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The BLUE AND THE GRAY SERIES



BY OLIVER OPTIC

A VICTORIOUS UNION

The Blue and the Gray Series

A VICTORIOUS UNION

BY

OLIVER OPTIC

AUTHOR OF "THE ARMY AND NAVY SERIES" "YOUNG AMERICA ABROAD, FIRST AND SECOND SERIES" "THE GREAT WESTERN SERIES" "THE WOODVILLE STORIES" "THE STARRY FLAG SERIES" "THE BOAT-CLUB STORIES" "THE ONWARD AND UPWARD SERIES" "THE YACHT-CLUB SERIES" "THE LAKE SHORE SERIES" "THE RIVERDALE STORIES" "THE BOAT-BUILDER SERIES" "TAKEN BY THE ENEMY" "WITHIN THE ENEMY'S LINES" "ON THE BLOCKADE" "STAND BY THE UNION" "FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT" "A MISSING MILLION" "A MILLIONAIRE AT SIXTEEN" "A YOUNG KNIGHT-ERRANT" "STRANGE SIGHTS ABROAD" ETC.

BOSTON

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A VICTORIOUS UNION

TYPE-SETTING AND ELECTROTYPING BY
C. J. PETERS & SON, BOSTON

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To My Friend

FRANK L. HARRIS

WHO CAME FROM THE COLD OF THE ARCTIC REGIONS, WHERE HE
WAS A MEMBER OF THE HAYES EXPEDITION, AND WENT
INTO THE HEAT OF THE WAR OF THE REBEL-
LION, SERVING AS A NAVAL OFFICER
UNTIL THE END OF THE STRIFE,
TO WHOM I AM GREATLY INDEBTED FOR MUCH VALUABLE
INFORMATION RELATING TO HIS PROFESSION,

This Book

IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED.

PREFACE

"A VICTORIOUS UNION" is the sixth and last of "The Blue and the Gray Series." While the volume is not intended to be a connected historical narrative of the particular period of the War of the Rebellion in which its scenes are laid, the incidents accurately conform to the facts, and especially to the spirit, of the eventful years in which they are placed, as recorded in the chronicles of the great struggle, and as they exist in the memory of the writer. It is more than thirty years since the war began, and thousands upon thousands of the active participants in the strife as soldiers and sailors, including nearly all the great commanders, have passed on to their eternal reward. Thousands upon thousands of men and women have been born and reached their maturity since the most tremendous war of modern times ended in A Victorious Union. The knowledge of the stirring events of those four years of conflict, and of the patriotic spirit which inspired and underlaid them, has come, or will come, to at least one-half the population of this vast nation of sixty-five millions from the printed page or through the listening ear. The other moiety, more or less, either as children or adults, lived in the period of action, saw the gathering battalions, and heard or read the daily reports from the ensanguined battle-fields.

In some of the States that remained loyal to the Union throughout the long struggle, a military parade had been regarded by many as something very much in the nature of a circus display, as "fuss and feathers," such as tickled the vanity of both officer and private. Military organizations, except in our small regular army, were disparaged and ridiculed. When the war came, the Northern people were unprepared for it to a very great degree. The change of public opinion was as sudden as the mighty event was precipitate. Then the soldier became the most prominent and honored member of the community, and existing military bodies became the nucleus of the armies that were to fight the battles of the Republic.

During the last thirty years the military spirit has been kept alive as a constituent element of patriotism itself. The love of country has been diligently fostered and nurtured in the young, and public opinion has been voiced and energized in the statutes of many States, and in the educational machinery of many municipalities. Over vast numbers of schoolhouses in our land floats the American flag, the symbol of the Union and the principles that underlie it.

The flag, the banner now of a reunited nation, means something more than the sentiment of loyalty to the Union as the home of freedom; for it implies the duty of defending the honor of that flag, the representative idea of all we hold dear in Fatherland. In the East and the West a considerable proportion of the high schools make military tactics a part of their educational course. Companies, battalions, and regiments of young men in their teens parade the streets of some of our cities, showing in what manner the military spirit is kept alive, and, at the same time, how the flag floating over our educational institutions, which means so much more than ever before to our people, is to be defended and perpetuated in the future.

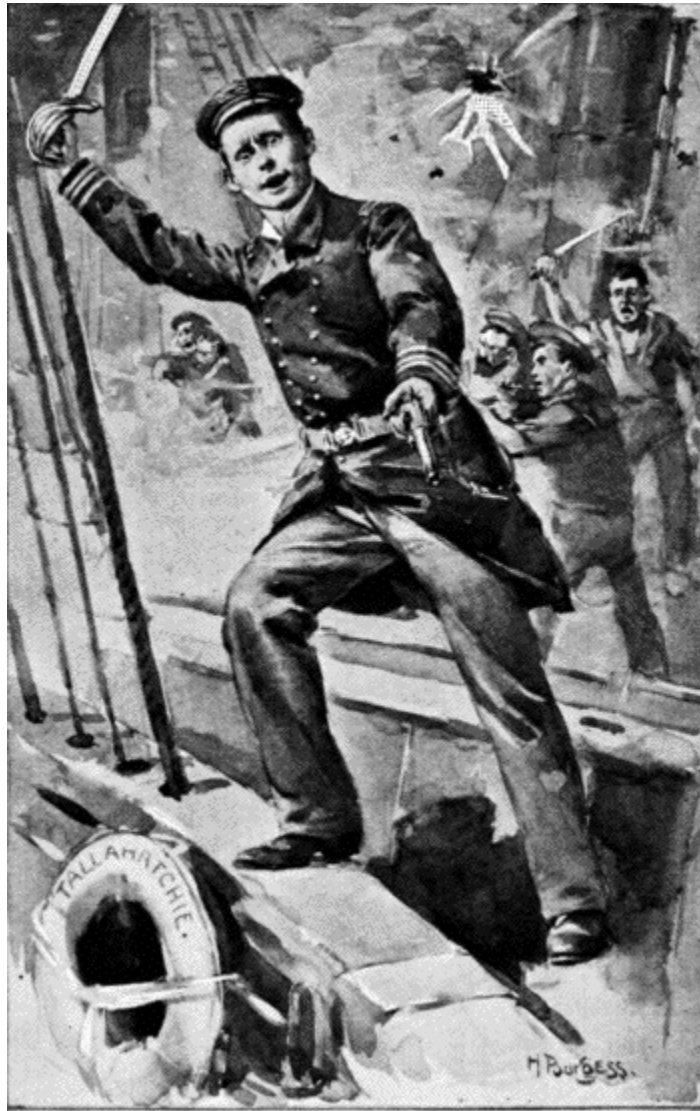
The author of the six volumes of "The Blue and the Gray Series," as well as of "The Army and Navy Series," the latter begun in the heat of the war thirty years ago, earnestly believes in keeping active in the minds of the young the spirit of patriotism. In the present volume, as in those which have preceded it, he has endeavored to present to his readers, not only a hero who is brave, skilful, and ready to give his life for his country, but one who is unselfishly patriotic; one who is not fighting for promotion and prize-money, but to save the Union in whose integrity and necessity he believes as the safeguard and substance of American liberty.

Peace has reigned in our land for nearly thirty years, and the asperities of a relentless war have been supplanted by better and more brotherly relations between the North and the South. The writer would not print a word that would disturb these improving conditions; and if he has erred at all in picturing the intercourse between Americans as enemies, he has made sure to do so in the interests of justice and magnanimity on both sides.

In the series of which this volume is the last, the author has confined his narrative of adventures to the navy. It has been suggested to him that another series, relating exclusively to incidents in the army, should follow. After forty years of labor in this particular field, and having already exhausted the threescore and ten of human life, he cannot be assured that he will live long enough to complete such a series, though still in excellent health; but he intends to make a beginning of the work as soon as other engagements will permit.

WILLIAM T. ADAMS.

DORCHESTER, MARCH 16, 1893.



"CHRISTY LEAPED UPON THE RAIL." Page 181.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
THE MISSION TO MOBILE POINT	15
CHAPTER II.	
THE DEPARTURE OF THE EXPEDITION	26
CHAPTER III.	
A BIVOUAC NEAR FORT MORGAN	37
CHAPTER IV.	
THE REVELATIONS OF THE REVELLERS	48
CHAPTER V.	
IN THE VICINITY OF THE CONFEDERATE FORT	59
CHAPTER VI.	
CAPTAIN SULLENDINE OF THE WEST WIND	70
CHAPTER VII.	
A POWERFUL ALLY OF THE BELLEVITERS	81
CHAPTER VIII.	
ON BOARD OF THE COTTON SCHOONER	92
CHAPTER IX.	
THE DEPARTURE OF THE TALLAHATCHIE	103
CHAPTER X.	
THE CASTING OFF OF THE TOWLINE	114
CHAPTER XI.	
A HAPPY RETURN TO THE BELLEVITE	125
CHAPTER XII.	
A LIVELY CHASE TO THE SOUTH-WEST	136
CHAPTER XIII.	
THE FIRST SHOT OF BLUMENHOFF	147
CHAPTER XIV.	
THE PROGRESS OF THE ACTION	158
CHAPTER XV.	
A FLANK MOVEMENT UNDERTAKEN	169
CHAPTER XVI.	
THE LIEUTENANT'S DARING EXPLOIT	180
CHAPTER XVII.	
A MAGNANIMOUS ENEMY	191
CHAPTER XVIII.	
THE REIGN OF CHRISTIANITY	202
CHAPTER XIX.	
COLONEL HOMER PASSFORD OF GLENFIELD	213
CHAPTER XX.	
A VERY MELANCHOLY CONFEDERATE	224
CHAPTER XXI.	
CAPTAIN SULLENDINE BECOMES VIOLENT	225
CHAPTER XXII.	
THE DISPOSITION OF THE TWO PRIZES	246

CHAPTER XXIII.	
THE WELCOME HOME AT BONNYDALE	257
CHAPTER XXIV.	
LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER CHRISTOPHER PASSFORD	268
CHAPTER XXV.	
THE PRINCIPAL OFFICERS OF THE ST. REGIS	279
CHAPTER XXVI.	
THE ST. REGIS IN COMMISSION	290
CHAPTER XXVII.	
CAPTAIN PASSFORD ALONE IN HIS GLORY	301
CHAPTER XXVIII.	
OFF THE COAST OF NORTH CAROLINA	312
CHAPTER XXIX.	
THE FIRST PRIZE OF THE ST. REGIS	323
CHAPTER XXX.	
ANOTHER SAILING CONTEST INAUGURATED	334
CHAPTER XXXI.	
A VICTORIOUS UNION	345

A VICTORIOUS UNION

CHAPTER I

THE MISSION TO MOBILE POINT

"I ALMOST wish you were the second or the third lieutenant of the *Bellevite*, instead of the executive officer, Christy," said Captain Breaker, the commander of the steamer, as they were seated together one day on the quarter-deck.

"Do I fail in the discharge of my duty in my present position, Captain?" asked Christy, very much astonished, not to say startled, at the remark of the commander.

"Not in the slightest degree, my dear boy!" returned Captain Breaker with very decided emphasis. "You have served in your present capacity for four months; and if you were fifty years old, and had twenty years of naval experience behind you, it would be hardly possible for you to be more correct and dignified in the performance of the details of your office."

