I have an idea that I can tell you the direction we are going."

"Have you heard anything?" asked the captain.

"Not a word," answered Ralph. "I have just made an observation," he continued, laughing.

"That's good," responded the captain. "I think we are sailing north by west."

"You are wrong," replied Ralph; "we are going due east."

"Are you sure?" asked the captain, exhibiting unusual interest in the news. "How did you find it out?"

"I saw the sun," said Ralph with a chuckle.

"How and where did you see it?" asked Alfred, incredulously.

"Well, I didn't exactly see the sun, but I saw a streak that came from the sun," was the reply.

"That's just as good," responded the captain. "Where did you see it?"

"I was at the indicator when an officer went up and the hatch was raised. As he didn't push it all the way down I had an idea he might soon return, so I moved up and stood between the twin tanks to the right of the steps. When the officer raised the hatch a streak of sunlight went right across the under side at the corner of the door, and I knew it couldn't come in at the front port hole," said Ralph, with a glow of pleasure in the discovery.

The captain shook his head slowly, as he said: "I am afraid this will mean an additional source of worry to all of us; it is bad enough to be locked up and subjected to the guns of vessels and warships, but it will be doubly hazardous to pass through the mine fields, and avoid the nets."

"Do you know anything about them, and how and where they are located?" asked Alfred.

"Yes, I have a pretty good knowledge of their location, and how to avoid them, although they constantly change the nets, or provide new safety outlets," said the captain.

The Steel Nets

The Steel Nets [To List](#)

"What do you mean by safety outlets?" asked Alfred.

"Immense steel nets are stretched across the straits from Calais to Dover, two lines, in fact, between which the vessels plying between England and France go to and fro in safety. Furthermore, war vessels guard these nets on both sides, so that it would be a difficult matter to get near the nets," said the captain.

"But submarines do seem to get through somewhere; do they not?" asked Ralph.

"Yes; owing to their ability to make the trip under water, and taking advantage of the darkness, it is sometimes the case that they get through without being entangled in the nets," he replied.

"But how do the ships that sail along the Channel get through?" asked Alfred.

"That is just what I was referring to when I spoke of safety outlets. At a certain point there is an opening through the nets at one side, through which vessels can pass into the line between the two wire cordons. The opening in the other line of nets is not directly opposite, but a mile or so off to one side, so that in order to get to the opening in the other nets, it is necessary for the ship to sail along in the safety zone between the two nets, and make a turn at right angles to get out through the second opening. That method has been found to be most effective, and is called the safety lane," responded the captain.

They were now in or near the most widely traveled part of the ocean on the western front of the continent. Thousands of ships pass and repass that zone which reaches from the southern part of Ireland to the western coast of France, and it was remarkable that the submarine was able to move along up to this time on the surface without being detected.

Before the sun had gone down that night, however, they were compelled to

submerge twice, and then the mantle of night shrouded the vessel and it moved along with more boldness. On this the fourth night of captivity, they were not locked in their prison.

"I cannot account for it," said the captain. "Possibly the commander has some little human sympathy left, and does not want to drown us like rats in a cage."

Neither the captain nor the boys slept much that night. They were too much occupied with constantly watching the manoeuvres necessary on the part of the commander and his crew to prevent detection as they passed up the Channel.

"I have spent years on the Channel as a navigating officer and in charge of various types of ships in the merchant service, as well as on our own naval vessels, and I know, probably, better than the lieutenant in charge of the submarine, what the dangers are. It is my belief that the lieutenant has come over this course before, and probably knows a safe, or measurably safe route, and has taken the chances of returning, but no one, however skilful a navigator he may be, can be sure of making exactly the same course twice. The tides may be against him; he may be out of his reckonings hundreds of feet, and that is too big a margin, where a hundred feet in width is the limit through which his vessel may pass in safety."

The captain thus, in general terms, set forth the perils of the route that the commander of the submarine had taken, and stated also, very plainly, that they must now be prepared to meet the greatest of all dangers. Sleep, therefore, could not be considered.

The long and weary night at last came to an end, and the appetizing odors of the morning meal were wafted to them. Their toilets were exceedingly simple affairs, a small cake of soap, warm water, and a long towel serving for the three. They had no trouble in dressing, for their clothing had not been removed. They were obliged to dispense with the bath, for, although all these boats are provided with comforts of that kind, none of them was available to the captain and the boys, and they did not ask that any privileges be extended to them.

No sooner had breakfast been served than the machinery began to slow down until finally it ceased. Not a perceptible motion was now observed. A pulsator or two were at work, and a slight rumble due to the action of the dynamo came to their ears.

"I suppose we are now on the bottom," suggested Ralph.

"Yes; during the daytime it will be necessary to keep quiet. Even the periscope

may reveal our presence," remarked the captain.

A little information as to the activities of the crew during these periods of rest may be interesting. Idleness breeds discontent and mischief. It is upon the principle that constant work encourages contentment and makes for efficiency, that the Germans require the continued activity which was shown by the occupants of the submarine.

The vessel was manned by twenty-seven officers and men. The personnel being as follows: A lieutenant, a sub-lieutenant, two under or petty officers, a physician, a cook and two oilers, two first-class machinists, and seventeen helpers, or seamen, although it was evident, as the captain expressed it, that few of the helpers had seen much sea duty.

While it is customary to divide the duties on shipboard into three watches, during the period of twenty-four hours, so as to give each squad a period of service every day at a different period, it would be difficult to carry out the same regulations on board a ship of this character.

The captain said: "I notice that they have practically two watches, one taking up the duty from midday until twelve at night, and the other from midnight to noon. Yesterday, I noticed the same shift that was on duty in the morning continued at work all the afternoon, so it is possible that every three or four days shift No. 1, which works from noon to midnight, will be changed so that for the next four days the time for their services will be from midnight to noon."

Attention is called to this method of doing duty so that the reader may understand certain events which will be referred to later.

The personnel of the shifts was also changed at intervals so that while the lieutenant during one shift would have at work a certain machinist and petty officer, during the next or second shift thereafter another machinist or petty officer would be on duty. In this manner all became efficient, for they had the opportunity afforded of being drilled and handled by different combinations of men and assistants.



CHAPTER VII

CAUGHT IN THE DEEP SEA NETS

The starting of the heavy machinery was sufficient indication that night had come. They were now going up and at an angle which was very perceptible. The boys had become quite expert in detecting certain activities, as they tried in every way to understand the use of the signals. One thing was certain; two sets of bells were brought into play as the signal for changing the motive power. The first signal, three bells followed by two more, was invariably the necessary preparation for this event.

A highly pitched bell next gave the signal to stop the gasoline engines and a deep-toned bell indicated the coupling of the electric motor. Occasionally a new set of signals would resound, which they tried to figure out. During the night Alfred thought he had found the key.

"Did you notice the big hand wheel on the side of the upright tank, which we pass as we go into the dining room?" he remarked.

"That is connected with a large valve," said the captain. "What did you observe?"

"Well, did you ever notice that before they rang the shrill bell four times we always have heard a whistle?" asked Alfred.

"Why, I have heard the bell ring four times on several occasions without the whistle," contended Ralph.

"So you have, but it was always after the four rings that followed the whistle. A little while ago I was near the tank, and I heard the whistle. The attendant sprang to the wheel, and when the four rings came he turned the wheel around twice. When the four next rings came (without the whistle, of course), he quickly turned it back again," said Alfred.

"That is the submerging tank," said the captain. "I see you are rapidly learning how to handle a submarine," and he laughed at the eagerness of the boys trying to conquer the details of signaling.

During that night there was hardly a half-hour but some movement or other was indicated by the bells. They submerged, halted, rose to the surface, steamed

at full speed, and in one or two instances it was evident from the sudden stopping that the submarine had to reverse.

This constantly kept them alert, and while engaged in conversation late in the morning, they were thrown forward on their seats with a motion that indicated a collision with something which was not very rigid, for there was no concussion such as usually accompanies the contact of the hull of a vessel with a hard object.

The boys looked at the captain in astonishment. They could now feel the propeller pulling in the opposite direction, only to be brought back again with the same springy collision, as when it had gone forward and first struck the strange obstacle.

The captain's face paled, and the boys plied him with questions as they saw his perturbed countenance.

"What do you think it is?" asked Ralph, as he saw the anxious seamen, and the second officer rushing about shouting orders, while one of them seized the main valve wheel and turned it.

"We are caught in one of the steel nets," said the captain quietly.

The boys' faces grew deadly pale. They knew what such a calamity meant. Few, if any of the submarines caught in the nets, ever escaped. The boys, while they did not know this, were, in a measure, aware of the great danger to submarines from this source. They were alarmed particularly on account of the serious manner in which the captain acted the moment the first impact took place.

The captain now arose, followed by the boys, and marched through the narrow passageway toward the lieutenant who was leaning over one of the air compressors.

"Is there anything we can do to help you?" asked the captain.

The lieutenant looked up and replied: "We can do nothing but change the trim of the ship. Everything portable in the stern must be moved forward. Your assistance will be appreciated," was the reply, an answer that was in marked contrast with his former demeanor.

The lieutenant then quickly detailed four men, who, together with the captain and the two boys, were directed what articles to carry forward. In this exercise they found many unexpected nooks and turns. The articles removed were mostly

ship's supplies, stores, boxes of canned goods, drugs in cases, and a lot of tubing. Some of the boxes must have contained machinery, or mechanical parts, for they were very heavy.

They were engaged at this work for fully an hour, and the task proved a difficult one, for the passageways were narrow and tortuous, and sometimes it was necessary to move through narrow alleys which ran almost directly across the ship. Every available bit of space is utilized in these vessels for the operating machinery.

The entire length of the submarine was 126 feet, and the material had to be carried a distance of about eighty feet. The lieutenant was in the stern portion, pointing out the articles which should be taken, while the sub-lieutenant directed the placing of them in the bow.

The captain and Ralph were just depositing a load in the hold near the bow, when a peculiar noise was heard, resembling a scraping, rasping sound. Before they had time to turn around, or move from their positions, the rear end of the submarine seemed to swing upward, bringing down and scattering among the machinery a choice lot of boxes and parcels.

A groan followed. Something peculiar had happened,—a thing unique in the annals of submarining. The vessel, after the peculiar motion, was quiet, but it was lying at an angle of forty-five degrees. The seamen and the captain hurriedly tried to move back in order to discover what had happened and from whom the groans proceeded.

It was hard work, and dangerous, too. Alfred was found pinned between the tanks, and temporarily held by several cases, but, fortunately, he was not hurt in the least.

Directly forward of the conning tower stairway the captain now noticed an object, and upon examination it was found to be the lieutenant, who had been thrown a distance of more than thirty feet through the tangled machinery. He was unconscious.

The physician was soon by his side, and a frightful gash was observed on the right side of the officer's face. Two men nearby were groaning. One had a broken leg, and the other several contusions about the head, and, owing to their crippled condition, it was just as much of a task to lower the bodies down into the inclined hold as to walk upward.

This was finally accomplished, and the lieutenant, with the two injured men,

were landed in the long compartment, which served as the dining room.

The sub-lieutenant was found pinned by some boxes between two stanchions, which had not been distributed and placed within the compartments. The seaman soon released him; he was not injured in any way, and now that the lieutenant was in a serious condition, the command devolved on him.

"That motion, if anything, will disentangle us from the nets," said the captain, addressing the sub-lieutenant. The latter did not reply, but turned on the captain with a frown.

"Your opinion is not requested!" he said in a terse manner.

The captain made a quiet bow and moved toward their small room, the boys following.

"I am sorry that fellow is in command," said Alfred. "I never liked him from the first."

"I'll bet we were locked up by that fellow's orders, for I don't believe the lieutenant had anything to do with it," remarked Ralph. The captain nodded his head, as he replied: "I knew that from the first day."

"I'd like to get ahead of him some way," said Alfred.

The captain looked at the boys for a few moments, then quietly put his hands on their arms, as he said: "Getting ahead, or getting even, doesn't pay, as a rule; but I have known where a few have been able to overcome a great many, as a duty, for that is what makes men strong."

Alfred's eyes fairly bulged, as he gazed at the captain. "Isn't it a duty to capture this submarine?"