"I thank you, Captain, for the partial view you take of what I have done," added Christy, taking off his cap and bowing to his superior.

"Well, you ought to be a good officer in any situation, my dear fellow," continued the commander. "I doubt if there is another officer in the navy who has enjoyed the advantages you have had in preparing himself for the duties of his profession. You were brought up, so to say, on board of the *Bellevite*. You were a good scholar in the first place. Without including myself, you have had excellent teachers in every department of science and philosophy, among whom your father was one of the wisest. Poor Dashington was one of the best seamen that ever trod a deck; and he took especial delight in showing you how to make every knot and splice, as well as in instructing you in the higher details of practical seamanship. Blowitt and myself assisted him, and old Boxie, who gave his life to his country, was more than a grandfather to you."

"I have certainly been very grateful to you and to them for all they did for me," replied Christy with a sad expression on his handsome face as the commander recalled the three shipmates of both of them who slept in heroes' graves.

"Perhaps the brilliant genius of our engine-room did quite as much for you as any other person, though not many years your senior."

"Paul Vapoor is my friend and crony; and if he had been my professor in a college he could have done no more for me. I assure you, Captain, that I keep alive my gratitude to all my instructors, including some you have not mentioned."

"I was only explaining why you are what you ought to be, for you have had very exceptional opportunities, better by far than any other officer in the service. But it is altogether to your credit that you have used those opportunities wisely and well."

"I should have been a blockhead if I had not."

"That is very true; but the mournful wrecks of wasted opportunities strew the tracks of many, many young men. I think you can look back upon as few of them as any one within my knowledge," said the commander, bestowing a look of genuine affection upon his chief officer. "More than once, even before we entered upon this terrible war, I have told your father how happy he ought to be in having such a son as you are."

"Come, come, Captain Breaker, you are praising me!" exclaimed Christy impatiently.

"I am speaking only the simple truth, and I have very rarely said as much as I say now. It was when you asked me if you had failed in the discharge of the duties of your present position that I was led into this line of remark; and I am sure you will not be spoiled by honest and just praise," replied the captain.

"Then, to go back to the point where you began, why do you almost wish that I were second or third lieutenant, instead of executive officer, of the *Bellevite*, Captain?" continued Christy, rising from his seat, and fixing an earnest gaze upon the face of the commander, for he was very sensitive, and he could not help feeling that he had been lacking in something that would make him a better executive officer than he was.

"Mr. Ballard, the second lieutenant, and Mr. Walbrook, the third, are gentlemen of the highest grade, and excellent officers; but they are both somewhat wanting in dash and cool impetuosity."

"Cool impetuosity' is very good, Captain," added Christy with a laugh.

"But that is precisely what I mean, my boy, and no two words could express the idea any better. You cannot carry an enemy by boarding with the same precision you man the yards on a ceremonious occasion, or as a regiment of soldiers go on dress parade. It requires vim, dash, spirit. The officers named have this quality in a very considerable degree, yet not enough of it. But what they lack more is ingenuity, fertility in expedients, and the expansive view which enables them to take advantage promptly of circumstances. You never lose your head, Christy."

"I never knew the gentlemen named to lose their heads, and I have always regarded them as model officers," replied the first lieutenant.

"And so they are: you are quite right, my dear boy; but it is possible for them to be all you say, and yet, like the young man of great possessions in the Scripture, to lack one thing. I should not dare to exchange my second and third lieutenants for any others if I had the opportunity."

"I confess that I do not understand you yet, Captain."

The commander rose from his seat, stretched himself, and then looked about the deck. Taking his camp-stool in his hand he carried it over to the port side of the quarter-deck, and planted it close to the bulwarks. The second lieutenant was the officer of the deck, and was pacing the planks on the starboard side, while the lookouts in the foretop and on the top-gallant forecastle were attending closely to their duty, doubtless with a vision of more prize money floating through their brains.

The *Bellevite*, with the fires banked in the furnaces, was at anchor off the entrance to Mobile Bay, about two miles east of Sand Island Lighthouse, and the same distance south of the narrow neck of land on the western extremity of which Fort Morgan is located. Her commander had chosen this position for a purpose; for several weeks before, while the *Bellevite* was absent on a special mission, a remarkably fast steamer called the *Trafalgar* had run the blockade inward.

Captain Passford, Senior, through his agents in England, had some information in regard to this vessel, which he had sent to Captain Breaker. Unlike most of the blockade-runners built for this particular service, she had been constructed in the most substantial manner for an English millionaire, who had insisted that she should be built as strong as the best of steel could make her, for he intended to make a voyage around the world in her.

Unfortunately for the owner of the *Trafalgar*, who was a lineal descendant of a titled commander in that great naval battle, he fell from his horse in a fox chase, and was killed before the steamer was fully completed. His heir had no taste for the sea, and the steamer was sold at a price far beyond her cost; and the purchaser had succeeded in getting her into Mobile Bay with a valuable cargo. She was of about eight hundred tons burden, and it was said that she could steam twenty knots an hour. She was believed to be the equal of the *Alabama* and the *Shenandoah*. The *Bellevite* had been especially notified not to allow the *Trafalgar* to escape. She had recently had her bottom cleaned, and her engine put in perfect order for the service expected of her, for she was the fastest vessel on the blockade.

When Captain Breaker had assured himself that he was out of hearing of the officer of the deck, he invited Christy to take a seat at his side. He spoke in a low tone, and was especially careful that no officer should hear him.

"Perhaps I meddle with what does not concern me, Christy; but I cannot help having ideas of my own," said the commander, when he was satisfied that no one but the executive officer could hear him. "There is Fort Morgan, with Fort Gaines three miles from it on the other side of the channel. Mobile Point, as it is called at this end of the neck, extends many miles to the eastward. It is less than two miles wide where it is broadest, and not over a quarter of a mile near Pilot Town."

"I have studied the lay of the land very carefully, for I have had some ideas of my own," added Christy, as the commander paused.

"If Fort Morgan had been Fort Sumter, with bad memories clinging to it, an effort would have been made to capture it, either by bombardment by the navy, or by regular approaches on the part of the army," continued Captain Breaker.

"They are still pounding away at Fort Sumter, because there would be a moral in its capture and the reduction of Charleston, for the war began there. Such an event would send a wave of rejoicing through the North, though it would be of less real consequence than the opening of Mobile Bay and the cleaning out of the city of Mobile. Except Wilmington, it is the most pestilent resort for blockade-runners on the entire coast."

"Then you think Fort Morgan can be reduced from the land side?" asked Christy, deeply interested in the conversation.

"I have little doubt of it; and while I believe Farragut will resort to his favorite plan of running by the forts here, as he has done by those of the Mississippi, the army will be planted in the rear of both these forts. As we have lain here for months, I have studied the situation, and I want to know something more about the land on the east of Mobile Point."

"I should say that it would be easy enough to obtain all the information you desire in regard to it," suggested Christy.

"There is an unwritten tradition that the commander must not leave his ship to engage in any duty of an active character, and I cannot explore the vicinity of the fort myself."

"But you have plenty of officers for such duty."

"I have no doubt there are pickets, and perhaps a camp beyond the rising ground, and the exploration would be difficult and dangerous. The two officers I have mentioned before lack the dash and ingenuity such an enterprise requires; and a blunder might involve me in difficulty, for I have no orders to obtain the information I desire."

"The officers named are prudent men within reasonable limits."

"They are; but I would give up my idea rather than trust either of them with this duty," replied Captain Breaker very decidedly. "But I have a further and nearer object in this exploration; in fact, examining the ground would be only secondary."

"What is the real object, Captain?" asked the first lieutenant, his curiosity fully awakened.

"I feel that it will be necessary to use extraordinary efforts to capture the Trafalgar, for no steamer of her alleged speed has ever run into or out of Mobile Bay. After I informed the flag-officer in regard to her, which your father's information enabled me to do, the Bellevite was especially charged with the duty of capturing her, if she had to chase her all over the world."

"I have not much doubt that you will do it, Captain."

"I mean to do so if possible. Now these blockade-runners usually anchor near the lower fleet, or under the guns of the fort in five fathoms of water. Sometimes they remain there two or three days, waiting for a favorable opportunity to run out. Perhaps the Trafalgar is there now. I wish to know about it."

"I infer that you consider me fitted for this duty, Captain Breaker," said Christy earnestly.

"For that reason only I almost wished you were second or third lieutenant, rather than first," replied the commander with some earnestness in his manner.

There was no unwritten tradition that the first lieutenant should not be sent on any duty.

CHAPTER II

THE DEPARTURE OF THE EXPEDITION

The conversation between the captain and the executive officer of the *Bellevite* was continued till they were called to supper; but a decision had been reached. On important occasions, as when several boats were ordered upon an expedition, it was not unusual to send the first lieutenant in command. Though only a single whaleboat would be required for the enterprise in which the commander was so deeply interested, its importance appeared to justify the selection of the executive officer to conduct it; and Christy was directed to suit himself.

Of course the expedition was to be sent out at night, for the cover of the darkness was necessary to render it effectual. In the afternoon the wind had come around to the south-west, and already a slight fog had obscured the Sand Island Lighthouse. It promised to be such a night as a blockade-runner would select for getting to sea.

Christy was especially warned that the principal business of his expedition was to obtain information in regard to the *Trafalgar*, though it was probable that a new name had been given to her for the service in which she was to be engaged. The examination of the surroundings of the fort, the captain strongly impressed upon his mind, was entirely subsidiary to the discovery of the intending blockade-runner. In fact, the commander seemed to have serious doubts as to whether it was proper for him even to reconnoitre without special orders for the use of the army.

It was several months that Christy had been on board of the *Bellevite* in his present capacity, and he had become very well acquainted with all the petty officers and seamen of the ship's company, now composed of one hundred and twenty men. After he had finished his supper he walked about the spar-deck to refresh his memory by a sight at all of the men, and selected those who were to take part in his enterprise.

One of the first persons he encountered in his promenade was the third assistant engineer, Charles Graines, whom he had known as a boy, before the war. He was not only a machinist, but a sailor, having served in both capacities, though now only twenty-five years of age. Through his father Christy had procured his appointment as an engineer, and his assignment to the *Bellevite*. The young man was exceedingly grateful to him for this service, and entirely devoted to him.

Paul Vápoor, the chief engineer, spoke of Graines in the highest terms, not only in his official capacity, but as a high-toned, patriotic, and thoroughly reliable man. The moment the executive officer put his eye on the assistant engineer, he decided that Graines should be his right-hand man. As a matter of precaution the proposed expedition was to be a profound secret, for there were white men and negroes about the deck who had been picked up in various ways, and were retained till they could be disposed of. They could not be trusted, and doubtless some of them were Confederates at heart, if not engaged in secret missions.

Christy invited Graines to the ward room for a conference. There were several officers there, and they retired to the stateroom of the first lieutenant, which is the forward one on the starboard side. The plan, as it had been matured in the mind of the one appointed to carry it out, was fully explained, and the engineer was delighted to be chosen to take part in its execution. The selection of the seamen to compose the expedition was not an easy matter, though every sailor on board would have volunteered for such duty if the opportunity had been presented to him.

Graines was not so familiar with the merits of the seamen as he was with those of the men in the engineer department. It became necessary for the executive officer to take another walk on the spar-deck, in order to revive his recollection of the men; and he soon returned to the stateroom with a complete list of those he had selected. The engineer suggested an oiler by the name of Weeks as a most excellent man; and Christy accepted him, completing the number from those of his own choice. Seated at his desk, he wrote out the names of the ten men chosen.

"Of course if we should be caught on shore in our ordinary uniforms it would be all night with us," said Christy, as he completed the writing out of the list. "I believe you have never seen the inside of a Confederate prison, Mr. Graines."

"Never; though I came pretty near it once while I was an oiler on board of the *Hatteras*," replied the engineer.

"You have been fortunate, and I hope you will come out of this excursion as well. I spent a short time in a Confederate lock-up; but I did not like the arrangements, and I took leave of it one night. It was in Mobile, and I don't care to be sent up there again. Therefore we must clothe ourselves in the worst garments we can find; and I carry a suit for just this purpose, though I have not had occasion to use it lately."

"I have to wear old clothes when at work on the machinery, and I have a plentiful supply on hand," added Graines.

"Perhaps I could help out some of the others."

"All the seamen have old clothes, and they will need no assistance in arranging their wardrobes. Now, Mr. Graines, it will excite remark if I instruct the ten men we have selected, and I must leave that part of the work to you," continued Christy. "But all the instruction you need give them is in regard to their dress, and require them to be at the main chains

on the starboard side at ten o'clock to-night precisely."

"As I have plenty of time I will take the men, one at a time, to my room in the steerage, and instruct them," replied the engineer.

"You can tell each one to send in the next one wanted. Above all, make them promise not to speak to any person whatever in regard to the expedition," said the executive officer as his companion retired.

Mr. Graines lost no time in discharging the important duty assigned to him. Christy reported to the commander, as soon as he found an opportunity to speak to him privately, what progress he had made in carrying out the duty assigned to him. Captain Breaker looked over the list of the men selected, and gave it his hearty approbation. He was a man of elevated moral and religious character; he had always exercised a sort of fatherly supervision over his ship's company, and he was better acquainted with those under his command than most commanders.

"It looks as though it was going to be a good night for blockade-runners, Mr. Passford," said Captain Breaker, as he looked over to windward and saw the banks of fog, not yet very dense, rolling up from the open gulf.

"It is not known, I suppose, whether or not the Trafalgar has come down from Mobile?" inquired Christy.

"I have been unable to obtain any definite information; but a negro who came off from the shore yesterday assured me there was a black steamer at anchor between the Middle Ground and Mobile Point. That is all the information I have been able to obtain, though I have examined all who came on board during the last week. It is certainly time for the Trafalgar to come out, as the Confederates are in great haste to re-enforce the Alabama, the Shenandoah, and other cruisers; for these vessels have made a tremendous impression upon our mercantile marine. She has been in port long enough to rebuild her already, and I am confident she must be ready for service."

"If I don't find her ready to come out to-night, would it not be well to repeat my visit to the shore until we learn something about her?" asked Christy.

"That is my purpose," replied the commander.

"I should like to have the scope of my powers as the officer of this expedition a little more definitely defined, Captain Breaker," continued the first lieutenant.

"I thought I had fully instructed you, Christy," answered the commander with a smile.

"Am I to confine myself solely to the two points assigned to me?"

"I don't understand what you have in your mind, my boy."

"I have nothing in my mind, Captain. I have not laid out any plan of operations outside of the instructions you have given me, sir; and I do not purpose to do so. If I had the intention to do anything but the duty assigned to me, I should assuredly inform you of it, and obtain your orders."

"I know you would, my dear boy."

"But if I see an opportunity to do anything for the benefit of my country"--

"Such as the capture of a sloop of war," interposed the commander with a suggestive laugh. "When you were sent to look out for a small steamer, simply to obtain information in regard to her, in Pensacola Bay, you went on your mission, and brought out the Teaser, which afterwards became the Bronx, and rendered very valuable service to the country under your command."

"I could not very well help doing so when I saw my opportunity," replied Christy, in an apologetic tone, as though he had been reproved for exceeding his instructions.

"You did precisely right, Christy; and that act did more to make the deservedly high reputation you have won than almost anything else you have done, unless it was your achievements at Cedar Keys," added Captain Breaker heartily.

"I am glad you have brought up the Teaser matter, Captain, for it just illustrates what I have in my mind. If I see an opportunity to do such a thing as that on the present occasion, I simply wish to know whether or not I am to confine my operations to the strict letter of my instructions. Of course, if so instructed, I shall obey my orders to the letter."

"The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life,' my boy. Your mission always and everywhere is to serve your country, and you are to do this on the present occasion. What I said about ingenuity in speaking of my officers is covered in this case. If you can capture and send out the Trafalgar, do it by all means, for that is the object in view in sending off this expedition. Your head is level, Christy; and that is the reason why I desired you to command this enterprise rather than either of the other officers. I can trust you, and you have full powers to act on your own judgment."

"I thank you for your abundant confidence, Captain; and I shall endeavor not to abuse it," replied Christy. "But it is not even remotely possible that I shall capture the Trafalgar; yet sometimes unexpected opportunities are presented, and the letter of my orders might prevent me from embracing them. I am very glad to know where I stand."

The night came on, and with it more fog; but it was of that flitting kind which settles down and then blows away. It seemed to come in banks that were continually in motion. The men who were to go to the shore had all been instructed,

and at precisely ten o'clock they were seated in the whaleboat, with Mr. Graines in the stern sheets. They were all armed with two revolvers apiece, and there was a cutlass for each in the boat. The men had not only changed their dress, but they had disguised themselves, smooching their faces with coal dust, and tearing their garments till they were in tatters.

Christy had dressed himself in his old garments, but added to them a gray coat he had obtained on board of a prize. The watch on deck had been ordered to the forecastle, so that they need not too closely observe the crew of the whaleboat. The chief of the expedition had quietly descended to the platform of the after gangway, and when the boat dropped astern, he stepped into it, selecting his place by the side of the engineer, who had taken the tiller lines. The boat pulled away at once, with four hands at the oars, and Mr. Graines headed it to the north-east by the compass, the side lights of which were covered so that they should not betray the approach of the boat to the shore, if any one was there.

On the way Christy gave the men full instructions in regard to their conduct; and in less than an hour the party landed.

CHAPTER III

A BIVOUAC NEAR FORT MORGAN

The expedition landed about two miles east of Fort Morgan. The sea was not heavy, as it sometimes is on these sand islands, and the debarkation was effected without any difficulty. At this distance from the defences of the bay not a person was to be seen. The fog banks still swept over the waters of the gulf as during the latter part of the afternoon, and if any number of persons had been near the shore, they could hardly have been seen.

"We are all right so far, Mr. Graines," said Christy, as the bowmen hauled up the boat on the beach.

"It is as quiet as a tomb in this vicinity," replied the engineer, as he led the way to the shore.

"Now, my men, haul the boat out of the water. I think we need not use any of our small force as boat-keepers, for we can hardly spare them for this purpose, Mr. Graines," Christy proceeded very promptly.

"It does not look as though the boat, or anything else, would ever be molested in this lonely locality," replied Graines, as the men lifted it from the water.

"Now carry it back about half a cable from the shore," continued the principal of the party. "If one or two strollers should happen this way, they would not be able to put it into the water, though four men can carry it very easily."

The whaleboat was borne to a spot indicated by the lieutenant, and left as it had been taken from the surf. Everything in it was arranged in order, so that it could be hastily put into the water if circumstance demanded a hurried retreat from the scene of operations. Near the spot was a post set up in the sand, which might have been one of the corners of a shanty, or have been used years before by fishermen drying their nets or other gear.

"Do you see that post, my men?" asked Christy, as he pointed to it, not twenty feet from the spot where the boat had been deposited.

"Ay, ay, sir!" the seamen responded, in low tones, for they had been warned not to speak out loud.

"That will be your guide in finding the boat if we should get scattered," added the officer. "Now, do you see the two stars about half way between the horizon and the zenith?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" answered Weeks, the oiler. "The Band of Orion."

"Quite right, Weeks," added Christy. "Fort Morgan lies about west of us; and a course from there in the direction of the two stars will bring you to the coast and the boat. Every man must act for himself to some extent, and you are expected to be prudent, and use your own judgment. It will not be safe for us to keep together, for a dozen men seen all at once would be likely to awaken suspicion."

"If there is not a crowd of men over by the fort, we can hardly expect to avoid coming together," suggested Weeks, who proved to be a very intelligent man, with excellent judgment.

"I cannot tell whether or not we shall find any gathering of men in the vicinity of the fort," replied Christy. "We shall be obliged to govern ourselves according to circumstances. If you find any number of people over there, you can mingle with them. Some of you are very good scholars; but if any of you are disposed to indulge in fine talk, don't do it. Make your speech correspond with your dress, and let it be rough and rude, for that is the fashion among the laboring class in this region."

"I suppose sea-slang will not be out of order," said Weeks.

"Not at all. Simply consider that you are sailors and laborers, and do not forget it," answered Christy; and he was confident that he had selected only those who were competent to conduct themselves as the occasion might require.

"Now, Mr. Graines, tell off five men--any five."

The engineer called off five of the seamen, whose names he had learned from the list given him by his superior officer.

"Now these five men will each choose his partner, who is to be his companion while we are on shore, and who is to act with him," continued Christy. "I do not know yet any better than you do what you are to do; but if you are called upon to do any difficult or dangerous work, remember that you are American seamen, and do your best for your country. If you are required to do any fighting, as I do not expect you will, our success depends upon your strong arms and your ready wills. You will do your whole duty, whatever it may be, and do it like true American sailors."

"Ay, ay, sir!" came in a unanimous voice from the knot of men, though in subdued tones.

"Call the first name again, Mr. Graines," added Christy.

"Weeks," replied the engineer.

"Select your man, Weeks."

"Bingham," said the oiler.

The names of the other four men who had been selected were called in turn, and each of them selected his partner, each one of course choosing his best friend, if he had not already been appropriated.

"Now, my men, Weeks and Bingham, the first couple, to be called simply 'One' when wanted, and they will answer to this designation, will start first. The next couple, to be called 'Two,' will follow them; and so on, the other pairs coming in order," continued Christy, designating each by name and number. "Two will start in ten or fifteen minutes after One, as nearly as you can guess at the time, for it is too dark to see watches if you have them."

"Are we to choose our own courses?" asked Weeks.

"No; I was coming to that next. Each couple will stroll due north as nearly as he can make it out, till they come to the waters of Mobile Bay. If you see any houses or tents, avoid them, and keep clear of any collection of people before you reach the vicinity of the fort. The bay is the first point you are to reach; then follow the shore to the fort. If you meet any person, talk to him in a friendly way, if necessary, and be as good Confederates as any in this region, even inside of Fort Morgan."

Weeks and Bingham took up the line of march in the direction indicated, and soon disappeared beyond the rising ground in the middle of the neck of land, which was here about three-eighths of a mile wide. A quarter of an hour later Lane and McGrady followed them. While they were waiting, each of the pairs gave a specimen of the dialect they intended to use. McGrady was an Irishman, educated in the public schools of the North, and his language was as good as that of any ordinary American; but now he used a very rich brogue.