The captain leaned forward and held up a warning hand. Ralph rose up and glanced around. "Why can't we do it?" he asked.

"There is only one thing lacking; yes, it has been in my mind from the first moment we came aboard, but we cannot do it without weapons. With them in our possession we might succeed. Why, if we could have had them this afternoon it would have been an ideal time to make the attempt," said the captain.

"I have something to tell you," said Alfred, as he lowered his voice.

"What is it?" asked the captain.

"I know where there is a box of revolvers," he replied.

"Where?" asked the captain, agitated visibly.

"Do you remember the two big upright drums which I was pinned against when the ship went up?" asked Alfred.

"Yes," replied the captain.

"Well, one of the boxes broke open when it came down the passageway, and when I saw what was in it I pushed it way under the base of the tank on the left side," said Alfred.

"The revolvers are all right, but we may have some trouble in getting cartridges," replied the captain. "But wait," he continued, "I am sure I carried cases of them down the passageway."

"If I am not mistaken, there are several boxes near there,—rather long, slim boxes, are they not?" asked Alfred.

"Yes; with a red label on the corner," interrupted Ralph. "I can put my hands on a box any minute."

"Then you are with me and will carefully follow out my instructions?" inquired the captain, looking at them intently.

"We will follow you in whatever you ask us to do," replied Ralph.

"You must remember that the business we are about to engage in means life or death. Once begun we cannot go back. We have no line of retreat. While it is most hazardous, the feat would be a wonderful one," said the captain.

"No; we are not afraid. Both of us have been in some dangerous places and have come out all right. We have confidence in you," said Alfred slowly and deliberately.

"Thank you for that," replied the captain. "We must begin the preparations at once, for at the present time when all is confusion we can get the opportunities that may not be offered later on."

"The boat seems to move," said Alfred.

A perceptible swaying motion was now observed. The vessel was still lying at the inclined position heretofore described. As they were about to crawl out of their cabin, they heard the voice of the sub-lieutenant:

"Connect the forward motor!"

They drew back into the room. "What is that for?" asked Ralph.

Before the captain could reply came the second order:

"Reverse!"

The motor buzzed, but no effect was produced on the boat.

"That seems singular," observed Alfred.

"Not at all," answered the captain.

"Why not?" asked Ralph.

"The stern of the submarine is out of the water," answered the captain.

The power was shut off, and again turned on. It was now obvious that they were dangling in the water with the prow of the boat held fast in the entangling nets. As they glanced out the door they could see the faces of the seamen moving to and fro with terror depicted on their countenances.

"They may well fear the results," said the captain. "But we have a duty to perform, and I might as well advise you of several things which we should do and observe. We must try to obtain the weapons and ammunition. That will be the first duty. Does either of you know where the electric switches are?"

"Yes," answered both of the boys in one breath.

"I mean the switch in the hold," said the captain.

"Yes," said Alfred. "The one I mean is close to the dynamo on the switchboard, behind the steps leading to the conning tower."

"That is correct," answered the captain. "The control switch for the lighting is in the conning tower, however, and I call your attention to this, as it may be of service to us in our work."

"I can see, now, that to keep that in our control would be the main thing," said Ralph.

"The officer has not yet given any orders to put the boxes in the passageways aside, and he will not do so, probably, until they are able to ascertain whether or not the ship will free itself; under the circumstances, Alfred, I must delegate you to secure a half-dozen of the revolvers, or remove them from the box so that we can secrete them later," said the captain.

As Ralph crawled from the cabin and moved toward the main gangway, the captain added: "If you remember where one of the ammunition boxes is you might smuggle it into this room, but proceed very cautiously."

Ralph soon made his way back, carrying with him one of the revolvers. "There are a dozen in the box," he said, "and I brought one over to show you. You see, it is the kind from which the cylinder can be removed. Wouldn't it be a good idea to take the cylinders out of all that we can't use?"

"Capital idea," said the captain. "If you can find any wire, put it where you can quickly place your hands on it."

"I found a box of ammunition also," continued Ralph, "but I haven't tried whether it would fit the revolvers."

An examination revealed the fact that the cartridges were not of the same calibre. It was, indeed, a terrible disappointment.

"Here it is," said Alfred, as he slipped into the door of the room.

"Ah, this is a different size; you have the right ones, fortunately," said the captain.

"Now, let me give you a few words as to the next,——"

A pronounced lurch in the vessel's position interrupted the captain. The seamen were now rushing around frantically, and talking excitedly.

"Hold your tongues!" shouted the sub-lieutenant.

The vessel was, evidently, moving. Occasionally, there would be a heavy, rasping sound, and the rear end of the boat would seem to settle down a few feet.

"It's coming all right," said Ralph in excitement.

"Connect forward motor!" again shouted the sub-lieutenant.

The motor turned smoothly without producing a disturbing influence on the ship, indicating that the propeller was still in the air.

"I fear that the sub-lieutenant does not know his business any too well," remarked the captain.



CHAPTER VIII

THE NIGHT'S STRUGGLE TO FREE THE VESSEL

The boys wondered at the remark which the captain had made, and were about to ask him for an explanation, when the electric lights suddenly died out, and all were left in total darkness. The captain crawled past the boys and felt his way toward the stern of the vessel.

"The storage batteries!" was all he said.

That there was confusion on the part of the crew of the vessel, was apparent, for the sub-lieutenant shouted one order after the other, until he seemed to be incoherent, and, as a result, no one knew what was expected of him or what to do.

Evidently, the captain knew the trouble and how to remedy it, for within a minute the lights were again in commission, and the captain was noticed at the main switch. From that point he shouted to the sub-lieutenant:

"I found a box on the switchboard. It had slipped down and thrown out the switch bar at the time the boat made the last lurch."

"Thank you for the service," said the sub-lieutenant, to the surprise of the captain and boys.

As the captain returned to their room he remarked: "The sub-lieutenant was very polite; probably he would not be so likely to thank me for some other things I have done."

"What! since you left us two minutes ago?" asked Ralph.

The captain nodded. "But I started to say a few minutes ago," he continued, "that we ought to have our work planned out ahead and thoroughly understand each other. There is one thing I must impress on you, and that is, we must not again be locked up in this room. I have no faith in the present commander, and would be very much mistaken if he permits us to have our freedom after we once get free of the nets."

"What must be done if he again orders us locked up?" asked Alfred.

"That brings us to the point where we must make a canvass of the situation as it confronts us. Let me see; there are three men in addition to the commander, who need not be reckoned with in a contest. Fortunately, one of the men is a machinist, and the only other man except the sub-lieutenant, of any intelligence, is the doctor. I doubt if he would be a strong factor against us," said the captain.

"The fellow who had charge of the men carrying the boxes is nothing but a chump," said Ralph. "I wouldn't be afraid of him."

"I am considering more the character of the men who are able to handle the boat, and who know the intricacies of the mechanism. I can see where men of that sort will be able to make it very interesting for us if we should attempt to capture the officers and crew," said the captain thoughtfully.

It was evident that the vessel was slowly righting itself, for every minute or two there would be a slight sinking movement, which was very gratifying.

"Where are the revolvers?" asked the captain.

"I found a dandy place for them, and can get them in a minute, if wanted," said Ralph.

"Captain, I wanted to ask you some time ago what you meant by saying that the sub-lieutenant didn't know any more about submarining than he ought to. What did you mean by that?" asked Alfred.

"One of the things I had in mind was, when he was trying to start the propellers, that he could have found an easier way to learn whether they were in the water or not," was the answer.

"How so?" asked Ralph.

"The indicator board in the conning tower shows just how far the vessel is under water," replied the captain.

"But," said Alfred, "would that tell it correctly if one end of the vessel should be up and the other down, as this is?"

"Why not? It would indicate how far down in the water the hull would be amidship, and it would not require much involved calculating to figure out where the stern of the vessel would be if he knew the angle at which the hull was resting," answered the captain.

"I would just like to know how far we are down," said Ralph, looking up the stairway into the conning tower.

"Do you think you could spot the right dial face if you went up?" asked the captain.

"I think I could," said Ralph, rather doubtingly, it must be admitted.

"Then I'll give you a little hint, if you'd like to try to make an investigation," said the captain. "Directly forward of the table, which contains the chart, and below the three levers, you will see a glass column with red colored liquid in it, _____"

"I know what you mean now," said Ralph, interrupting.

"Well, simply get the number on the card on the right side of the glass column. Do you understand?" remarked the captain.

"Yes; but why not take the numbers on the left side also?" asked Ralph.

"They merely indicate the pressure. Depth below the surface is all we want," rejoined the captain.

"Well, here goes; and I hope they won't catch me at it," said Ralph, as he slowly moved out.

"One moment," said the captain, as he put forth a restraining hand. "What will you do, or how will you act if some one should catch you in the tower?" he asked.

Ralph hesitated: "I hadn't thought of that; why,—well,—I suppose I should try to explain it in some way or other," he said.

"I am afraid that would not do. Allow me to make a suggestion. Go up boldly, as though you had a perfect right to, or that you did not suspect it was a forbidden place; if some one accosts you look at him in a surprised way, make an apology, and retire; I give you this pointer because you may be frustrated and unable to make a prompt reply, and that would show guilt of some kind," said the captain.

Ralph went out and loitered about, gazing at the various pieces of machinery, and finally stood on the steps of the conning tower, which, at the angle of the boat in its inclined position, were almost horizontal. He stretched himself out on the stairs, and turned his head. From that point he could see the red liquid in the glass column, but it was difficult to read the figures.

The glare from the electric light interfered with his sight, and before he had an opportunity to get a glimpse of the figures from his new position, one of the

petty officers crawled along the passageway, and, noticing him lying on the stairs, peremptorily ordered him to get down.

Ralph glanced at the man, smiled at him, and promptly complied, chagrined at his failure. As he entered the little room the captain eagerly questioned him: "What did it say?" he asked.

"That fellow ordered me away before I could make out the figures," said Ralph, "but I'm going to try it again."

"How near was the liquid from the top of the glass tube?" asked the captain.

"Well, I should say about so far," replied Ralph, indicating space between his thumb and finger. "I guess it was about an inch."

"How long do you think the tube is?" asked the captain.

"I think it must be a foot long; probably more," was the answer.

"I asked you to give me an estimate of the length of the entire tube so as to give me some assurance that you knew the value of an inch. You were right; those tubes are twelve inches long. Now let me see; I ought to know what figures are an inch from the top!" remarked the captain thoughtfully.

"Pardon me, Captain, but how does it come that you know all about these boats?" asked Alfred.

"I used to be an officer on a French submarine," he replied in a quiet tone, and immediately proceeded to make certain mental calculations. Then he continued: "One inch below the top! That is twenty."

"Twenty what?" asked Ralph.

"Twenty feet; the Germans have the English foot on all their boats. I wonder they didn't think about that, and make a change before starting out."

"Maybe it's twenty meters," said Alfred, with a slight laugh.

"Oh, no," replied the captain. "That would be too Frenchy for the Germans. Besides, it would be too much by all odds. I am sure the conning tower is not more than twenty feet below the surface of the water."

"Then the stern of the submarine must be sticking out of the water," remarked Alfred.

"Unquestionably," replied the captain.

"How far, do you suppose?" asked Ralph.

"We can easily figure that out," said the captain. "Let me see; we must first get the angle at which the boat is lying."

The Entangled Submarine

The Entangled Submarine[To List](#)

After looking about for some time he continued: "The door jamb is built in vertically; that is sure. A string, or piece of thread will make a plumb-bob; here it is: now let us see; according to the plumb line the boat is at an angle of 33 degrees, as nearly as our imperfect device indicates. There, now this line A shows the top of the boat and B the base of the conning tower. A line C, from the top of the water to the center of the conning tower, measuring 20 feet, shows where the water line is. Do you understand how I am doing it?"

"That is very plain," said Alfred, "and it is an interesting way to get at it, too. Then how far is the tail of the boat out of the water?"

"I should say it is about nine feet," replied the captain.

"No wonder the propellers didn't do any good when they sent them spinning!"

"There is one thing I forgot about," said the captain, as he shook his head. "Why didn't I tell you to note the time. We are in the greatest danger, I fear."