Every man followed his own fancy. Lane had lived in the South, and "mought" and "fotch" came readily to his aid. The Crackers of Florida, the backwoodsmen of North Carolina, the swaggering Kentuckian, the wild Texan, were all represented; and Christy could easily have believed he had a company of comedians under his command, instead of a band of loyal Northerners.

The executive officer and the engineer had decided before this time to keep together; and, as soon as they had seen the second couple depart, they set out on their wandering march to the fort in a direction different from that of the others of the party. They walked directly towards the fort, for Christy intended to make his examination of the ground to the eastward of the fortification, on his way to some spot where he could ascertain what vessels were at anchor between the point and the Middle Ground. He discharged this duty very faithfully; and before he reached his objective point he was confident he could draw a map of the region, with what information he had obtained before, which would meet the requirements of Captain Breaker.

"What's that?" demanded Graines, suddenly placing his hand on the arm of his companion, and stopping short, as they were approaching the crown of the elevation.

A fire was burning on the ground in a depression of the surface, which doubtless concealed its light from persons in the vicinity of the fort, if there were any there. Around it could be seen four men, as the two officers looked over the crest of the hill, who appeared to be engaged in eating and drinking; and they were doing more of the latter than of the former, for the bottle passed very frequently from one to another.

"It looks like a bivouac on the part of those fellows," said Christy in a low tone.

"But who and what are they?" asked Graines.

"They may be deserters from Fort Morgan, though if they were they would hardly bivouac so near it," replied Christy, who did not seem to his companion to be at all disturbed by the discovery of the men. "They are more likely to be sailors from some intending blockade-runner at anchor off the point, who have come on shore to make a night of it; and they appear to have made considerable progress in the debauch."

"They are not soldiers, for you can see by the light of the fire that they are not dressed in uniform," added the engineer.

"This is the third year of the war, and uniforms for the soldiers are not particularly abundant in the Confederacy."

"We can't see the waters of the bay till we reach the top of the knoll yonder, and we don't know whether there are any vessels at anchor there or not. But we can easily avoid these fellows by keeping behind the ridge till we get where they cannot see us."

"I don't know that we want to avoid them, for I should like very much to know who and what they are. They must be tipsy to a greater or less degree by this time, for they do twice as much drinking as eating," answered Christy, as he advanced a little way farther up the hill. "They have a basket of food, and I do not believe they are mere tramps. They are more likely to be engaged in some occupation which brought them to this point, and I think we had better fraternize with them. They may be able to give us some valuable information; and it looks as though they were drunk enough to tell all they know without making any difficulty about it."

"Do you think it is quite prudent, Mr. Passford, to approach them?" asked the engineer.

"When we come on an excursion of this kind we have to take some risk. If I were alone I should not hesitate to join them, and take my chances, for they must know something about affairs in this vicinity," replied Christy in a quiet tone, so that his answer might not be interpreted as a boast or a reproach to his companion.

"I am ready to follow you, Mr. Passford, wherever you go, and to depend upon your judgment for guidance," said Graines very promptly. "If it comes to a fight with those fellows, I beg you to understand that I will do my full share of it, and obey your orders to the letter."

"Of course I have no doubt whatever in regard to your courage and your readiness to do your whole duty, Mr. Graines," added Christy, as he led the way to the summit of the elevation. "Now lay aside your grammar and rhetoric, and we must be as good fellows as those bivouackers are making themselves. We are simply sailors who have just escaped from a captured blockade-runner."

"I don't see anything around the fire that looks like muskets," said the engineer, as they descended from the elevation.

"I see nothing at all except the provision-basket and the bottles," replied Christy.

"But they may be armed for all that."

"We must take our chances. They are so busy eating and drinking that they have not seen us yet. Perhaps we had better be a little hilarious," continued the lieutenant, as he began to sing, "We won't go home till morning," in which he was joined by his companion as vigorously as the circumstances would permit.

Singing as they went, and with a rolling gait, they approached the revellers.

CHAPTER IV

THE REVELATIONS OF THE REVELLERS

"We won't go home till morning," sang the two counterfeit revellers, as they approached the fire of the bivouackers.

The four carousel's sprang to their feet when the first strain reached their ears. They were not as intoxicated as they might have been, for they were able to stand with considerable firmness on their feet, after the frequency with which the bottle had been passed among them. They did not do what soldiers would naturally have done at such an interruption, grasp their muskets, and it was probable they had no muskets to grasp.

"We won't go home till morning, till daylight doth appear," continued the two officers, without halting in their march towards the revellers.



"THE TWO COUNTERFEIT REVELLERS." Page 48.

No weapons of any kind were exhibited; but the tipplers stood as though transfixed with astonishment or alarm where they had risen, but were rather limp in their attitude. They evidently did not know what to make of the interruption, and they appeared to be waiting for further developments on the part of the intruders.

"It isn't mornin' yit, but we just emptied our bottle," said Christy, with a swaggering and slightly reeling movement, and suiting his speech to the occasion. "How are ye, shipmates?"

"Up to G, jolly tars," replied one of the men, with a broad grin on his face. "We done got two full bottles left, at your sarvice."

"Much obleeged," returned the lieutenant, as he took the bottle the reveller passed to him. "Here's success to us all in a heap, and success to our side in the battle that's go'n' on."

"I'm with you up to the armpits," added Graines, as another of the four handed him a bottle.

One sniff at the neck of the bottle was enough to satisfy Christy, who was a practical temperance man of the very strictest kind, and he had never drank a glass of anything intoxicating in all his life. The bottle contained "apple-jack," or apple-brandy, the vilest fluid that ever passed a tippler's gullet. He felt obliged to keep up his character, taken for the occasion, and he retained the mouth of the bottle at his lips long enough to answer the requirement of the moment; but he did not open them, or permit a drop of the nauseous and fiery liquor to pollute his tongue. It was necessary for him to consider that he was struggling for the salvation of his beloved country to enable him even to go through the form of "taking a drink."

Graines was less scrupulous on the question of temperance, and he took a swallow of the apple-jack; but that was enough for him, for he had never tasted anything outside of the medicine-chest which was half as noxious. If he had been compelled to keep up the drinking, he would have realized that his punishment was more than he could bear. Fortunately the tipplers had no tumblers, so that the guests were not compelled to pour out the fluid and drink it off. All drank directly from the bottles, so that the two officers could easily conceal in the semi-darkness the extent of their indulgence.

"Who be you, strangers?" asked the man who had acted thus far as spokesman of the party.

"My name is Tom Bulger, born and brought up in the island of Great Abaco, and this feller is my friend and shipmate, Sam Riley," replied Christy, twisting and torturing his speech as much as was necessary. "Now who be you fellers?"

"Born and fetched up in Mobile: my name is Bird Riley; and I reckon t'other feller is a first cousin of mine, for he's got the same name, and he's almost as handsome as I am. Where was you born, Sam?"

"About ten miles up the Alabama, where my father was the overseer on a plantation before the war," replied Graines as promptly as though he had been telling the truth.

"Then you must be one of my cousins, for I done got about two hundred and fifty on 'em in the State of Alabammy. Give us your fin, Sam."

Bird Riley and Sam shook hands in due and proper form, and the relationship appeared to be fully established. The names of the three other revellers were given, but the spokesman was disposed to do all the talking, though he occasionally appealed to his companions to approve of what he said. It was evident that he was the leading spirit of the party, and that he controlled them. He was rather a bright fellow, while the others were somewhat heavy and stupid in their understanding. The bottles were again handed to the guests, both of whom went through the form of drinking without taking a drop of the vile stuff.

"What be you uns doin' here?" asked Bird Riley, after the ceremony with the bottle had been finished.

"We was both taken in a schooner that was gwine to run the blockade," answered Christy. "We was comin' out'n Pass Christian, and was picked up off Chand'leer [Chandeleur] Island, and fotched over hyer. We didn't feel too much to hum after we lost our wages, and we done took a whaleboat and came ashore here, with only one bottle of whiskey atween us. That's all there is on't. Now, how comes you uns hyer?"

"I'm the mate of the topsail schooner West Wind, and t'others is the crew; all but two we done left on board with the cap'n," replied Bird, apparently with abundant confidence in his newly found friends.

"You left her?" asked Christy.

"That's just what we done do."

"Where is the West Wind now?" inquired Christy, deeply interested in the subject at this point.

"She done come down from Mobile three days ago, and done waited for a chance to run the blockade. Her hole is full o' cotton, and she done got a deck-load too," answered Bird Riley without any hesitation.

"Where does the West Wind keep herself now, Bird?"

"Just inside the p'int, astern of the Trafladagar."

"The Trafladagar?" repeated Christy.

"That's her name, or sunthin like it. I never see it writ out."

"She's a schooner, I reckon," continued Christy, concealing what knowledge he possessed in regard to the vessel.

"She ain't no schooner, you bet; she's jest the finist steamer that ever runned inter Mobile, and they've turned her into a cruiser," Bird Riley explained.

"How big is she?"

"I heerd some un say she was about eight hun'ed tons: an' I'll bet she'll pick up every Yankee craft that she gits a sight

on."

"And you say the Trafladagar is at anchor off the p'int?" added Christy, not daring to call the steamer by her true name.

"That's jest where she is; and the West Wind is hitched to her, like a tandem team," replied Bird Riley. "Look yere, Tom Bulger, you don't make love to that bottle as though you meant business. Take another drink, and show you done got some manhood in yer."

The bottle went the rounds again, and the guests apparently took long pulls; but really they did not taste a drop of the infernal liquid.

"That's good pizen, Bird Riley; but it is not jest the stingo that I like best," said Christy, as he wiped his mouth with his sleeve in proper form, for he did not like the smell of the fluid lightning that clung to his lips.

"Whiskey suits me most; but they waste the corn makin' bread on't, and there ain't much on't left to make the staff of life. Howsomever, we don't choke to death on apple-jack, when we can get enough on't," argued Bird Riley.

"Jest now you got a tandem team hitched up out on the Trafladagar and the West Wind," continued Christy cautiously, and with apparent indifference, drawing the mate of the schooner back to the matter in which he was the most deeply interested. "What's this team hitched up that way for? Is the steamer go'n' to tow the schooner up to Mobile?"

"I reckon you're a little more'n half drunk, Tom Bulger," replied Bird Riley, with a vigorous horse laugh. "Tow the schooner up to Mobile! Didn't I tell yer the Trafladagar's been waiting here three days for a good chance to run out?"

"You said that as true as you was born," added Graines, who thought it necessary to say something, for he had been nearly silent from the beginning.

"Sam Riley ain't quite so drunk as you be, Tom Bulger; an' he knows what's what; and thar he shows the Riley blood in his carcass," chuckled the mate.

"And you said the West Wind was loaded with cotton, in the hole and on deck," added Graines, hoping to hurry the conference along a little more rapidly.

"That's jest what I said. I reckon you ain't much used to apple-jack, fur it fusticates your intelleck, and makes yer forget how old y'are. Come, take another, jest to set your head up right," said Bird, passing the bottle to Christy, who was doing his best to keep up the illusion by talking very thick, and swaying his body about like a drunken man.

Both the guests went through the ceremony of imbibing, which was only a ceremony to them. The fire had exhausted its supply of fuel, and it was fortunate that the darkness prevented the revellers from measuring the quantity left in the bottles as they were returned to the owners, or they might have seen that the strangers were not doing their share in consuming the poison.

"Sam Riley does honor to the blood as runs in his body, for he ain't no more drunk'n I am; an' he knows what we been talkin' about," said the mate, who seemed to be greatly amused at the supposed effect of the liquor upon Christy. "You won't know nothin' about the Trafladagar or the West Wind in half an hour from now, Tom Bulger. I reckon it don't make no difference to you about the tandem team, and to-morrer mornin' you won't know how the team's hitched up."

"I don't think I will," replied Christy boozily, as he rolled over on the sand, and then struggled for some time to resume his upright position, to the great amusement of Bird Riley and his companions. "But Sam Riley's got blood in him, the best blood in Alabammy, and he kin tell you all about it if yer want ter know. He kin stan' up agin a whole bottle o' apple-jack."

"I say, Cousin Bird, what's this tandem team hitched up fer?" asked Graines, permitting his superior officer to carry out the illusion upon which he had entered, in order more effectually to blind the mate, and induce him to talk with entire freedom.

"I reckon you ain't too drunk to un'erstan' what I say, Sam, as t'other feller is."

"I'm jest drunk enough to un'erstan' yer, Cousin Bird; but I callate I won't know much about it by to-morrer mornin'," added Graines.

"Let's take another round, Sam; but I reckon Tom Bulger's got more'n he can kerry now," continued the mate.

Bird took a long draught from the bottle, and then passed it to his guest. Three of the four revellers had already toppled over at full length on the ground; and Christy thought he could hurry matters by doing the same thing, and he tumbled over all in a heap. Graines drank nothing himself, though he contrived to spill a quantity of the fluid on the ground, so that it might not seem too light to his only remaining wakeful companion. The last dram of Bird had been a very heavy one, and the engineer realized that he could not hold out much longer.

"What's that tandem team fer?" asked Graines, in the thickest of tones, while he swayed back and forth as Bird was doing by this time.

"The Trafladagar's gwine to tow the West Wind out; and both on 'em's sure to be taken," stammered the mate. "We uns don't bleeve in't, and so we runned away, and left Captain Sullendine to paddle his own punt. They get off at three in the morn in'."

Bird Riley took another drink, and then he toppled over.

CHAPTER V

IN THE VICINITY OF THE CONFEDERATE FORT

It was a favorable night for running the blockade, for the fog had settled down more densely upon the region in the vicinity of the ship channel, though it occasionally lifted, and permitted those on board of the *Bellevite* to see the tall tower of the Sand Island Lighthouse, which had not been illuminated for three years. The mists were generally thicker and remained longer towards daylight than at any other time, and this was the evident reason why three o'clock in the morning had been fixed upon for the departure of the *Trafalgar* and the *West Wind* in tow.

The engineer's head was as clear as it had ever been, notwithstanding the tipsy swaying and doubling-up of his body which he simulated, and he realized that his companion and himself had obtained very important revelations from the revellers. The hour at which the steamer was to leave, evidently by arrangement with the officers of the fort, was valuable knowledge, and he hoped they would be able to carry or send seasonable warning of the time to the *Bellevite*, for she was the only ship on the blockade that could be counted upon to overhaul the *Trafalgar*, if the reports of her great speed had been correctly given.

Both Christy and Graines had listened attentively to the revelations of Bird Riley; but neither of them could understand why the four men, including the mate, had deserted the *West Wind* only a few hours before she was to depart on her voyage to Nassau, where she was believed to be bound. The reason assigned by the tipsy mate was that she was going out in tow of the steamer, and was sure to be taken by the blockaders. Both of the listeners thought this fact improved her chances of getting clear of any possible pursuers.

Bird Riley had fallen back on the ground; but he still continued to talk, though his speech was very nearly incoherent. Graines was very anxious to know what time it was, for the most important part of the enterprise was to give the *Bellevite* timely notice of the coming of the *Trafalgar*. He struck a match and lighted a cigar, offering one to the mate, which he took and lighted. It was half-past twelve by his watch, as he informed Bird, though he did so more for the information of the lieutenant than of the mate.

"I reckon we are all about full enough to go to sleep, and we might as well turn in," said Graines. "But I suppose you uns mean to sleep on board of the *West Wind*."

"I don't reckon we'll do nothin' o' that sort," hiccoughed the mate. "We done got a p'int to kerry, and I reckon we're gwine to kerry it."

"All right," gobbled the engineer, who overdid his part, if anything. "What's the p'int, shipmate?"

"Cap'n Sull'dine's sho't handed," replied the mate, his speech turning somersets as he labored to utter the words, for he still had a portion of his senses left.

"I see," added Graines, tumbling over, but regaining his perpendicularity with a trying effort. "Only six men left after you four done runned away."

"Six!" exclaimed Bird, raising himself up with a desperate struggle, like a wounded hawk. "No six in it; only two left. He don't, can't no how, go to sea with only two men. I'll pilot the schooner out by the Belican Channel an' Mis'sip' Sound. Cap'n Sull'dine 'n' I fit over it, an' I left, with most of the crew. Hah, ha, ha! He done got 'nuff on't! Let's take a swigger, and then we gwine to go to sleep, like the rest on 'em."

With no little difficulty Bird Riley got the bottle to his lips, wasting no little of the liquor in the operation. He was entirely "full" then. He handed the bottle to the engineer, and dropped over on his back, overcome by his frequent potions. Graines did not find it necessary to go through the form of putting the bottle to his lips again, and after waiting a few minutes he was satisfied that the mate was in a deep slumber, from which he was not likely to wake for several hours.

But all the information he appeared to be capable of giving had been imparted, and Graines rose to his feet as steady as he ever was in his life, having taken hardly a swallow of the repulsive poison. He walked away from the sleeping group on the ground, halting about twenty feet from them. Christy saw him, for his eyes were open all the time, and he had listened with intense interest to the conversation between the engineer and the mate of the *West Wind*.

The lieutenant straightened himself up and looked about him. The fire was entirely extinguished; the four men lay with their feet to the embers, and not one of them showed any signs of life. Carefully raising himself to his feet, so as not to disturb the sleeper nearest to him, he crept away to the spot where his associate awaited him. Christy led the way in the direction of the fort, but both of them were silent till they reached the summit of the knoll which concealed the inner bay from their vision, or would have done so if the fog had not effectually veiled it from their sight.

"I suppose you heard all that was said, Mr. Passford, after you ceased to lead the conversation," said Graines, as he glanced back at the foot of the hollow where the revel had taken place.

"Every word of it; and I could insert a good deal of what might have been read between the lines if the talk had been written out," replied the lieutenant. "As you were the cousin of the mate, he seemed to be more communicative to you than to me, and I thought it best to leave you to conduct the conversation. You did it extremely well, Charley, and there was no occasion for me to interfere. I find that you have no little skill as a detective, as well as a sailor and an engineer, and I shall make a good report of you to Captain Breaker. I could almost believe that we were boys together again as we were carrying on the farce this evening."

"Thank you, Christy--Mr. Passford," added Graines.

"You need not stand on ship formalities while we are alone, Charley. But we must put together the threads we have gathered this evening, and, if I mistake not, we shall make a net of them, into which the Trafalgar, or whatever her new name may be, will tumble at no very distant time. It appears that she is not to tow out the West Wind, for Captain Sullendine cannot go to sea with only two men before the mast, and no mate."

"Bird Riley played his cards very well to accomplish the purpose he had in view, which was to keep the West Wind from going to sea in tow of the steamer," replied Graines, keeping up with the lieutenant, who had taken a very rapid pace.

"I should say that the schooner would have a much better chance to get through the blockaders in tow of the Trafalgar than in going on her own hook. Bird is a big fellow in his own estimation; but it struck me that Captain Sullendine had an ignorant and self-willed fellow for a mate, and probably he took the best one he could find; for I think good seamen, outside of the Confederate navy, must be very scarce in the South."

"The fellow had a notion in his head that he could take the schooner out by Pelican Channel, and he quarrelled with the captain on this point. It occurred to me that he deserted his vessel on account of the quarrel rather than for any other reason."

"We need not bother our heads with that question, for it does not concern us; and we will leave the captain and his mate to fight it out when they meet to-morrow, for it is plain enough that the West Wind cannot go to sea with no mate and only two hands before the mast," returned Christy, who was hastening forward to discharge what he considered his first duty thus far developed by the events of the night. "What time is it now, Charley? I have a watch, but no matches."

The engineer's cigar had gone out when he lighted it before, and he had put it in a pocket of his sack coat. Putting it in his mouth, he struck a match, and consulted his watch.

"Quarter of one, Christy; and we have plenty of time," he replied as he lighted his cigar; for he thought it would help him to maintain his indifference in whatever event might be next in order.

"But we have no time to spare," added the lieutenant, as he increased the rapidity of his pace. "Our five pairs of men must have readied the vicinity of the fort before this time, for we have had a long conference with those spreests."

"About an hour and a half; and the information we have obtained will fully pay for the time used."

"No doubt of it; and we must hurry up in order to make a good use of it," said Christy. "The fog is lifting just now, as it has been doing all the evening, and we can see the fort. There are very few people about; for it cannot be an uncommon event to see a blockade-runner get under way."

It was not probable that any of the persons in sight were soldiers, for they had abundant opportunity to see all there was to be seen within the solid walls that sheltered them. The rapid pace at which the lieutenant led his companion soon brought them to the group of people near the shore of the channel leading to Pilot Town. The five pairs of seamen were well scattered about, as they had been instructed to be, and they did not appear to have attracted the attention of the others in the vicinity.

Pair No. Three were the first of the party the officers encountered, and no others appeared to be near them. One of them was smoking his pipe, and both of them were taking it very easily. Not far from them was a knot of men who seemed to be disturbed by some kind of an excitement. As the couple encountered manifested no interest in the affair, Christy concluded that they must know something about it, unless they were extremely scrupulous in adhering to the orders given them.

"What is the row there, French?" asked Christy in a low and guarded tone, though there was no stranger very near him.

"The man in the middle is the captain of that schooner you see off the shore, sir. His mate and three of his crew have deserted the vessel, and he can't go to sea without them," replied French.

"They say the steamer ahead is to tow the schooner out; but the captain cannot go because he has only two men left," added Lines, the other man of the pair.

"Do you know where to find Nos. One and Two?" continued the leader of the expedition.

"I do not, sir; for we keep clear of each other, as we were ordered," answered French, as he looked about him for the men designated.

"You two will separate, and find One and Two. Send them to me, and I will wait here for them," added Christy; and the men departed on the errand. "While I am waiting for them, Mr. Graines, you may go down to that group, and pick up what information you can."

The engineer sauntered down the declivity, smoking his cigar, and making himself as much at home on the enemy's territory as though he had been the commander of the Confederate fort. Christy was not kept long in waiting, and the first pair that reported to him were Weeks and Bingham No. One. The former was the oiler who had been selected on account of his ingenuity and good judgment by Graines.

"Are you a sailor as well as a machinist, Weeks?" asked Christy.

"I am not much of a sailor, sir, though I have handled a schooner. I have been a boatman more or less of the time all my life," replied the oiler modestly.

By this time No. Two, Lane and McGrady, reported, but French and Lines kept their distance, in conformity with the spirit of their orders.

"Nos. One and Two will return to the whaleboat, and Weeks will be in command of the party," continued Christy. "The rest of you will obey him as your officer. Is this understood?"