"Why, what makes you think so?" asked Ralph.

"This accident happened during the night, and we have now been in this condition for at least four hours. If we are caught here at daylight it is all up with us," remarked the captain.

"Why, is it any more dangerous then than now?" asked Alfred.

"Because the patrol boats and submarine chasers will spy us, and then a shot, and all will be over," replied the captain with a solemn voice.

"Then I think we ought to do something right away," said Ralph, as he half rose and glanced out.

"I am afraid that will put the burden of getting out of the nets on our shoulders," replied the captain. "No, let them work at it, as long as they care to, but we must try by some means to determine the time."

"Do you think the seamen would object to telling us?" inquired Alfred. "Just let me alone; I am going to try it on, anyway," he said, as he slipped out of the

door, picked up a box and stowed it away snugly at one side out of the way of a young fellow who was making his way up the incline toward the stern.

Alfred struck up a conversation, and asked: "Can I help you in any way? Tell me what to do."

The request seemed to warm up the fellow, and the information was given that the officer had instructed him to remove the stray boxes from the machinery. The two engaged in this work for more than fifteen minutes. Finally Alfred said: "How are you, pretty tired? You haven't had much sleep so far?"

"Oh, no; but we're used to that," he replied, "why, in the last run we had hardly an hour's sleep in the last four days before reaching port."

"That must be very trying," rejoined Alfred. "But it must be near daylight."

"It is just about an hour off; and when the day comes I don't know what will happen," remarked the seaman.

"Why, what are you afraid of?" asked Alfred, appearing to be greatly alarmed.

"They have caught us this time for good, as I heard the lieutenant,——"

The sentence was never finished, for at that moment there was another rasping sound, and the stern of the boat came down with a sudden spring, then rebounded, and after two or three oscillations, rested quietly in the water, still at quite an angle.

The sub-lieutenant sprang toward the conning tower as fast as he could scramble. The signal was given to reverse, the motors began to hum and the ship vibrated. It was a glorious feeling, and the captain grasped the hands of the boys in an ecstasy of joy.



CHAPTER IX

THE CAPTURE OF THE SUBMERGED VESSEL

"Why does it still keep at this angle?" asked Ralph.

"Have you forgotten the stuff we carried back into the stern?" replied Alfred.

"Do you think that really is the trouble?" asked Ralph.

"Yes; it is out of balance, and I suppose we may look out for another job," said the captain. "That may be the opportunity we are seeking. Furthermore, what is to be done must be done just as soon as possible."

"What makes you think so?" eagerly inquired Alfred.

"Several things. The first is, that we are now in the English Channel under the guidance of a man much less skilful than the lieutenant; and, secondly, the lieutenant, although badly wounded, may recover sufficiently to be able to direct affairs," replied the captain.

"When I was out there talking with the seaman," said Alfred, "I learned that the lieutenant was in a very low state."

"I should judge so, too," rejoined the captain, "for the reason that the doctor has not left the room once since the lieutenant was taken there. In making a calculation of the forces against us I have considered that the lieutenant, the cook and the doctor are disposed of, so far as being of any aid to the crew. Three others are also so badly injured that they do not need to cause us much worry. I am not certain in my mind, however, where they are at this time."

"Do you mean the men who were injured?" asked Ralph.

"Yes."

"Two of them are in the bunks behind the compressed air tanks," answered Ralph.

"Are you quite sure of that?" queried the captain.

"I know it," was the answer.

"Well, that makes six accounted for, so that there are twenty-one we must meet. Now I shall give a few general instructions before we proceed. The sub-

lieutenant has gone into the conning tower. As he entered I tried to get a glimpse to ascertain whether or not the sun had risen, but was unable to decide, but I should judge that it is not yet daylight or he would not be running on the surface. As a precautionary measure we must have the weapons ready, and have the revolvers put away so as not to expose them before we are ready."

"Here they are," said Ralph, who cautiously brought them to the room.

"Shall we load them?" asked Alfred.

"By all means; and let me warn you of one thing: when you aim be sure to hit. There must be no pretense about it. The matter is too serious for anything but strict business. I hope we shall not have the opportunity or necessity for using the revolvers. Now pay attention to the details: the sub-lieutenant must be the first one captured, and he must be taken into the conning tower. I suggest that you, Ralph, take your place beneath the stairway, hiding, as much as possible, behind the amidship tank, while you, Alfred, remain at the door of our room here."

"Shall I stay here so I can be seen or keep out of sight?" asked Alfred.

"Remain under cover inside the room, but in sight of the stairway. You have probably noticed that the under officer makes frequent trips to the conning tower, and that on returning each time he turns a short lever below the hinge," said the captain.

"I have noticed that several times and wondered what it was for," said Ralph.

"That is for the purpose of holding the hatch door so that it can be opened by him when he again ascends the stairway. Now, when the under officer opens the hatch and comes down the hatch stairs, will be the time for you to come out of the room and take up your position at the forward corner of the room; that will completely hide you from the eyes of the officer. I shall then go into the room, the moment he reaches the last step, and thus he will not suspect me. The moment he reaches the passageway opposite the door, I will hold him up with my revolver, and compel him to enter the room. The moment that is done you will push the door shut, as you will see that it has a spring lock. Do you fully understand the instructions so far?" asked the captain.

"I think so," answered Alfred, "although I don't exactly understand why I am to go into the room first, and then come out the moment the hatch is being opened."

"For the reason that we must not be suspected by the others, some of whom

are at all times not far away, and if, while we are waiting, some of the crew should pass the end of our room they would be sure to see you and consider that a peculiar place for you to be in. Do you understand it now?" replied the captain.

"Then, after that what will take place?" asked Ralph, his breath coming thick and fast.

"I shall go up the stairway, followed by Alfred. While this is going on it will be your duty, Ralph, to watch the workers at the dynamo and the aft tank. They are the only ones who will be able to see the stairway clearly. If you see any look of alarm on their faces, or see that they notice what is going on, move around into the opening, and level both revolvers at them, without, however, making any sound. Hold them in that position until I raise the trap-door and warn the sub-lieutenant. Alfred will follow close and hold the trap-door from being sprung. Then move up the companionway as fast as you can. There, he is going up now. Take your place, Ralph."

The crucial time had come. Alfred retreated into the little room as the captain leisurely moved along the narrow passageway toward the dynamos. Thus they waited and waited, five, ten minutes. Ages seemed to pass. Then the hatch door opened slowly. Alfred came out quietly without looking around, moved forward, and then walked back and slid into the corner of the room.

The petty officer closed the hatch and moved down the steps, brushing past the captain. As he did so the captain entered the door and immediately turned with the revolver pointing at the officer's breast.

"Not a sound, or I fire," said the captain in a voice which could not be heard a dozen feet away. The captain stepped aside, and pointed to the open doorway, at the same time indicating by motions that the German should enter it. The officer gritted his teeth and finally obeyed. As the captain stood there with the revolver at his side, but pointed at the man, Alfred slowly closed the door.

The captain now turned and moved up the stairway. With his revolver drawn he pushed open the trap-door quietly, and, in a quiet voice, said: "Hands up!"

The sub-lieutenant turned quickly, to look into the muzzle of the revolver. His hands reached out to seize a lever.

"*Stop!*" said the captain, and the officer quickly raised his hands.

Alfred was now in the tower, and Ralph, walking up backwards, had his head through the hatch opening, when a shot was fired. He dropped one of his revolvers, and Alfred quickly seized him by the shoulders and drew him up. The

hatch cover came down with a bang.

"Are you hurt?" asked Alfred, as Ralph dropped down, but he was reassured as the latter arose. For the moment the captain's gaze was averted, when, quick as thought, the officer's hand touched a lever.

The captain smiled, as he said: "I am afraid the valve of the submerging tank will not work; I prefer running on the surface. But, in the meantime, as I am commander of this vessel, and I notice that you are trying to interfere, I shall have to restrict your movements somewhat."

Saying this he drew a small cord from his pocket and instructed Alfred to bind the arms at the wrists. The hands of the officer were then carried around to the back and the cord fastened to a stanchion at one side, where he was out of reach of the instrument board.

This gave the captain an opportunity to examine Ralph's wound. The latter had quickly rallied. It was the shot, coupled with the extreme tension, which caused him momentarily to collapse, for it was found that the wound had passed through the fleshy part of the arm above the elbow.

"I suppose you want the destroyers to sink us," said the officer.

"Not at all," replied the captain. "Unscrew the bolts of the door, Alfred. And now a word more, Mr. Officer. Where are your flags?"

"I refuse to inform you," said the officer, with a look of determination in his face.

"I expect a shot every minute," said the captain, "for I know as well as you do that there is a cruiser on our port side. I shall give you another opportunity; where are the flags?"

"You must open the hatch for them," said the officer.

"All the bolts are out," said Alfred, turning to the captain.

"Guard the officer while I go out and signal," said the captain.

Before the captain reached the door there was an ominous boom in the distance. Alfred could see the officer's face grow pale. A shower of sea water sprayed over the deck, and some of the water entered the open door. Looking out he saw the captain, who had thrown off his coat and vest, and was now drawing off his white shirt, which he held up and waved to and fro, just as the second shot boomed.

Fortunately, the shot was too far away to be at all dangerous, as Alfred thought, but the voice of the captain explained it.

"Signal to stop!"

"Which lever?" inquired Alfred.

The latter hesitated. He glanced out the door and then at the boy. To refuse meant that the ship was doomed and his companions below without hope of rescue.

The captain, with the white signal in his hand, stepped to the door, and with the revolver pointing full into the face of the officer, said: "Stop the ship or you will never have an opportunity to save yourselves or your companions."

"Pull the second lever," he said, and Alfred did as directed.

"Reverse!" demanded the captain.

"The lever below," said the officer.

A mile away was a small, speedy craft, sailing around the submarine. It seemed fairly to skim over the surface of the water, and cast the spray astern like a mist. It had come up unnoticed by the captain.

"Look at the little boat," shouted Ralph, who had now recovered and had moved to the open door.

The captain turned quickly toward the stern, waving the white flag in a frenzy. It must have been regarded as a remarkable thing to those on board the little cutter to see a German submarine hoisting a surrender flag. It seemed too good to be true. They evidently supposed the white flag was a ruse of some kind, for they did not venture nearer.

Meanwhile, the cruiser, which had fired the two shots, came up behind the little craft, and the latter cautiously steamed up. The small vessel was one of the speedy torpedo boat chasers, carrying two three-inch guns, and drawing less than six feet of water. The safety of these boats lies in their great speed and in the shallow draft, which prevents the submarine from reaching them with their torpedoes.

Once abreast the commander called out: "I am sending a boat for your officers."

"I have only one here, that we can get at, at present," shouted the captain.

"What is that?" asked the commander of the chaser.

"I have one of the chief officers in the conning tower, and the others are below," said the captain.

"Who are you?" asked the commander.

"Captain Leclere, of the French service," replied the captain.

"Captain Leclere!" almost shouted the German officer in the conning tower.

"That's the man," said Alfred.

"Then I am not surprised," said the officer in a low voice.

"Surprised?" said Ralph. "Did you say 'surprised?'"

The officer sighed, turned his head away, and was silent.

A lieutenant and four seamen reached the side of the submarine, and were drawn aboard.

"Ah! it was your ship that went down in the bay last Wednesday," said the chaser's lieutenant.

"Yes; we were picked up by the submarine, together with my two young friends here," said the captain.

"And how does it happen that you are in command of this vessel?" he asked in surprise.

"We captured it about a half an hour ago, and have the chief officer and the crew below," replied the captain.

"That is certainly a remarkable exploit," replied the lieutenant. "I suppose you will be glad to meet the commander of *l'Orient*?" said the lieutenant.

"Ah! Captain Tournai, you mean! I recognized the French colors. But I supposed he was in the Mediterranean; it will be quite a pleasure, indeed. Do me the honor to signal him," said the captain.

The lieutenant gave the necessary instructions, and the flags wig-wagged from the bridge of the little vessel.

The sub-lieutenant was called out of the conning tower, and Alfred directed to unloosen the cords.

"I suppose you will take charge of the prisoners," said the captain.