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the three men.

"Weeks, you will carry the boat to the water, and return to the ship with all possible haste. Inform Captain Breaker that the Trafalgar will sail at three o'clock in the morning. I will report to him later."

The four men started off as though they meant to obey this order to the letter.

CHAPTER VI

CAPTAIN SULLENDINE OF THE WEST WIND

Weeks and his companions divided up as they had been ordered to do in coming to the fort, and departed in different directions. The lieutenant pointed out to them the locality of the bivouac where he had passed so much of the evening, so that they might avoid it. It was about one o'clock in the morning when they left, and Christy calculated that they would reach the ship in an hour and a half, which would give the commander ample time to get up steam from the banked fires, and move down four or five miles to the southward of his present position.

The chief of the expedition had sent no message to the captain of the *Bellevite* in regard to his own movements, but simply that he would report to him later. He had already grasped an idea, though he had had no time to work it up in detail. It looked practicable to him, and he had jumped to a conclusion as soon as he was in possession of the facts covering the situation in the vicinity of Fort Morgan.

With only a plan not yet matured in his mind, perhaps he had been more rash than usual in sending away the whaleboat before he had provided for his own retreat from the enemy's territory; but he had considered this difficulty, and had come to the conclusion that the *Trafalgar* must be captured if possible, even if he and his associates were sent to a Confederate prison.

But he did not anticipate any such result. He had three pairs of the seamen left; and the party still consisted of eight men, all well armed. If the plan he had considered should fail, he had force enough to carry a light boat from Pilot Town, or any other point on the inner shore, in which they could make their escape to the *Bellevite* or some other blockader. He did not feel, therefore, that he had "burned his bridges," and left open no means of retreat in case of disaster.

Christy and Graines were left alone in the darkness and the fog, a bank of which was just then sweeping over the point; but they could hear the violent talk of Captain Sullendine in the distance, as he declaimed against the perfidy of his mate and the three seamen just at the point where he needed them most. Evidently he could not reconcile himself to the idea of being left behind by the *Trafalgar*, which seemed to be inevitable under present circumstances.

"The skipper of the *West Wind* seems to be in an ocean of trouble, and he is apparently resolved not to submit to the misfortune which has overtaken him," said Christy, as he led the way towards the knot of men who were the auditors of the rebellious captain.

"He may jaw as much as he pleases, if it makes him feel any better, but I don't see how he can help himself," replied Graines. "The schooner looked like a rather large one when I got a sight of her just before I came back to you, which I did as soon as I saw the four men leave you."

"I sent Weeks as a messenger to Captain Breaker, to inform him that the *Trafalgar* would sail at three in the morning," added Christy.

"I concluded that was the mission upon which you sent him," replied the engineer; and, whatever doubts the lieutenant's action might have raised in his mind, he asked no questions.

Every man on board of the *Bellevite* was well acquainted with the record and reputation of the executive officer; and he concluded at once that Christy had already arranged his method of operations. It was not "in good form" to ask his superior any questions in regard to his intentions.

"Did you go down to the shore, Charley?" asked Christy, as they walked in that direction.

"I did not, but I went far enough to hear what the captain of the *West Wind* was talking about. I had no orders, and as soon as I saw the four men leave you, I thought I had better rejoin you," answered Graines.

"Quite right," said the lieutenant as he halted; for they were as near the group on the shore as it was prudent to go, for the fog was lifting. "What did the captain say?"

"He offered ten dollars apiece for the recovery of the men who had deserted, if they were brought back within two hours," replied Graines. "He did an immense amount of heavy swearing; and it was plain that he was mad all the way through, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot."

"Was any one inclined to accept his offer, and go in search of the runaways?"

"I can't say, but I saw no one leave on that or any other mission. I was there but a few minutes, and the fog dropped down on the party so that I could not see them at all."

"We must join that assemblage, and we may be able to help Captain Sullendine out of his dilemma," said Christy.

"Help him out of it!" exclaimed Graines.

"Not a word more, Charley. I have an idea or two left, but it is not prudent to say a word about it here," replied the

lieutenant cautiously. "You know the cut of my jib in my present rig, and I want you to keep an eye on me, for we must separate now. When you see me take off this old soft hat with my left hand, and scratch my head with my right, moving off a minute later, you will follow me. By that time I shall know what we are to do."

"All right, Christy; I will follow the direction to the letter," added Graines.

"While you go off to the left of that pile of rubbish yonder, I will go to the right of it. If you speak to any of our men, do so with the utmost caution."

"They have been down there some time, and they have full information in regard to what is going on in this locality," suggested Graines.

"Use your own judgment, Charley, only be careful not to give us away," replied the lieutenant, as he moved towards the pile of rubbish.

A walk of a few minutes brought him to the group on the shore, which consisted of not more than a dozen persons, and half of them belonged to the *Bellevite*. Christy halted before he reached the assemblage, in order to listen to the eloquence of the captain of the *West Wind*. He talked very glibly; and it did not take his outside auditor long to perceive that he had been drinking somewhat freely, though he was not what non-temperance men would have called intoxicated.

"I use my men well, and give 'em enough to eat and drink, and what's good enough," the nautical orator declaimed with a double-handed gesture. "Why, my friends, I gave each of the villains that deserted the schooner a bottle of apple-jack. I don't drink it myself, but it is good enough for niggers and sailors; in fact, my men liked it better'n whiskey, because it's stronger. They served me a mighty mean trick, and I'll give ten dollars apiece to have 'em fetched back to me. That's a good chance for some on you to make some money tonight."

His audience listened to him as they would have done to a preacher with whom they had no sympathy, and no one was tempted by the reward to go in search of the deserters. Christy moved up nearer to the speaker. In his disguise, with his face smooched with some of the color he had received as a present from Mr. Gilleur, the French detective, with whom he had been associated on his cruise some months before, he did not appear at all different from most of those who listened to Captain Sullendine. He had laid aside his gentlemanly gait and bearing, and acted as though he had lately joined the "awkward squad."

"How d'e?" called the orator to him, as he saw him join the group of listeners. "I see you come from the other side of the p'int."

"Well, is that agin the laws o' war?" demanded Christy.

"Not a bit on't," replied the captain pleasantly, as though his potations of whiskey were still in full effect upon him. "If you come from that way, have you seen anything of my four men that deserted the schooner?"

"I wasn't lookin' for 'em; didn't know ye'd lost some men," replied Christy, staring with his mouth half open at the orator. "Was one on 'em the mate?"

"Yes!" exclaimed the captain eagerly.

"Well, I hain't seen nothin' on em," added Christy in a mumbling tone.

"I'll bet you have!" protested the skipper of the *West Wind*. "How'd you know one on 'em was the mate if you didn't see 'em?"

"I didn't know one on 'em was the mate; I only axed yer so's ter know."

"I reckon you know sunthin about my men," persisted the captain; and by this time the attention of all the party had been directed to him.

"I don't know nothin' about yer men, and I hain't been interduced to 'em. If you want to ship a new crew, I'm ready to jine with yer."

"One man ain't enough," added the skipper.

"Some o' these men'll jine too, I reckon," suggested Christy, who had proceeded in this manner in order to attract the attention of the disconsolate master of the *West Wind*.

"I don't reckon they can ship, 'cause most on 'em belongs to the *Tallahatchie*, and they can't leave."

"That's so," shouted several of the group, including some of the crew of the *Bellevite*.

"What's the Talla-what-you-call-her?" demanded Christy.

"She's the steamer you can see when the fog lifts," answered Captain Sullendine. "The *Tallahatchie* is her name. Are you a sailor, my lively lad?"

"I reckon I know the bobstay from the mainmast."

"You know sumthin about my mate and men, my jolly tar, and I'll give you five dollars apiece for any news on 'em that

will help me to ketch 'em; and I'll ship you into the bargain, for I want more hands," the captain proceeded in a more business-like manner, though at the expense of his oratory.

Just at this moment three short and sharp whistles sounded from off the shore, and about half of the skipper's audience turned upon their heels and walked down to the water, where they embarked in a boat. They were evidently members of the ship's company of the Tallahatchie, on shore on leave, and the whistles were the signal for their return. The remainder of the group, with two or three exceptions, were the seamen of the blockader.

"Where'd you come from, my hearty?" demanded the captain of the schooner, turning to Christy again.

"I was taken in a blockader, eight on us. We done stole a whaleboat and comed ashore," replied Christy, enlarging upon the story he had told the bivouackers.

"Eight on you!" exclaimed the master of the schooner. "Where's the rest on ye?"

"They're all about here somewhar, and I reckon I kin find em. They're lookin for sunthin t'eat. They all want to ship, and the mate of the Rattler's one on 'em," continued Christy, guiding himself by the circumstances as they were developed to him.

"What's your name, my man?"

"My name's Jerry Sandman; and I ain't ashamed on't."

"Are your men all sailors, Jerry?"

"Every one on 'em."

"I want eight good men, Jerry, the mate bein' one on 'em."

"Then we kin fix you like a 'possum in a hole."

"I've got two boats on the shore; the deserters stole one on 'em, and I come ashore in t'other arter 'em. I reckon I'll get a steamer in Nassau, and I want all the good men I can find to man her. I'll ship the whole on you. Find your men, Jerry, and fetch 'em down to the boats. I'll give 'em all sumthin t'eat. Now be lively about it," said Captain Sullendine, as he walked away towards the shore.

"I'll find 'em in no time," replied Christy, as he removed his soft hat with his left hand, and scratched his head with the other.

The rest of the party scattered, and Graines joined the lieutenant.

CHAPTER VII

A POWERFUL ALLY OF THE BELLEVITERS

The seamen of the *Bellevite* had listened with intense interest to the conversation between the commander of the *West Wind* and the lieutenant; and there was not a single one of them who did not comprehend the purpose of the chief of the expedition. They were greatly amused at the manner in which Christy conducted himself, and especially at the mongrel dialect he had used. It was a little difficult for them to realize that the awkward fellow who was in conversation with the skipper of the schooner was the gentlemanly, well-spoken officer they had been accustomed to see on the quarter-deck of the *Bellevite*.

They separated as they had been instructed to do; but they were careful not to go to any great distance from the spot, for they understood that they should be wanted in a few minutes. Graines had not spoken a word on this occasion, though he had done most of the talking at the bivouac. He was ready to do his part; but the skipper had addressed his companion first, introducing the subject, and he had no opportunity to get in a single word.

"I suppose you understand it all, Charley," said Christy as soon as they were alone.

"I could not very well have helped doing so if I had tried. The only thing that bothered me was when you appeared to be betraying yourself by alluding to the mate," replied Graines.

"I did not do that by accident; but I desired to get the whole attention of the captain, and I got it. The rest all followed in due course. Now tell all the men to go down to the shore, and wait a little distance from the two boats till you and I join them. Tell them all to be hungry. Your name is Mr. Balker, the mate of the *Rattler*, the blockade-runner from which we escaped in a whaleboat. My name is Jerry Sandman, the second mate, for the want of a better. Tell them not to forget any of these names," continued Christy.

"They heard the whole story, and they were deeply interested in it, for they could not help seeing what was coming," added the engineer, as he went to carry out the order he had just received.

The seamen still kept together in pairs, and Graines instructed them by twos, impressing them with the necessity of remembering the names they had heard in the lieutenant's story, which was a "story" in the double sense of the word. As each couple received their lesson, they sauntered in the direction of the shore.

"What's going to be done, Mr. Graines?" asked French, who was one of the second pair the engineer instructed.

"That is none of your business, French. You are to remember the names I have given you, and then obey orders," replied Graines rather sharply, for it was a very unusual thing for a seaman, or even an officer, to ask such a question of his superior; and the discipline of the *Bellevite* was as exacting as it was kind and fatherly.

"Excuse me, Mr. Graines; I only wanted to be ready for whatever was coming," pleaded French.

"Excused; but don't ask such questions. You listened to the conversation between your officer and the captain of the schooner; and if you cannot comprehend the meaning of it, ask Lines, and he will explain it," added the engineer, "Where are Londall and Vögel?"

"Right by that pile of rubbish, sir," replied French, as he led the way to the shore.

The last pair were instructed and sent with the others, and they asked no questions. Graines joined the lieutenant, who had seated himself on a log, and reported that all was going on right.

"As I said before, Charley, you will be the mate of the *Rattler*, and will no doubt be engaged for the same position on board of the *West Wind*. I will ship as second mate, if one of the two men now on board of the vessel is not shipped as such, for I wish to be among the men," said Christy, after looking about him to see that no one was within hearing distance of them.

"I take it I shall not make a long voyage as mate," replied Graines.

"Probably not, though I cannot tell how long you will have to serve in that capacity. I purpose to have the *Tallahatchie* tow the schooner as far down as practicable; but we shall doubtless have business on our hands before it is time to cut the towline. Now we will wait upon the captain."

They found him walking up and down the shore, apparently somewhat excited; and doubtless he had not entire confidence in the promises of "Jerry Sandman." The six seamen had not joined Captain Sullendine on the shore, but had placed themselves behind a coal shanty quite near the water.

"I've brought the mate down, Cap'n Sull'dine," Christy began, as he and the engineer halted in front of the master of the schooner. "Here he is, an' I reckon there ain't no better sailor in the great Confed'racy. This yere is Mr. Balker."

"How are ye, Mr. Balker? You are just the man I want more'n I want my supper. Now tell me something about yourself."

Graines invented a story suited to the occasion. Then the conversation was about wages; and the candidate haggled for form's sake, but finally accepted the lay the captain offered.

"By the way, Captain Sullendine, do you happen to have a second mate?" asked the engineer when the terms were arranged.

"I had one; but he run away with Bird Riley. He wa'n't good for nothin', and I'm glad he's gone," replied the skipper.

"The man you talked with is Jerry Sandman, and he was the other mate of the Rattler. He isn't a showy fellow, but he was a first-class second mate," continued Graines.

"Then I ship him as second mate;" and they arranged the wages without much difficulty.

The six seamen were promptly shipped. The whole party then embarked in the two boats, Captain Sullendine dividing them into two parties for the purpose. The fog had settled down very densely upon the shore; but the West Wind was easily found, and they went on board, where one boat was hoisted up to the stem davits, and the other on the port quarter.

"Here you be, Mr. Balker," said Captain Sullendine when the party reached the quarter-deck; and he was so lively in his movements, and so glib in his speech, as to provoke the suspicion that he had imbibed again at the conclusion of his oration on shore. "Here, you, Sopsy!" he continued in a loud voice.

A lantern was burning on the companion, which enabled the party to see that the waist of the vessel was compactly packed with bales of cotton. The schooner seemed to be of considerable size, and Christy thought she must be loaded with a very large cargo of the precious merchandise. In answer to the captain's call, Sopsy, who proved to be the negro cook of the vessel, presented himself.

"All these people want something to eat, Sopsy. Let the crew eat in the deck-house for'ad, and bring a lunch into the cabin right off," continued Captain Sullendine.

"Yis, sar," replied the cook with emphasis. "Git 'em quicker'n a man kin swaller his own head. Libes dar a man wid soul so dead"--

"Never mind the varse, Sopsy," interposed the captain.

"--As never to hisself have said"--

"Hurry up, Sopsy!"

"He don't say dat, Massa Cap'n," added the cook, as he shuffled off over the bales of cotton.

"Hullo there, Bokes! Where are you, Bokes?" called the captain again.

"On deck, Cap'n," replied a white man, crawling out from a small opening in the bales.

"Wake up, Bokes! You ain't dead yet."

"No, sir; wide awake's a coon in a hencoop," added the man, who appeared to be one of the two left on board by the deserters, the cook being the other.

"Be alive, Bokes! Here, wait a minute!" and the captain ran down the companion ladder to the cabin, from which he presently appeared with a bottle in each hand. "Do you see them men on the cotton, Bokes?" he asked, pointing with one of them at the six Belleviters, who stood where they had taken their stations after hoisting up the quarter-boat.

"I see sunthin over thar," replied the seaman, who seemed to be hardly awake yet.

"Them's the new crew I shipped to-night--six on 'em, or seven with the second mate," added the captain. "Show 'em over to the deck-house, and let 'em pick out their bunks."

"Seven on 'em; the cook and me makes nine, and they ain't but eight berths in the deck-house, Cap'n," replied Bokes, who seemed to be afraid of losing his own sleeping quarters.

"You can sleep on the deck, then. These are all good men, and they must have good berths," added the captain. "You can sleep as well in the scuppers as anywhere else, Bokes; and you ain't more'n half awake any time."

"Must have my berth, Cap'n, or I go ashore," persisted the seaman.

"Small loss anyhow," growled the captain.

"How is the cabin, Captain Sullendine?" interposed Graines.

"Two staterooms and four berths," replied the master.

"Then why can't the second mate take one of the berths in the cabin?" suggested the new mate. "He is a first-rate fellow, and I reckon he's a better sailor than I am, for he's been to sea about all his life."

"Tain't reg'lar to have the second mate in the cabin. He'll have t'eat with us if he bunks there," argued the master.

"He'll have to keep his watch on deck when we eat, and I reckon he'll have to take his grub alone," reasoned the mate.

"I'd ruther live in the deck-house with the crew," said Christy.

"But there ain't no room thar," added Graines, who thought his superior had made the remark simply to keep up his character.

"Let him come into the cabin, then," said Captain Sullendine, in order to settle the question. "Now, Bokes, take this apple-jack, and show the other six to the deck-house. Give 'em one or two drinks all round. It'll do 'em good."

Bokes obeyed the order, after the master had lighted another lantern for his use, and he went over the bales of cotton to the seamen.

Captain Sullendine remarked with great complacency that he always treated his men well, gave them enough to eat and drink, and he thought the apple-jack he had sent them would do them good. He liked to be liberal with his crew, for he believed a tot of grog would go further with them than "cussin' 'em;" and the two mates did not gainsay him, though they believed in neither grog nor "cussin'."

Though Christy never drank a drop of intoxicating fluid under any circumstances, and Graines almost never, both of them believed that "apple-jack" had been a very serviceable ally during the night so far. Rut they considered it useful only in the hands of the enemy, and they were sorry to see the bottles sent forward for the use of Belleviters; for they were afraid some of them might muddle and tangle their brains with the fiery liquor.

"Come, mates, let's go down into the cabin now," continued the captain, descending the ladder without waiting for them.

"I will go forward for a few minutes, Charley," whispered Christy in the ear of the engineer, who followed the captain below.

When the lieutenant reached the deck-house he found the men there, with Bokes in the act of taking a long pull at one of the bottles, while French was holding the other.

"Here's the second mate," said the seaman with the bottle.

"You can keep the bottle you have, Bokes," said Christy. "Now go aft with it." The sleepy sailor was willing enough to obey such a welcome order, and the lieutenant took the other bottle to the side and emptied it into the water. The men did not object, and the new second mate joined the master in the cabin.

CHAPTER VIII

ON BOARD OF THE COTTON SCHOONER

Probably some, if not all, of the six men in the deck-house of the West Wind were in the habit of taking intoxicating liquors when they were ashore, and when it was served out on board of the ship in conformity with the rules and traditions of the navy. The commander and his executive officer labored for the promotion of total abstinence among the officers and crew. More than the usual proportion of the men commuted their "grog ration" for money, through the influence of the principal officers.

While the commander of the present expedition accepted the aid of the powerful ally, "apple-jack," in the service of his country, drinking freely appeared to him to be about the same thing as going over to the enemy; and he could not permit his men to turn traitors involuntarily, when he knew they would not do so of their own free will and accord. He had settled the liquor question to his own satisfaction in the deck-house, returning the bottle to French.

When Graines went below, a minute or two later than Captain Sullendine, he saw his new superior in the act of tossing off another glass of whiskey, as he concluded it was from the label on the bottle which stood on the cabin table. He had been considerably exhilarated before, and he was in a fair way to strengthen the ally of the loyalists by carrying his powerful influence to the head of the commander of the intending blockade-runner. The captain seated himself at the table, and Christy saw that he had a flat bottle in his breast-pocket.

"Now, Mr. Balker, we had better seal up the bargain we've made with forty drops from this bottle," said he, as he poured out a glass for himself, regardless of the fact that he had just indulged; and at the same time he pushed the bottle and another glass towards the new mate.

Graines covered the lower part of the glass with his hand, and poured a few drops into it. Putting some water with it from the pitcher, he raised the tumbler in imitation of the captain.

"Here's success to the right side," added the master, as he drank off the contents of the glass.

"I drink that toast with all my mind, heart, and soul," added the engineer, with decided emphasis, though he knew that "the right side" did not always convey the same idea.

"Help yourself, Mr.-- I've forgot your name, Second Mate," he added as he moved towards the companion ladder.

"Jerry Sandman, sir, and I will help myself to what I want," replied Christy.

"That's right, Mr. Sandman; make yourself at home in this cabin. I must go on deck and take a look at the Tallahatchie," added the master as he went up the ladder, followed by Graines.

The lieutenant helped himself to a glass of water, after rinsing the tumbler, for that was what he wanted. Sopsy the cook immediately appeared, bearing a tray on which were several dishes of eatables, bread and ham being the principal. The bottle was in his way; and after he had drunk off half a tumblerful of its contents, he removed it to the pantry. He proceeded to set the table.

"Oft in der chizzly night, 'fore slumber's yoke hab tooken me," hummed Sopsy as he worked at the table.

"Where is this schooner bound, Sopsy?" asked Christy.

"Bound to dat boon whar no trab'ler returns," replied the cook, pausing in his occupation and staring the second mate full in the face.

"That bourn is Nassau, I reckon," laughed the lieutenant.

"Is 'pose she's gwine dar if she don't go to dat boon where no trab'lers come back agin," answered Sopsy seriously.

"Be you Meth'dis' o' Bab'tis', Massa Mate?"

"Both, Sopsy."

"Can't be bof, Massa."

"Then I'm either one you like."

"That ain't right, Massa Secon' Mate, 'cordin' as you was brung up," said the cook, shaking his head violently, as though he utterly disapproved of the mate's theology.

"I'm a theosophist, Sopsy."

"A seehossofist!" exclaimed the cook, dropping a plate in his astonishment. "We don't hab none o' dem on shore in de Souf. I reckon dey libs in de water."

"No; they live on the mountains."