"I should be glad to do so, with your permission, although you have a right, of course, to turn them over to *l'Orient*," said the lieutenant.

"No; it is sufficient gratification to know that we have the vessel," said the captain, "and I shall be glad to leave to you the disposition of the men and the vessel."

"What procedure would you suggest?" asked the lieutenant.

"I shall give an order to the sub-lieutenant directing the men to come out of the hold," said the captain. Then, turning to the sub-lieutenant, he said:

"You will inform the men below that they are to present themselves at the hatch."

The officer bowed, and entered the conning tower. He immediately descended. Before he had reached the bottom the captain said:

"Halt! Notify them from where you are. I shall not permit you to go any farther."

All the men were found to be stationed near the hatchway steps. One by one they appeared, and were escorted out, a dozen marines in the meantime having appeared in two boats. As they emerged from the door they were escorted to the side and directed to take their places in the ship's boats.

"That makes twenty-one," said Alfred.



CHAPTER X

THE SECRET KEY TO THE BOMB FUSE

"Shall I go down and assist in bringing up the lieutenant?" said the sub-lieutenant, as the doctor of the submarine passed out.

"No; I have decided that he shall not be removed until this evening," said the captain. "In the meantime the doctor may return, and give him such aid as is necessary."

The sub-lieutenant's face turned pale, and he trembled. This was the first show of weakness that he exhibited. The boys looked at the captain, and turned their glances toward the officer of the chaser. They could not understand it. The captain continued:

"I believe the chief machinist is also injured, as well as two of the machine tenders. They may also remain until after the lieutenant is brought up."

All present noticed the wrought-up condition of the sub-lieutenant, and the latter soon exhibited evidence that he was breaking down. At last he remarked with trembling voice:

"At what time can they be brought up?"

"I cannot tell at this time; possibly not until tomorrow," said the captain, directing a searching glance at the officer.

"He is very ill," said the doctor.

"I have no doubt of it," replied the captain. "The length of their stay in the submarine will depend on the length of the fuse attached to the time explosive in the hold."

The sub-lieutenant almost dropped as the captain uttered these words, and the boys exchanged significant glances, while the lieutenant of the chaser smiled.

"You did not think," continued the captain, "that I would be so lax in my duty as to permit you to plant a mine under our feet?"

The sub-lieutenant dropped his eyes without answering. The captain gazed at him intently, as he continued: "For the present you will be detained, and the time of the removal of the lieutenant with his companions will be decided within the

next two hours."

With this decision the sub-lieutenant was put in charge of the marines, while he descended to enter the boat. As he was about to step aboard, he turned to the captain and said: "It will be too late if you defer the decision for two hours."

"Ah!" said the captain with a faint smile, "you have thought better of it. Will the fuse last an hour?"

The sub-lieutenant nodded. The captain waved his arms and directed the officer to proceed. The latter unceremoniously pushed the sub-lieutenant into the boat.

"I will see to it that the fuses are taken out," said the sub-lieutenant, recovering from his sullen attitude.

The captain paid no attention to the remarks of the officer. As soon as the sub-lieutenant was well out of hearing, the captain turned to the boys and said: "It may be a difficult and trying duty to you to perform, but it is the only safe thing to do. As you know almost every part of the submarine from the investigation you have made, I would ask you to follow me, and I will tell you what to do."

The boys nodded their heads, and entered the conning tower with the captain. The latter turned, before descending, and said:

"You will have observed, no doubt, that the scheme was to turn over the submarine to us as soon as possible, leaving a time fuse, which, within a specified time, would have blown the ship to atoms. By so doing they would accomplish two purposes, namely, destroy the ship, and save their own lives. We must not put confidence in any statement they may make."

"But wouldn't it be a good idea to let the sub-lieutenant remove the fuses, as he said he would do?" asked Ralph.

"Would you be willing to rely on that?"

"Well, I wouldn't," replied Alfred. "I could tell by the way the sub-lieutenant acted that he would play a trick if he could."

"That is just why I want you to assist me in check-mating," said the captain.

"Tell us just what to do, and you may depend on us," replied Ralph.

"As you know many of the dark places below I want you to go down with me and find several where you can secrete yourselves. I will then send the sub-lieutenant down, and order him to remove the fuses. I want you to be particular

to observe every step he takes, and, as far as possible, note what he does at each place; do you understand?" said the captain.

"Perfectly," replied Ralph.

Together they descended. All were well aware that the lieutenant, the doctor, and the three wounded men were still in the dining galley, the door of which had been closed and locked by orders of the captain, after the last of the submarine crew reached the upper deck.

"I know one good place where a fellow can hide and still see what is going on," said Alfred.

"Where is that?" asked the captain.

"At that tank by the side of the dining galley," replied Alfred.

"That would be a good vantage point," answered the captain. "It is the aft trimming tank, and if you can find a place of concealment it would, at the same time, enable you to overhear any conversation that might possibly take place, when the sub-lieutenant is performing his unwelcome duty."

"Then maybe I ought to get somewhere forward of the main hatch?" proposed Ralph.

"I suppose you have your revolvers with you?" said the captain.

"I know mine is all right," replied Ralph.

"So is mine, I think," said Alfred, "although I haven't had an opportunity to try it so far."

"I hope there will be no necessity for anything of that kind," said the captain. "However, we are dealing with men who are desperate, and who have been taught that they must do desperate things to accomplish their purposes, hence the safe rule, in all cases, in dealing with them, is to do the very opposite of that which they wish you to do."

"Is that the reason why you refused to let him remove the fuse?" asked Alfred.

The captain laughed quietly, as he replied: "He thinks I have refused to let him do so, but he will be surprised to get the order to remove the fuses, and be permitted to go down into the vessel unaccompanied."

"Then he is to come down here without you?" said Ralph in surprise.

"Why, certainly; and that is why I want some one here to watch proceedings,"

said the captain.

"Oh! I understand now," replied Alfred. "That's a good idea. If anything happens we'll find out what it is if any one can."

"I believe it," answered the captain. "And now select your places. I will go up and send him down within the next fifteen minutes."

Alfred took up his station at one side of the aft trimming tank, and Ralph, after some investigation, upturned one of the boxes which was still lying in the passageway directly to one side of the steps leading to the conning tower, and after a little search, found two more, which were drawn together, thus forming a retreat which enabled him to observe the movements of any one on three sides.

All this was done in silence, and all preparation having been made, the captain ascended. After reaching the deck-house of the chaser, he requested the sub-lieutenant's presence. As he approached, between the two guards, the captain said: "I have concluded that you may go down and remove the fuses, and I shall depend on your honor to do it effectually."

The sub-lieutenant bowed stiffly, and was led to the boat, followed by the captain. As they reached the conning tower, the captain continued: "I will remain here. I shall give you ten minutes' time to do the work."

The sub-lieutenant descended, and was somewhat surprised to find himself alone in the interior. The electric lights were burning brightly. Ralph was the first to view his movements. The officer first moved to a point directly opposite, and with a key opened a door, which Ralph had never theretofore noticed. In a moment the door was again closed and Ralph saw a short section of a fuse, which the officer quickly pushed into a dark recess below.

From that point he moved toward the stern, stopping at the motors; then he quickly turned around and glanced about in a suspicious manner. As he stooped down, Ralph made a slight noise on one of the boxes, and the officer straightened up like a shot. The movement indicated a guilty act, and Ralph divined that the purpose was to injure the motors.

The sub-lieutenant moved cautiously to the rear, and in a few moments was abreast of the dining galley. Here he was within hearing of Alfred behind the aft trimming tanks. He saw the officer go to the door, and give three quick knocks. "Herr Schwoger!" he said in a subdued voice. In another moment a voice within replied: "The fuses; you must not forget them."

To this the sub-lieutenant answered: "I have been ordered to remove them;

what shall I do?"

"Take out all but the forward fuse, and report," said the voice. "Tell us what has happened," continued the voice, which was now recognized as the doctor's.

"They have complete command, and two warships are outside," was the reply.

From this point the officer crossed over to the starboard side of the vessel and at a large stand-pipe stooped down. Alfred tried to ascertain what he was doing, but was unable to detect the nature of his work. The sub-lieutenant then crossed back to the other side, and, working his way quickly to the motors, stooped down. Ralph could no longer restrain himself. He quickly and quietly moved toward the officer, as he saw him with a long tool of some kind in his hand reach down to the base of the motor.

"Hands up!" shouted Ralph.

The tool dropped from the hands of the officer with a click.

Alfred was at the side of the sub-lieutenant in an instant. "You may go on deck," said Ralph.

The officer glanced at Alfred, whom he had seen emerge from the aft hiding place, and then turned a look of contempt on Ralph.

"Move!" said Ralph, pointing to the gangway.

Alfred cocked his revolver and menacingly pointed it at him.

There was only one thing to do and he did it. He was met by the captain at the head of the stairway.

The boys followed quickly. The captain looked on at the leveled revolvers and appeared to be surprised.

"What does all this mean?" he asked.

"It means that he tried to destroy the motors, and we caught him at it in time," said Ralph.

"That is not so," replied the officer.

"What is this for?" asked Alfred, as he held up the tool which the officer had dropped.

"But you have removed all the fuses, of course?" said the captain, apparently not heeding the tool referred to.

"I have," said the officer, straightening up.

"All but the one at the forward part of the vessel," replied Alfred.

The officer turned, with a look of surprise and chagrin on his face. "He does not know what he is talking about," said the officer.

"Then you are lying to me as you are to the captain," said Alfred. "You told the doctor in the galley that you had removed all but the forward one. Did you lie to him?" asked Alfred.

A blush seemed to suffuse the officer's face, as the captain said:

"We will go down together. There may be some more work to do; come on," said the captain, as he indicated the way. "You may go first, Ralph, the sub-lieutenant will follow."

There was no help for it. Once below the captain said: "You will save yourself considerable trouble by removing the fuse from the forward bomb, and that without further waste of words."

The officer knew that the manner in which the words were uttered meant business. Without waiting for the second warning, he led the way, opened another secret door, and removed the tell-tale fuse.

"Ah, ha! cut for two hours! Now, while we are about it you might as well start the motor; we have some use for it," said the captain.

"I cannot do that," replied the officer.

"So you succeeded in injuring it," said the captain.

"No," was the reply.

The captain picked up the tool, which Alfred was so particular to carry along. "And what was this used for?" he asked.

"Yes; I have disarranged the motor fields so that they are useless; and I don't deny it," said the officer, straightening up and looking at the captain defiantly.

"There; that is something like it; but you haven't deceived me in the least. I have brought a very useful article with me," continued the captain, drawing from his pocket a paper and presenting it to the officer. "It contains instructions, which I expect you to follow, for your own safety. I shall see to it that the fuses you removed are again put into place and the mechanism set for one hour. Of course, I shall hold the keys. Under those conditions you may remain locked below, and I shall expect you to obey my signals, as we intend to navigate the vessel to port,

which will, as you know, occupy about fifty minutes of time. Do you know where the fuse boxes are?" said the captain, turning to the boys.

Ralph marched to the side wall and pointed to the place where the sub-lieutenant opened the first box.

"Open it!" ordered the captain, turning to the sub-lieutenant.

The latter hesitated. The captain stared at him sternly and repeated the order. As he made no motion, the captain continued: "Why do you hesitate?"



CHAPTER XI

OPERATING THE SUBMARINE WITH A CAPTIVE CREW

The officer now saw that he was dealing with a man who understood the motives of those aboard the submarine, and it was also evident that the sympathy of the boys was turned from the young man. The latter had played his part to the ultimate.

"You have now done all and more than is required of you," said the captain, as he altered his tone of voice. "You have set the automatic device, which, in due time, would have sent this vessel to the bottom. I understand all these devices, and they will not avail you. I understand, as well as you do, that to open that box will cause an explosion; but it is necessary to make an example of you." Then, turning to the boys, he said: "You may go on deck. As for you, Mr. Officer, I shall detain you below a sufficient length of time to be sure that the automatic device gets in its work. We really have no use for the submarine."

He turned and started up the stairway, when the sub-lieutenant, with trembling voice, said: "I am powerless to prevent the explosion,——"

"Unless," interrupted the captain.

The officer nodded his head. "I supposed so!" continued the captain. "The lieutenant in the galley has the key which controls the automatic device. You may open the door and get the key, and from this time forward, if I find that you deceive me in the slightest degree, or make any attempt to injure the vessel, I will make it your grave without a moment's hesitation, and without the least compunction."

The sub-lieutenant moved toward the galley, and opened the door. In a moment he reappeared with the key and followed the captain to the conning tower.

Below the switchboard was a tiny slot. Into this the key neatly fitted, and upon giving a turn, a set of switches was exposed.

"These are the control circuits," he said.

"Turn them off and open the boxes below!" ordered the captain. This was

done.

"Who are the men that operate the trimming tanks?" asked the captain.

"The machinist Scholer and his assistant Bracher," was the reply.

"Lieutenant," said the captain, addressing the commander of the chaser; "send those men on board."

When they appeared the captain continued: "You will go below with these men, and obey my signals, as we take the vessel to port, and remember, that if any part of the machinery is destroyed I will not guarantee to deliver you safely on shore."

As they disappeared, the trap-door was closed, and the boys were free, for the first time since the eventful morning, five days previous to this time, when they stepped aboard the submarine.

They now realized, in a particularly pointed manner, that while the air in a submarine seems to be fairly pure, it is filled with the most noxious fumes, due to the petroleum and lubricants, as well as to the odors due to cooking, all of which cannot be gotten rid of, however constantly the air-circulating apparatus of the ship is in operation.

The greatest efforts have been made to automatically discharge these odors, but the hundreds of dead corners within a hull of this character make it impossible to effect a thorough discharge, and when the trap-door finally closes down there is a peculiar feeling, not unlike seasickness, which seemed to attack one.

"I understand your feelings," said the captain, as he noticed the pale faces of the boys. "It is wonderful how you have been able to keep up, and not exhibit symptoms before this. I will have two seamen come over to assist me in the conning tower."

"I wish you wouldn't do that," said Alfred, as he placed his hand on his temples. "I am sure we will get over this in time."

"No, no; we want to stay with you, if you don't mind," insisted Ralph. "I am all right now," and he tried to smile, but it was not a very successful effort.

"Then I suppose I shall have to accede; yes, lieutenant, we can take care of the boat, but I shall expect you to act as our convoy," replied the captain.

The lieutenant directed his men to pull for the chaser, and the captain turned to

the operating board. "Forward," the word was plain. The signal was made by two distinct rings. The propellers turned. The captain, with his hands on the wheel, turned to starboard and made a short turn. This brought the vessel alongside the chaser. A slight turn to port, then forward, and they glided alongside *l'Orient*.

The crew had been lined up on the port side, and the captain at the end of the bridge raised his cap in salute as they passed by.

"Where are we going?" asked Ralph, as he saw the prow pointing to the south. "Are we going to France?"

"What are those funny things bobbing up there for,—that whole line?" asked Alfred.

"They are the floats for the torpedo nets," replied the captain. "We are now on our way to go through the gates, and thus avoid the nets."

"Is that why we are following the torpedo chaser?" asked Ralph.

"Yes, and when once inside the lane, we will change our course and reach the English base for craft of this kind," said the captain.

The submarine followed the wake of the chaser for fully a half hour, when, for some reason, that boat stopped. As they neared it they noticed the sailors and marines aboard on the port side, and intently engaged in looking forward.

"What's up now, I wonder?" said Alfred, as he opened the door of the conning tower and stepped on the deck.

"Look at the floats ahead," said the captain.

On investigation two of them were noticed moving back and forth, and occasionally dipping in an unaccountable manner.

"Look at those fellows with the guns on the deck of the chaser," said Ralph.

Alfred looked up. He saw the gun crews at their stations, with the officers in charge of the guns standing at one side in attitudes of expectancy.

"I know," said Alfred. "They have caught one of them."

"Yes; and they are making the same efforts to get away that we were engaged in only a few hours ago," said the captain.

The chaser steamed back and forth in a quiet, determined way, the men never for a moment relaxing their watch.

"What are they trying to do with that funny-looking, big, fat gun on the side

near the front end of the deck?" asked Ralph.

"That is a howitzer," answered the captain.

"What in the world do they want a howitzer for?" asked Alfred.

"To use it on the boat if it should get free from the net," replied the captain.

"Why don't they use it now?" asked Ralph.

"Because they do not want to destroy the boat unless it is absolutely necessary," answered the captain.

"But how will they know whether the boat gets away?" asked Alfred.

"By the condition of the floats," answered the captain. "You will notice that the two floats within range of the submarine's action are being dragged down. If the floats should be in a normal condition, or float on their true water line, which you can readily observe by glasses, it is evident that the submarine is free."

"And then that would be the time they would use the howitzers?" suggested Alfred.

"But how could they reach the submarine?" asked Ralph. "Do they know just where the vessel is now?"

"Yes, they can locate it within a hundred feet; but that would be near enough for their purpose," replied the captain.

"Do you mean," asked Alfred, "that they would send the shell from the howitzer anywhere near them, and that it would destroy the submarine even though it didn't hit it?"

"Yes; the detonating or rupturing effect of the high explosive in the shells is such that even though the explosion would take place a hundred feet from the hull, it would put it out of commission at once, and, in all probability, crush in the sides like an egg shell," said the captain.

"Why are they signaling?" asked Ralph, as the wig-wagging began.

"I think that's *l'Orient* in sight on the port side," replied the captain, after gazing in the direction indicated.

"Then the cruiser will take the position of the chaser?" said Alfred.

"Quite likely," answered the captain.

"Look at the smoke; she's coming this way," shouted Ralph.

The captain waved his hand to the lieutenant on the chaser, as he shouted: "They have responded to your signals."

As *l'Orient* approached and took up position, the chaser, with a parting salute, turned and started for its former course along the line of buoys. The boys looked back and kept their eyes on the moving buoys as far as they could see them.

"It will never get away," said the captain.

The chaser described a long curve, and changed its course due east, and, following it, they were at the entrance which had been left free. Beyond were several other small vessels, two of which dashed up and steamed alongside. The crews cheered as the boys emerged from the conning tower and waved their caps.

The lieutenant quickly informed the officers aboard the other boats of the prize, which had been taken by those aboard of her, and the news redoubled their noisy welcome. The tell-tale number on the side of the conning tower, U-96, was sufficient to inform the crews of the passing vessels that another of the dreaded boats was out of action.

Once within the lane, as the path between the two lines of buoyed nets is called, they turned and steamed north. Vessels were passing and repassing; transport and hospital ships; immense freight carriers, and saucy little tugs drawing barge-like flat-boats; innumerable fast launches and large war vessels, going to and fro between the shores of England and France.

Within a half-hour they again approached the place where *l'Orient* was watching the struggles of the entangled submarine. The boys thought of the trying hours when they, too, were thus imperilled, and could hardly refrain from shuddering at the thought of the human beings in the narrow prison house below the waves.

Evidently, something exciting was taking place, for the cruiser was constantly manoeuvring, and the men at the howitzers were keenly alive. Occasionally, there would be a lull in the movement of the buoys and it was during those moments that the most intense activity was shown on board the guarding vessel.

"I don't understand how it is that the submarine can get fastened to the nets," said Ralph to the captain, as they leaned over the rail of their vessel.

"The meshes of the nets are very large,—that is, of sufficient diameters to permit the ends of the submarines to pass into them," replied the captain.

"But, if that is the case why cannot the submarines back out in the same way that they went in?"

"They can, if the mesh is too small to take more than the bow of the vessel; but, in the event the mesh is large enough to permit the bow to enter, and the net once gets behind the fins of the submarine, that is the end of them, for the vessel cannot, in that case, free itself," responded the captain.

"How was it in our case?" asked Ralph. "Do you think the fins of our ship got caught?"

"I did not explain it to you at the time, as I did not wish to alarm you; but this vessel had one of its fins through the net. Evidently we struck the nets at an angle, and the tide helped us in keeping the hull against the net at the proper angle. The lieutenant knew this, for he adopted the only method known to free the ship under those circumstances," said the captain.

"So you think the lieutenant knew that only one fin had caught, and for that reason he tried to up-end the ship?" inquired Alfred.

"Yes; but not that alone. I observed one thing that you may have overlooked," remarked the Captain. "He was particular to store all the boxes which we helped to carry aft, on the starboard side."

"I noticed that," said Ralph hurriedly, "and that wasn't all. Every time a box was brought in he would ask: 'Heavy or light,' and I have many times wondered why he did so."

"I did notice one thing, though," said Alfred, "and that was, when the rear end of the submarine shot upward, and the boxes came tumbling down, that the hull seemed to roll around to the left."

"That was our salvation," replied the captain. "I then knew we had a chance."



CHAPTER XII

THE DEATH BLOW TO THE SUBMARINE

Let us try to get some idea of the situation. Ahead of the boat on which the boys were watching the scene, and probably not more than eight hundred feet distant, was *l'Orient*. Between them was the row of buoys, as far as the eye could see, stretching from the shore of England to the coast of France. To their right, and not two hundred feet distant was the saucy little chaser, which acted as their convoy.

At a point which might be termed midway between the three vessels thus described, were the two buoys, which moved with spasmodic jerks, due to the action of the imprisoned vessel below. As they looked along the bobbing buoys in either direction, small vessels were observed, patrolling to and fro, in the tiny mast, or lookout of each, being two or more men, with glasses, constantly scrutinizing the floats as the ships slowly moved past.

Apparently, at regular intervals, were large ships of war, all of them in motion. Sailing vessels and steamers, carrying freight, were coming up the channel, convoyed to the open doors in this giant network which guarded the channel.

The lieutenant on the chaser backed his vessel toward the submarine and hailed the captain:

"Do you wish to remain?" he asked.

"The chances of that fellow seem to be pretty slim. I would like to see the finish of the game; but I suppose we ought to get into port as soon as possible," answered the captain.

"Then I will give the order to proceed," replied the lieutenant.

The captain nodded, and the boys started for the door.

"One moment!" said the captain. "We may still be able to see an interesting sight."

The boys rushed out of the door. Glancing up at the deck of the chaser they could see the marines aboard rushing to the side of the vessel. As they looked at the buoys it was noticed that they were silent. *L'Orient* was slowly backing away from the obvious location of the submerged vessel.

"They are about to throw a shell," observed the captain.

The remark had hardly left his mouth when an explosion was heard and the shell could be observed moving upward at a very high angle, and descending into the water with a vicious plunge.

No sooner had it struck the sea than it seemed to raise the surface of the water like the foaming mass in a boiling pot. The explosion was dull, vibrant, ominous.

"They are shooting another one," shouted Alfred, although he tried to suppress his voice.

"Boom!" came the sound, as he uttered the words.

The second shot struck the water not fifty feet distant from the first one.

"Do you think they will fire another?" asked Alfred.

"Probably not," answered the captain.

"What is that little boat going over there for?" asked Ralph, as one of the torpedo boats boldly advanced over the spot where the two shells had entered the water.

The captain nodded his head for a few moments before speaking.

"The shots were successful."

"I can see that now," said Ralph. "Look at the oil coming up and covering the sea."

It was, indeed, a sad sight to witness, knowing that the shots meant the death of thirty or more human beings.

"Well, I am awfully sorry for them, even if they had no sympathy for us, and didn't wait to see whether or not we were put into safety before they sent our ship down," said Alfred reflectively, as he turned and entered the conning tower.

The scene had its fascination for Ralph, although he felt the horror of it all as he stood leaning over the railing, gazing at the patrol boats which were sailing back and forth in and around the spot where the petroleum was fast covering the surface of the water in all directions.

"You can understand now, can't you, why flying machines are such good spotters for submarines?" remarked the captain.

"Do you mean the oil that comes on top of the water?" asked Ralph.

"Yes," was the reply.

"But does oil arise at all times when a submarine is submerged?" asked Ralph.

"More or less oil is constantly detaching itself from the body of the hull, at the discharge ports, and it can't be helped because all of the gas discharge ports are under water at all times, whether the vessel is running on or under the water, hence, as it moves along it will leave a trail of oil which can be easily detected by a machine in flight above the surface of the water," said the captain.

"But doesn't a machine, when it is under the water, leave a ripple that is easily seen by a flying machine?" asked Ralph.

"Yes; I was going to refer to that," replied the captain. "An aviator has a great advantage over an observer on a vessel, for the reason that the slightest movement of the surface of the sea, even though there may be pronounced waves, can be noted. If the submarine is moving along near the surface, the ripple is very pronounced, and the streak of oil which follows is very narrow. Should the submarine stop, the oil it discharges accumulates on top of the water at one place, and begins to spread out over the surface of the water and this makes it a mark for the watchful eye of the airmen of the sea patrols," answered the captain.

"I heard one of the officers at the aviation camp say that a submarine could be seen easily through fifty feet of water by an airman," remarked Alfred. "Do you think that is so?" he asked.

"I know it is possible," replied the captain.

"But why is it that when you are on a ship it is impossible to see through the water that depth?"

"For this reason," answered the captain: "if you are on a ship, and you are looking even from the topmast of the vessel, the line of vision from the eye strikes the surface of the water at an angle. The result is that the surface of the water acts as a reflector, exactly the same as when the line of sight strikes a pane of glass."

"Do you mean that the sight is reflected just as it is when you are outside of a house and try to look into the window at an angle?" asked Ralph.

"Exactly; that is one explanation. The other is this: sea water is clear and transparent. By looking down directly on the water, a dark object, unless too far below the surface, will be noted for the reason that it makes a change in the

coloring from the area surrounding it, and a cigar-shaped object at fifty feet below, whether it should be black or white, would quickly be detected," explained the captain.

"I remember that Lieutenant Winston, who has flown across the channel many times, told me that he could tell when he was nearing land, in a fog, by sailing close to the water, even though the land couldn't be seen. Do you know how he was able to do that?" asked Ralph.

"That is one of the simplest problems," replied the captain. "The shallower the water the lighter the appearance to an observer in an airship. As the water grows deeper the color seems to grow greener and bluer, the bluest being at the greatest depth."

The chaser was now under way, and described a circle to the right. The captain, after saluting the officer on the bridge of *l'Orient*, gave the signal "Forward," and slowly the submarine sheered about and followed.

The second line of buoys appeared a quarter of a mile to the east of the one they had just left. In a half-hour the two vessels passed through the gateway and turned to the north.

"We can't be very far from England," remarked Alfred.

"I judge we are fifteen miles from Dover," replied the captain.

"Do you intend to go to Dover?" asked Ralph.

"No; there are no stations there that can receive crafts of this kind. I do not know to what point they may take us; possibly to the mouth of the Thames, and from there to some point where the vessel will be interned," answered the captain.

"How deep is the channel here?" asked Ralph.

"Probably not to exceed 120 feet," was the reply.

"Not more than that in the middle of the Channel,—half way between England and France?" asked Alfred in surprise.

"No; the Channel is very shallow," answered the captain.

"No wonder then," said Alfred, "that the submarines are having such a hard time getting through, even though they don't have the nets!"

Having passed the cordon of nets the chaser turned and slowly steamed past the submarine. The lieutenant stepped to the side of the bridge and said:

"I suppose, Captain, you can now make the pier-head at Ramsgate, where you will get a ship to convoy you to the harbor. Good luck to you! Adieu!"

The boys waved their caps in salute, as the chaser began to move, and the crew lined up to give the final goodbye.

The captain smiled and replied: "I think I have ample assistance on board; give my regards to the admiral."

"How far is it to Ramsgate?" asked Ralph.

"It cannot be more than twenty-five miles, and at the rate we are now going we should reach the head at five this evening. That will be the end of our troubles, as the naval officials will take care of this vessel from that point," said the captain.

"Well, I shall be glad of it," replied Alfred.

It was a glorious day, the sun was shining brightly, and the air, although somewhat cool, was not at all disagreeable. The boys insisted on taking their turns at the wheel, the course being given by the captain as west by north. Everything was moving along in fine shape, and Alfred was at the wheel, while Ralph was peering through the periscope, for this interested them from the moment they boarded the ship.

"Where is that steamer bound?" asked Ralph, who noticed a large two-funnel steamer crossing the field of the periscope.

"It belongs to the Australian line," replied the captain.

"Aren't we in the barred zone?" asked Alfred.

"I was about to remark a moment ago that it does not seem as though the German edict of a restricted zone makes much difference in the sailing of vessels," replied the captain.

While speaking, the submarine seemed to slow down, and the captain turned toward the conning tower. "I wonder what is up now?" he asked.

Alfred's head appeared at the door and shouted: "They don't seem to answer my signals."

The captain entered the tower, and pulled the lever, *Attention!* There was no response to the signal below the word. He again rang, with the same result.

The
Periscope
The
Periscope[ToList](#)

"I will open the hatch," said the captain.

It was quickly swung open. The sub-lieutenant appeared at the hatch with haggard face and staring eyes. "The captain has gone mad!" he shouted.

"I will go down if you want me to; I am not afraid," said Ralph.

The captain looked at him for a moment, and glanced down into the hatchway. "Why do you not obey my signals?" he asked.

The sub-lieutenant stared at the captain, but did not make a reply. "Answer my question!" shouted the captain.

The officer raised his face, threw up his hands, and fell back across the low railing, which served as a guard at the foot of the stairs.

"You may go down, and ascertain what is the matter, but use caution," said the captain.

Ralph stepped into the open hatch, and, as he did so, the captain laid his hand on his shoulder, and said: "Take out your revolver; do not trust those men for a moment, under any consideration; we know them too well."

Ralph quickly drew the weapon and held it in his hand, then cautiously descended. He passed the inert form of the officer on the rail, and not until he reached the last step did he see the doctor and the chief machinist by the side of the dynamo.

The doctor held a revolver, which he pointed straight at Ralph. "Drop that revolver!" shouted the doctor. "The lieutenant is dead, and the time fuse will soon send this ship to the bottom."

The moment he saw the revolver and heard the voice, Ralph dropped behind the stanchions to which the stairway was attached. The doctor's revolver was fired. Instantly the captain divined the cause. Without waiting for a warning cry from Ralph, he leaped into the open hatch, and saw the two men with their weapons. He covered them with his revolver.

"Come up!" he shouted to Ralph.

The latter raised up from his crouching position, with his revolver now leveled full in the faces of the two frenzied men. Before Ralph had reached the upper step both men in the hold fired, fortunately, without doing any damage.

The moment Ralph gained the deck the captain jumped out of the hatch and slammed it down.

"Now, quickly, boys; tie this rope to the railing close to the periscope tube, and arm yourself with the life preservers; there, you will find them under that couch," said the captain, as he quickly threw back the cover from the couch and handed out four preservers.

"Why do you want four?" asked Ralph, as he hastily buckled one of them around himself.

"To attach to the end of the line that you have just fastened to the rail," replied the captain.

The captain sprang out through the open door, and attached one of the life belts to the end of the line. The boys now noticed the coil of rope, which must have been more than a hundred feet in length.

"I wonder what that is for?" asked Alfred, as the captain disappeared.

"There," said the captain, as he again appeared at the door. "If she goes down that preserver will tell them where to fish for her."

"Do you think there is any danger?" asked Ralph.

"I do not know; I am not taking any chances. I have my opinion, though," replied the captain thoughtfully.

"Do you think they are going to blow up the vessel?" asked Alfred.

"No; but I am inclined to think that they have not been able to disconnect the automatic fuse, or, that the death of the lieutenant, if such should be the case, has prevented them from finding the secret key, and,——"

"That the sub-lieutenant has actually gone mad," interrupted Ralph.

The captain nodded, and continued: "Although they deserve death, still, I am not a barbarian, and shall give them a chance for their lives," and, saying this, he moved through the door, and, sighting a large steamer, gave a signal. Once, twice, three times he moved the flag from right to left. Almost immediately there was a response and two short whistles responded.

Before the great ship had time to stop, the forward end of the submarine moved upward with a violent heave, followed by an explosion that seemed to tear everything to pieces. Ralph was thrown clear of the top, and landed fully twenty feet from the side of the hull. Alfred and the captain seemed to be propelled to the stern of the ship and dashed into the waves at least fifty feet from the spot where Ralph had landed.

Ralph did not appear to be even stunned, but Alfred's head dropped lifeless on the side of the life preserver, and the captain was prompt to reach his side and support him so that his head was kept free from the water.

Ralph was bewildered at the suddenness of the affair, and, while splashing in the water, glanced first at the captain and Alfred, and then swung around to get a view of the big ship, which they had signalled. The submarine had vanished. The sea around appeared to be a mass of bubbles, and he could plainly see the petroleum which was oozing up.

Nothing was visible where the submarine floated but a single belt,—the life preserver which the captain had used as a buoy, to mark the location of the sunken vessel.



CHAPTER XIII

THE RESCUE IN THE CHANNEL

"The boat is on the way," shouted the captain, as Ralph tried to direct himself toward the captain and Alfred.

"We were just in time," said Ralph. "How is Alfred?" he asked.

"Only stunned," replied the captain. "I think he hit the conning tower as the vessel up-ended."

"Poor fellows," said Ralph, "I suppose it's all up with them."

"They are gone beyond all help. But we did the best we could," answered the captain. "Here, take this fellow first," continued the captain, addressing the officer in charge of the boat.

The boys were soon dragged in, and the officer gazed at the captain most earnestly, as he said: "Why, Captain, we heard just before we left the dock about you and two boys capturing a submarine; was that the submarine? What has happened?"

"That is a long story, but you shall hear it as soon as we get aboard. Where are you bound?" asked the captain.

"For the Mediterranean," replied the officer.

"Where is your first port?" asked the captain.

"Havre," was the answer.

"Couldn't be better," replied the captain. "Ah! I see Alfred is coming around all right."

"He seems to be breathing all right now," said Ralph.

"So they heard about our exploit?" asked the captain.

"Why, yes; the papers made quite an item about it; I think we have a copy on board," replied the officer.

As the boys ascended the ship's ladder they saw two torpedo boat destroyers crowd up alongside the ship. The captain leaned over the taff-rail and said:

"The buoy yonder marks the resting place of the U-96, late in the service of the Imperial German Navy. Please report same, with my compliments."

Alfred was taken aboard and the ship's doctor was soon in attendance. Every one crowded around and the names of the boys and the captain were soon known to all the passengers. The *Evening Mail* gave the most interesting account of the affair, and Ralph read and re-read the item.

An hour afterwards, when everything had time to quiet down, and Alfred had recovered sufficiently to sit up, Ralph drew out the newspaper, and, to the surprise of Alfred, read the following:

"AN EXTRAORDINARY FEAT

"A SUBMARINE CAPTURED BY THREE PRISONERS

"The war is a never-ending series of startling and remarkable events, the latest being the capture of a German submarine by the captain of one of the transatlantic liners and two American boys who were passengers on the captain's ship when she was torpedoed. The commander of the submarine took the captain and the two boys from the boat in which they had sought refuge, after their vessel went down in the Bay of Biscay.

"It was learned from the first officer of one of the torpedo-boats that the submarine while on its way to Germany was caught in the nets in mid-channel. While trying to disentangle itself, the chief officer of the submarine met with an accident, and, taking advantage of the situation, the captain and his two boy companions, having found a case of revolvers, held up the second officer and the crew, and imprisoned them below.

"They are now bringing the submarine to England, and we hope to be able to give more details tomorrow."

"There, what do you think of that?" ejaculated Ralph.

Alfred smiled, but a shadow came over his face, as he looked at Ralph. The latter, seeing the change, jumped up, and cried: "Are you sick?"

"No," replied Alfred wearily; "but I have been thinking of father and mother; I had a dream that I saw them standing on a dock; I wonder where they are?"

"I have some interesting news for you," said the captain, as he entered the cabin, holding a French paper in his hand.

"What is it?" asked the boys in unison.

"Boats three, four and five of our ship have reached port all right," said the captain.

"Have you heard about No. 1?" asked Alfred, as he leaned forward, and anxiously awaited the reply.

"No; but it is likely that the other boats may have been picked up by a west bound vessel, and it is not time yet to hear from the other side," replied the captain.

"But do you think they are safe?" asked Ralph.

"I do not see that they were in any great danger, as there was calm weather for at least forty-eight hours after the ship went down," answered the captain. "I understand that all but three of the boats have been accounted for."

"Have the submarines been doing much damage?" asked Alfred.

"Yes; they have sunk a great many ships," was the answer.

"Any American ships?" asked Ralph.

"No; but a number of Americans have lost their lives on vessels that have been sunk."

"Where are we going?" asked Alfred.

"To Havre," was the reply.

"I wouldn't worry about father and mother now," said Ralph soothingly.

"No, indeed; the boats were perfectly safe, and I have no doubt but we shall hear from them by the time we reach port," reassured the captain.

Ralph waited until Alfred dropped off to sleep, and then strolled up on deck and mixed with the passengers. He was kept busy telling them about the terrible hours on board the submarine, until he was tired and sleepy. Then he wended his way to the cabin and was soon asleep.

The distance from the point where they boarded the ship to Havre was about two hundred miles. Ordinarily, they would have reached port at six in the morning, but the route during the night was a slow and tedious one, for the reason that all ships along the channel route were permitted to pass only during

certain hours when the war vessels acted as guides and convoys through the open lane.

Once near the zone of the nets no lights were permitted, and each ship had to be taken through by special vessels designated for this work, and, when once clear of the nets, extra precautions were taken to convoy them to relative points of safety beyond.

When Ralph awoke the next morning, and saw that it was past six, he hurriedly dressed himself, and, taking a look at Alfred, who was quietly sleeping, ascended the deck. He was surprised to see nothing but the open sea on all sides. Addressing a seaman, he asked:

"Haven't we reached Havre yet?"

"No; we may not get there until nine o'clock. We have had reports of many submarines in the mouth of the channel, and they are, probably, lying in wait to intercept steamers going to or coming from Havre," replied the man.

Pacing the deck he found many of the passengers excited at the news, although it was the policy of the officers to keep the most alarming information from them. Meeting the second officer he inquired about the captain, and was informed that he had just gone down to see Alfred. Nearing the companionway he met the captain and Alfred, the latter looking somewhat pale, and rather weak or unsteady in his walk.

"I am glad to see you looking so well," said Ralph. "Where are you hurt the most?"

"Look at the back of my head," replied Alfred. "I suppose I must have struck the railing as the thing heaved up."

The captain suddenly sprang forward and the boys followed in wonderment. Before they had time to ask any questions they were startled by a shot.

"That was a pretty big gun to make such a racket," remarked Ralph.

"It's one of the four-inch forward guns," said a seaman, standing near.

"But what are they shooting at?" asked Alfred.

"Submarine, I suppose," was the reply.

"But where?" asked Alfred.

"Don't know; haven't seen one; but I suppose the lookouts spotted the fellow," was the reply.

Every one now crowded forward, and gazed in the direction of the pointed glasses in the hands of the officers. In the distance nothing was visible but the conning tower and the two periscope tubes, but that was enough.

The Conning Tower

The Conning Tower, All That Could Be Seen of the Submarine[ToList](#)

The boys moved forward, and the captain noticing them, spoke a word to the commander on the bridge.

"Come up, boys," said the captain.

Once on the bridge the captain said: "I take pleasure in introducing my companions on our little jaunt; they are brave fellows, and are made of the right kind of stuff. I think you will hear from them if America gets into the fight."

"And America is bound to get in, for we have just learned that the first American ship has been sunk without warning," said the navigating officer, as he pressed the hands of the boys.

The captain took up the receiver, which communicated with the topmast. After listening awhile, he turned to the group and said: "The sub has disappeared."

"That will mean an interesting time for us," said the captain. "I have had the same experience, but was not fortunate enough to be armed when they attacked us. Are all the vessels from England now armed?" he asked the captain commanding the vessel.

"Yes; fore and aft. We have found that but a small percentage of armed vessels have been sunk, and those which have guns at both ends are surely doubly armed," answered the commander.

The boom of the guns had brought every passenger on deck. The officers could not conceal the real state of affairs, but there was no sign of a panic. The officers did not even take the precaution to warn the passengers that they should apply or keep the life belts close at hand.

"That is the policy I suggested from the first," said the captain. "That boat must have been three miles away, at least, and a careful gunner would come pretty close to hitting the mark at that distance, and those fellows know it."

"Then why do you think the interesting or dangerous time is now coming?" asked Alfred.

"Because the safety of the ship now depends on the ability of the observers to report the moment a periscope appears in sight. If the submarine is close enough to fire a torpedo, it is near enough to be a fine target for the gunners aboard, and, as the submarine would not be likely to attempt a shot unless it had a broadside to aim at, you can see that such a position would expose her to the fire of the guns both fore and aft," responded the captain.



CHAPTER XIV

TEN HOURS IN THE DANGER ZONE

"What do you make the reckoning?" asked the captain, as the navigating officer lowered his instrument, and turned to the book.

"Fifty, ten north," was the reply.

"On the line?" asked the captain.

"Twelve minutes east," answered the officer.

"Then we are forty miles due north of Havre," responded the captain.

"What did you mean by being 'on the line?'" asked Ralph, addressing the captain.

"The zero line, or the point where all calculations east and west are reckoned from, runs north and south through Greenwich, in England, a place a little east of London. We are about fifteen miles east of that line," replied the captain, "and one hundred and eighty miles south of London."

But all were now interested in the further developments which might be expected. The wireless was constantly receiving messages, and occasionally the commander received messages which were, evidently, interesting reading, judging from the comments made. Most of the information related to the activities of the undersea boats, and only in that region where they were now approaching.

The vessel was proceeding slowly, when suddenly the officer in the crow's nest sent down a signal that vitalized the gunners. The guns swung around instantly. Away off to starboard was the faintest ripple, for the water was comparatively smooth.

Two shots rang out almost simultaneously from the fore and aft guns. It was a thrilling sight to see the streaks of glistening water, which the two shells brought up to be reflected by the brilliant sun. A shout from the gunner at the bow caused a chorus of answering shouts.

"Did they hit it?" asked Alfred.

"Well, there is one less periscope, if I know anything," replied the navigating

officer.

Ralph had descended the stairs leading down from the bridge, and quickly made his way to the bow.

"I want to congratulate you on that shot," he said, as he approached.

The gunner, with glowing face, turned, and, seeing Ralph, replied: "Thank you, lad! Coming from you it's a compliment. Lor', but we like to spot 'em."

"That fellow's as good as useless," remarked the officer in charge.

"But suppose the submarine has any torpedoes left?" queried Ralph.

"That wouldn't do him any good; he would have to use that to sight by," replied the officer.

"Yes; I can see that now," replied Ralph. "If he came to the top in order to fire the torpedo he wouldn't last very long with these guns pointing at him."

As Ralph was ascending the stairway leading to the bridge on his return a half-hour later, the watch shouted out a warning: "Five points to starboard!"

Every one was now keyed up to the highest pitch. The guns were quickly swung to the angle indicated, and another tense moment arrived.

The captain walked over to the commander, and said: "It seems to me that the best policy is to bear down on him with all speed possible. That will give the gunners the best chance, and at the same time present the smallest target for the submarine."

The commander nodded and gave the necessary order, but before the helmsman had time to execute the turning movement the forward gun was heard, quickly followed by the second gun. The aft gun also responded, making three shots that were fired, striking the water in such close proximity to each other that the aim must have been very accurate.

"Gunners from the Royal Navy," remarked the captain, as he lowered his glasses. "And they have hit the mark."

"Do you think so?" asked Alfred.

"I am sure of it, for this reason," said the captain, as the officers on the bridge crowded around; "neither of the periscopes is visible, and I can plainly see the boiling that follows a sinking submarine."

The ship was now at full speed, sailing directly over the course where the

submarine was sighted. It did not take long for the vessel to cover the mile, and, as they neared the tell-tale spot, the ship was veered slightly out of its course, so that a good view could be obtained of the surface of the water.

"How deep do you suppose that submarine is now?" asked Alfred.

"It is in less than two hundred feet of water; see, the air bubbles are still coming up, although it went down fully fifteen minutes ago."

The steamer slowed down as it came abreast, and the passengers leaned over the side in intense excitement, watching the signs which indicated the death of another sea terror. Even while they were watching one immense boiling zone appeared and settled down, indicating that another air tank had given way, or that the pressure of the sea water had forced the air from one of the innumerable pockets in the interior of the submarine.

Four bells indicated a resumption of the journey. The great funnels began to pour forth smoke in immense volumes, and the ship fairly shook with the revolutions of the twin screws.

"So we are going directly south," said Ralph, who had just examined the compass, and started for the stairway.

"There will be no let-up now," remarked the captain.

Every one understood that forced draught would now be resorted to, both to avoid the likelihood of being torpedoed, and also to enable the ship to reach port at the earliest possible moment. The *St. Duneen*, although a twin-screw vessel, was not of more than 5,000 tons burden, having been built as a mail carrier for distant ports, in which speed was regarded as the important element in her construction.

As the commander remarked to the captain, after the latter reached the bridge, he felt sure that the speed alone, which he was able to make in an emergency, would baffle any attempt to reach his hull. It seemed so, for the vessel fairly skimmed the surface of the water, and left a trail which could be marked for miles.

Every one felt happy, and there was a feeling of security aboard that was shared by every one. Luncheon was announced, and the boys were descending the stairway leading to the cabin, when they felt a peculiar sensation. They were thrown down the steps, taking with them several women and children, who were alongside.

No sooner had they landed at the bottom, when the most terrific crash was heard.

"Submarine!" shrieked a voice.

The sensation of the oscillating movement of the vessel was a sickening one. The dining room was half-filled with women, children and men.

"To your cabins at once; life belts as quickly as possible!" shouted an officer. "The men must aid the women and children. Do not become excited."

This warning had a marked effect; it restored the confidence which had been so rudely shocked. Ralph and Alfred sprang for the closets where the life preservers were kept, and threw them out on the floor as fast as they could grasp them. They caught up one child after the other, and, without heeding the resistance which some offered, adjusted the belts, and, as fast as this was done, they assisted in pushing the children toward the companionway.

[A Contact Mine](#)

A Contact Mine[ToList](#)

The ship was slowly sinking to one side. The angle was very perceptible, and especially noticed as the boys reached the stairway, for it was found to be impossible to ascend by the starboard stairs. This made it more difficult to get the people out of the crowded rooms below.

"Don't get excited!" shouted the officer from the head of the stairs. "We can all clear the ship safely before she goes down."

As fast as the passengers reached the deck, officers were present to direct them to the most advantageous boats, but no orders were given to man the boats. The bow of the ship had gone down, and she was now lying at a considerable angle, but it was evident that there was considerable buoyancy in the vessel, and that there was no immediate danger.

"Are you sure that all are out of the cabins?" asked the captain, as one of the porters appeared at the end of the passageway.

"We might as well take a look," said Alfred, as he rushed toward the port passage.

"I will go through the other passageway and meet you at the aft stairway," said Ralph, as he darted toward the gangway leading along the right side of the ship.

Alfred diligently opened every door and glanced about; he was not long in reaching the aft stairway area, and waited for some minutes for Ralph to appear. As he was crossing the open space between the two passageways, he heard a shriek, followed by piercing screams, evidently from the port passage.

Directed by the sounds he sprang from door to door, and soon detected a terrific struggle. "Help! help! I am being murdered!" was the cry.

At the door of a cabin Alfred saw two forms, one the woman, and the other Ralph in a fierce struggle, the woman with her arms around the post, which extended upward from the floor at the side of the cabin couch. She defied every effort on the part of Ralph. Alfred seized her hands, gradually loosened them, and when they had succeeded in freeing her, she dropped down, completely exhausted, threw her head to one side, and swooned.

This greatly facilitated her removal. The boys dragged her along the passageway, and, nearing the stairs, noticed a peculiar sound, something like a muffled explosion, followed by a sudden lurch of the ship, which destroyed their balance so that they were compelled to drop their burden.

"What can that be?" asked Ralph.

"Seems as though we have been hit the second time," replied Alfred.

"Oh! here you are!" shouted the captain, as he rushed down the stairway, followed by an officer.

"What was that?" asked Ralph.

"A bulkhead has just given way," replied the captain.

"Then we are bound to go down," said Alfred with a sigh. "We must get her up before she comes to."

"Yes, but we'll try to save her," replied the captain.

The ship was slowly sinking. The motion of a vessel as it loses its buoyancy gives a most peculiar feeling to those on board, independently of the knowledge that danger is lurking very near. The sinking motion is not a smooth and steady going down, but the movement is accompanied by successive throbs, as it seems,—it almost appears as though the ship were a living thing, sobbing away, until the final plunge takes place.

Aided by the captain and the officer, the woman was quickly brought to the deck, where it was learned that her husband had lost his life on a torpedoed

vessel a month before. She opened her eyes as they were placing her in the boat, and instantly recognized Ralph.

"Did I resist and try to injure you?" she asked. "Forgive me!" she said pleadingly. "But I have had so much trouble. You must be a brave boy to act as you did."

"Don't mind that for a minute," replied Ralph. "We were bound to get you out; we didn't think of anything else."

"Come on, boys; take the boat at the next davit," said the captain. "I will be with you in a moment."

The boys entered the little dory and sat down. The navigating officer was the last one to step in. He stood there with his instruments in his hands, and cast a gloomy look along the deck. "Too bad, too bad!" he said reflectively.

"Say, Ralph, I have an idea that we are hoodoos!" said Alfred, with a serious air.

"Who is a hoodoo?" asked the captain, approaching and overhearing the conversation.

"Hoodoo, nothing!" answered Ralph.

"Well, it begins to look like it," responded Alfred. "There is some sort of deviltry around wherever we have happened to be ever since the war began."

Notwithstanding the gravity of the situation, the captain could not repress a smile, which he quickly suppressed, as he answered:

"Then what would you call me? They have sunk four ships under me by torpedoes, and one by a mine. You have seen and experienced some of the other adventures I have had within the past ten days, and now this is another vessel to go down under me on account of a mine," said the captain.

"A mine! a mine, did you say?" almost shrieked Alfred.

"Yes; one of the floating mines that the Germans are strewing about in open defiance of all the laws," answered the captain with a bitter voice.



CHAPTER XV

A FRIGHTFUL MINE EXPLOSION

The order was given. There was no hope for the ship. "Lower the boats!" Everything was done with precision and in order, indicating that there was no panic on shipboard. Up to the last moment the wireless S. O. S., *St. Duneen*, 48, 50 N., 10 E., repeated and repeated the message of the disaster.

At a signal the wireless operator obeyed the commander's orders, and emerged from the little room high up aft of the main stacks. He sprang into the boat, as it was moving down.

"Pull away! pull away!" shouted the commander, as the boats reached the surface of the water. The order and its execution did not come too soon. Like a giant, in a death struggle, there were a few spasmodic movements, and more pronounced ones as the bulkheads gave way.

They were fully two hundred feet from the ship, when suddenly it seemed to roll around half-way, and they could look over the entire deck, so fully was it exposed to those on board of the dory in which the boys had taken refuge.

The vessel rested on its side for a moment only, then it slowly staggered back, the bow quickly dipped, and failed to come back again. Then it seemed actually to slide forward into the depths, the stern rising higher and higher, as the bow moved under. More than fifty feet of the stern of the ship was still out of the water, when a peculiar thing happened. The hull ceased to move. It remained at an angle in the air for a quarter of a minute, while every one stared at it in silence.

"What is the matter with it?" asked Alfred, who was the first to break the silence.

"The bow is on the bottom of the ocean," said the captain.

That was, indeed, true. Soon it began to sink, by falling back, and it quietly sank beneath the waves, leaving scarcely a ripple above the surface.

"That would have been different if she had been struck amidship, for the hull would have gone down on an even keel," remarked the commander.

The nine boats were now afloat near each other. In the distance could be seen

smoke in two directions, evidence that vessels were not far away. Then, almost like an apparition, from the east came two of the speedy little ships, which act like spit-fires and lie so low in the water that they are able to creep up unawares. They do not give forth any smoke to warn an enemy, or indicate their presence to friends.

Long before the ships, which had announced their positions by the smoke on the horizon, came into sight, the saucy chasers were sailing around and about the fleet of *St. Duneen's* boats.

"It rather makes me feel good to think that we didn't get caught by either of the submarines," said Alfred. "I would hate to give them that satisfaction."

"But what's the difference, after all?" replied Ralph. "So long as they sink the ships, what matter does it make whether they do it by mines or submarines?"

"Yes; one is as bad as the other, both done against all law," answered Alfred.

The first boat to answer the signal was a French cruiser, which came up rapidly after the chasers arrived. There was ample room on board for the passengers, but it took fully an hour before all were safe on board and orders were given to start. As the cruiser turned, a great, gray British battleship came up to port, saluted, and passed on, followed by another far in the distance, those two great vessels with their black smoke trailing out in the distance and moving along majestically seeming to be the acme of power.

The boys were on the upper deck and watched the scene with admiration. Before the cruiser had proceeded far the smoke of more than a dozen ships were visible, and the boys could not help but be impressed at the tremendous power of the Allies on the water, notwithstanding the calamity which had just befallen their ship. After all, the ships had been sunk by an enemy which dared not show his face above the surface of the water.

"Submarine sunk near the harbor of Brest and one off Cherburg," was the startling announcement of the wireless operator. "Five American ships have arrived at the Loire," was another message. "America is aflame with excitement, and demands action," came later.

"Is it possible that the United States will go to war?" asked Ralph.

"The United States is now at war," replied the captain.

"What? do you mean to say that the President has declared war?" asked Alfred in astonishment.

"No; it is not necessary that America should declare war. Germany has done so by torpedoing your ships, and killing your citizens; that is an act of war; for every nation, and Germany itself, knows that its submarine war is illegal, and without any standing in International Law. It is no justification to say that to give notice makes it legal. If a man wished to commit murder it would not make him less a murderer if he had given notice of his intention beforehand," said the captain.

"Then I'm not going back to New York," said Alfred.

"Nor I; we've been in it from the first, and we might as well stick it out;—if I only knew that mother was safe," concluded Ralph with a shadow across his face.

Within an hour the boys saw a faint streak of peculiar gray to the left, far ahead.

"That must be land," said Alfred.

"And that looks like a town, away in the distance," remarked Ralph.

"You are right; that is the coast of France, and the houses you see belong to the town of Fécamp, a seaport and watering place, 22 miles from Havre," said the navigating officer.

Every minute brought them nearer the city of Havre. How they longed to hear some news of their parents, now that all excitement had died away, and they were permitted to think of home and those dear to them.

Vessels began to accumulate on all sides of them, indications that they were now within the safety zone. For a period of eight days they had not known what absolute quiet and rest meant. First, the terrible suspense within the hull of a submarine, the trying experience attending the capture of the vessel, the unquiet feeling that they had desperate men below who might do anything to gain their liberty, the explosion and sinking of the submarine, their rescue, and then the last sinking, seemed to form a chapter of misadventures which constantly kept them on the alert.

It was such a different feeling now, and, as such things generally do, caused a reaction. They actually felt ill, and Alfred, especially, after the last accident, felt too weak to remain on deck.

They retired to the cabin assigned to them in the officers' quarters, and were soon asleep. The captain, missing them, made a search and soon found them. He

smiled, and, turning to the officers, said:

"They are fine fellows; the experiences have been most trying, and would test the mettle of most men; but they went through with it, obeyed all orders, without asking why, and never showed the white feather."

"Who are they?" asked one of the cruiser's officers.

"American boys, caught in the war, where they helped the fighting until two months ago, and were just returning to the United States on my ship. That is how I happened to meet them and learned to love them," replied the captain with pride in his voice.

As they were leaving the cabin, Alfred awoke. "Are we near Havre?" he asked anxiously.

"We are now turning the point; we expect to reach the dock in a half-hour," answered the officer.

Every one crowded the rails and watched the ever-changing panorama, for Havre is the second seaport in France, has the largest foreign trade, especially with America, and is noted for its great docks, and ship-building facilities.

"Hurrah for the Stars and Stripes!" shouted Ralph, as he pointed to the banner above the mast on a ship, which was just being warped out of the dock.

The passengers, as well as officers and seamen of the cruiser, took off their hats and cheered. Ralph blushed at the hearty response, but he knew that it was a tribute which they were paying to America, about to become a new ally. The seamen on board the American ship gave a hearty response to the salute, and this swelled the pride of the boys beyond measure.

How slowly the ship moved, now that they were nearing the end of their journey from the perils of the sea. How anxiously they awaited the time they could step ashore and visit the consul's office, there to learn, if possible, the fate of their parents.

"They are going to take us to the main foreign dock," said the captain, as he approached. "And I want to say that you must not get away from me in your eagerness. There are some people who want to talk to you and tell you how they appreciate your bravery and good work."

"Thank you, Captain," said Alfred. "We had no cause to fear, as long as you commanded."

"Indeed not," chimed in Ralph. "Even if we knew other perils that might come to us, we would be glad to follow you again wherever you ordered us to go; that's the way we feel about it."

"That is, indeed, a compliment," replied the captain.

"We have never felt the slightest fear or doubt," said Alfred, "but, of course, we have been sad many times, to think that our parents were separated from us, after we had not seen them for over two years."

"There is the dock. We will be off within fifteen minutes now. You must allow me to conduct you to the consul's office; I know him very well," said the captain.

As the vessel touched the dock the captain turned to the boys, and said with a wicked grin on his face: "Get your luggage, boys, and come on."

The boys laughed at the remark. "For my part," answered Ralph, "I had forgotten that there was such a thing as luggage, or baggage, or anything of that sort."

"Ralph! Ralph! who is that coming across the dock? Look! it is just like father! I believe it is!" almost shrieked Alfred.

"It is! yes; I am sure of it; and there is mother, too," replied Ralph, now all excitement.

"Of course, they are there; I knew it; I told you it would be all right," said the captain with a jubilant voice.

The boys glanced at the captain, and Ralph turned his head slyly, as he said: "And did you know they were here?"

"Well, I think they got my message this morning," replied the captain with a laugh. "Where is your father; point him out," said the captain to Alfred.

"The tall man with the gray overcoat; do you see him coming?—and there is mother, too," shouted Alfred.

The boys were the first ones down the plank, closely followed by the captain, the passengers standing by and witnessing the reunion of the families.

The captain came forward and shook hands with Mr. Elton. "Thank you for the wireless; we had about despaired, when it came to the hotel."

"I didn't tell the boys," replied the captain. "I left that pleasure for their own eyes; and here are the mothers; how I must congratulate you on having such sons. I know their worth."

"And is it true what they say about your doings with our boys, that you captured the submarine, while it was under the water?" asked Mrs. Elton.

"Yes, that was true, and much more," answered the captain.

"We felt so proud about it," replied Mr. Elton, "and it was some compensation for having been twice torpedoed within a week."

"What? did you say that you were torpedoed the second time?" asked Ralph.

"Yes," replied Mr. Elton. "We were picked up by a ship, the next morning, which was bound for New York. Two days afterwards, when out of the danger zone, our ship went down, and we had to take to the boats. This time we were picked up by a ship that landed us in Havre, three days ago. Then we heard of your exploits, of which the French papers were full, and we determined to remain here until we heard from you."

"But I cannot understand how it was that the captain happened to reach you by wireless?" asked Ralph.

"The cruiser wireless telegraphed the fact of our rescue to the U. S. consul, and I wired the commander of the cruiser," replied Mr. Elton.

"I answered Mr. Elton's message," said the captain with a smile. "But are you going back to America now?" continued the captain.

"Why, what has happened?" asked Alfred.

"America is at war with Germany," was the reply.

We shall now take leave of our young friends, but we do so with the feeling that before long we shall hear more about them, and be able to follow their adventures enlisted under the banner of their own beloved land in the fight against oppression and savagery.

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Transcriber's Note

Typographical errors corrected in the text:

Page 39 ofcer changed to officer
Page 46 possed changed to possessed
Page 73 missing word "get" inserted
Page 76 personnal changed to personnel
Page 77 personnal changed to personnel
Page 119 blow changed to below

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