"We hain't got no mount'ns down here, and dat's de reason we don't hab none on 'em," added Sopsy as he went to the pantry; but presently returned with a plate of pickles in one hand and the whiskey bottle in the other. "Does dem sea-hosses drink whisker, Massa Secon' Mate?"

"They never drink a drop of it."

"Dis colored pusson ain't no sea-hoss, and he do drink whiskey when he kin git it," added the cook; and he half filled a tumbler with the contents of the bottle, and drank it off at a single gulp.

He had hardly placed it on the table in the middle of the dishes before the captain came below. His first step was to take a liberal potation from the bottle. As he raised it to the swinging lamp, he discovered that the fluid had been freely expended in his absence.

"You've punished this bottle all it deserves," said he when he perceived that its level had been considerably lowered, and he did not ask the new officer to join him. "That's all right, Mr. Sandman; but I don't want you to take more than you can manage to-night, for we have a big job on our hands, and we want our heads where we shall be able to find them. Now go on deck, and learn what you can about the vessel, for we hain't got but half an hour more before the Tallahatchie goes to sea. We may have lots of music after we get outside; but I reckon our steamer can outsail anything the Yankees have got on the blockade. Don't drink no more, Mr. Sandman; and when we git to Nassau you can have a reg'lar blowout."

"I won't touch another drop before we get out of the bay, Cap'n Sullendine," protested Christy, without betraying the misdemeanor of the cook, as doubtless it was.

"That's right, Mr. Sandman; we must all have our heads on our shoulders to-night," said the captain, as he drank off the potion he had prepared.

Christy wished to hold the commander to his own advice; but that would have been fighting on the wrong side for him, and Sopsy escaped a reprimand, if not a kick or two, by his forbearance. By this time the bottle was nearly empty; but the skipper put it under lock and key in a closet, which seemed to be well filled with others like it. Christy went on deck, in obedience to the order he had received, and found the engineer on the quarter-deck buried in the fog, which was just then more dense than at any time before.

"The captain's pretty well set 'up,' isn't he Christy?" said Graines in a low tone.

"About half seas over; but he knows what he is about, though he took another heavy potion just now," replied the lieutenant.

"All right; I think we can manage this craft very well without him," added Graines with a smile, which could not be seen in the darkness.

But the conversation was interrupted at this point by the appearance of the cook, whose legs were more tangled up by his tipples than his master's. He delivered the request of Captain Sullendine that they should come into the cabin, and partake of the lunch which had been set out for them. As they moved towards the companion, they saw Sopsy creep over to the alley where Bokes had been sleeping, and take up the bottle of apple-jack Christy had given him, and drink from it. It was evident to them that the cook could not be much longer in condition for any duty.

The two mates went below as invited, and found the captain at the table. He had brought out the bottle of whiskey, and was eating of the dishes before him, but plainly with little relish.

"Have another little drink, Mr. Balker; but I think Mr. Sandman had better not take anymore," said the master, whose speech was rather thick by this time.

"Thank you, Captain Sullendine; I will do a little in that way, for we are likely to have a very damp night of it," replied Graines, as he helped himself, though he did not take ten drops.

"A little does one good; but it don't do to take too much when we have very important business on our hands. After that one, Mr. Balker, I advise you not to take any more till we get clear of the blockaders," added the skipper, as he emptied the bottle into his glass.

The ham on the table was of excellent quality, and the two mates ate heartily of it, with the ship-bread. The last dose the captain had taken appeared to cap the climax, and he could no longer eat, or talk so as to be clearly understood. When the mates had finished their lunch, they saw that the skipper had dropped asleep in his chair. They rose from their places, and rattled the stools. The noise roused the sleeper, and he sprang to his feet with a violent start.

"What's time'z it, Mr. Zbalker?" he demanded, catching hold of the table to avoid falling on the cabin floor.

He seemed to be conscious that he was not presenting a perfectly regular appearance to his new officers; and he dropped into his chair, making a ludicrous effort to stiffen his muscles and put on his dignity, but it was a failure.

"Quarter-past two, Captain Sullendine," replied Graines in answer to the question.

"Most an hour more 'fore we git started," stammered the invalid. "I didn't sleep none last night, I'm sleepy. I'm go'n to turn in for half an hour, 'n then I'll be on deck ready for busi-- ready for buzness."

Graines assisted him to his stateroom, for he could not walk, and he was afraid he would fall and hurt himself. He helped him into his berth, and arranged him so that he could sleep it off, and he did not care if he did not do so before the next day. He waited till he had dropped off into a deep slumber, and then joined Christy in the cabin.

"If I had not been a temperance man before, I should be now," said the lieutenant. "It is just as well that the captain is clean over the bay, for we might have been obliged to shoot him if he had been sober."

"But we could have taken possession of the vessel in spite of him, if the steamer had not interfered," replied Graines, as he led the way to the deck. "I don't see that we have anything to do but wait for the moving of the waters, or for the moving of the steamer. I suppose our men are all right forward."

"I have no doubt of it, though I have not seen them lately. I gave one of the bottles of apple-jack the captain sent forward for them to Bokes, and poured the contents of the other into Mobile Bay. I think we had better go forward and look the vessel over," said Christy.

They had gone but a few steps before they stumbled over the body of Sopsy, who had evidently succumbed to the quantity of firewater he had consumed. He had assisted Bokes to empty the bottle given to him, and both of them were too far gone to give an alarm if they discovered at any time that something was wrong about the movements of the West Wind.

They found the Belleviters lounging about on the cotton bales, some of them asleep, and others carrying on a conversation in a low tone. They were glad to see their officers, who told them the time for some sort of action was rapidly approaching. Then they went to the bow of the vessel, where they found that she was anchored, though the chain had been hove short. The hawser by which she was to be towed to sea was made fast to the bowsprit bitts, and led to the stern of the steamer, where it was doubtless properly secured.

While they were looking over the bow, a boat approached from the Tallahatchie, and an officer hailed, asking for Captain Sullendine.

"He is in the cabin; I am the mate," replied the engineer, "and the captain has shipped a new crew, we are all right now."

"Weigh your anchor at three short whistles," added the officer.

"Understood, and all right," said the new mate.

The boat pulled back to the steamer.

CHAPTER IX

THE DEPARTURE OF THE TALLAHATCHIE

The fog, which had been coming and going during the whole of the night, had now lifted so that everything in the vicinity of the fort could be seen; but across the point, down the ship channel, it was dense, dark, and black. The wind was fresh from the south-west, which rolled up the fog banks, and then rolled them away. Such was the atmospheric condition near Mobile Point, and Christy believed it was the same at the southward. He thought it probable that the commander of the Tallahatchie would wait for a more favorable time than the present appeared to be before he got under way.

"All hands to the forecastle," he called to the men on the cotton bales.

All of them, knowing his voice as well as they knew their own names, hastened to answer to the call.

"We have to heave up the anchor with a windlass, Mr. Graines," said he to the engineer. "We had better get the hang of it while we have time to do so. Ship the handspikes, my men."

Doubtless all of them had worked a windlass before, for every one of them was an able seaman, which had been one of the elements in their selection, and they went to work very handily. A turn or two was given, which started the vessel ahead, showing that the anchor was not hove entirely short. Graines went to the bow, and reported a considerable slant of the cable with the surface of the water. Christy ordered the six seamen to work the windlass, with French to take in the slack. They continued to heave over with the handspikes for some time longer.

"Cable up and down, sir," reported Graines.

"Avast heaving!" added the lieutenant; and he had taken the command, paying no attention to the fact that he was the second mate under the new order of things, and the engineer did not remind him that he was the chief officer. "Let off the cable a couple of notches, so that the anchor will not break out. Make fast to the bits, French, but don't foul it with the towline."

"We are all right now," said Graines, as he moved aft from the heel of the bowsprit.

"What time is it now?" asked the lieutenant. "Bring that lantern forward, Lines."

"Ten minutes of three," replied the engineer, holding his watch up to the light.

"The fog is settling down again, and I have no doubt the captain of the steamer will get under way at about the hour named," said Christy, putting his hand on the wire towline, and giving it a shake, to assure himself that it was all clear. "Now, Mr. Graines, or rather, Mr. Balker, as you are the mate and I am only the second mate, I think you had better go aft and see that all goes well there."

"Very well, Mr. Sandman; I will leave you in charge of the forecastle," replied the engineer, with a light laugh; but they had been boys together, and understood each other perfectly.

"Captain Sullendine is the only dangerous man on board, and I think you had better look after him," added Christy. "If there is any lock on the door of his stateroom, it would be well to turn the key."

"I will look after him at once, sir," answered Graines, as he leaped upon the cotton bales and made his way to the quarter-deck.

On the way he examined the condition of Sopsy, and found him snoring like a roaring lion, in an uneasy position. He turned him over on his side, and then went to the lair of Bokes, who was in the same condition; and he concluded that neither of them would come to his senses for a couple of hours at least.

Captain Sullendine had been assisted to a comfortable position when he turned in, and he was sleeping with nothing to disturb him. There was no lock on the door, and Graines could not turn the key. The interior of the cabin was finished in the most primitive manner, for the vessel had not been built to accommodate passengers. The door of the captain's stateroom was made of inch and a half boards, with three battens, and the handle was an old-fashioned bow-latch. There was a heavy bolt on the inside, as though the apartment had been built to enable the master to fortify himself in case of a mutiny.

The engineer could not fasten the door with any of the fixtures on it; but it opened inward, as is generally the case on shipboard, and this fact suggested to the ingenious officer the means of securing it even more effectually than it could have been done with a lock and key. In the pantry he found a rolling-pin, which the cook must have left there for some other purpose.

This implement he applied to the bow-handle of the fixture on the door. It would not fit the iron loop, but he whittled it down on one side with his pocket-knife till he made it fit exactly in its place with some hard pressure. But shaking the

door might cause it to drop out, and he completed the job by lashing it to the handle of the door with a lanyard he had in his pocket. When he had finished his work he was confident the captain could not get out of his room unless he broke down the door, which he lacked the means to accomplish.

"West Wind, ahoy!" shouted some one from the stern of the steamer before the engineer had completed his work in the cabin.

Christy thought that French's voice was a better imitation of Captain Sullendine's than his own, and he directed him to reply to the hail, telling him what to say.

"On board the Tallahatchie!" returned the seaman at the lieutenant's dictation.

"Are you all ready?" shouted the same officer.

"All ready, sir!" replied French.

"Captain Rombold will get under way in five minutes!" called the speaker on the stern of the steamer. "Wait for three short whistles, and then heave up your anchor!"

"Understood, and all right," added the spokesman of the West Wind.

"Captain Rombold!" exclaimed Christy to himself, as he heard for the first time the name of the commander of the Tallahatchie.

The lieutenant, acting as the servant of the French detective at St. George's in the Bermudas, had seen Captain Rombold, and had heard him converse for an hour with Mr. Gilfleur, when he was in command of the Dornoch, which had been captured by the Chateaugay, on board of which Christy was a passenger. He was known to be a very able and brave officer, and his defeat was owing more to the heavier metal of the loyal ship than to any lack of skill or courage on the part of the Confederate commander. The last the young officer knew about him, he was a prisoner of war in New York, and had doubtless been exchanged for some loyal officer of equal rank, for the enemy had plenty of them on hand.

"Man the windlass, my lads," said Christy in a quiet tone, though he was still thinking of the commander of the steamer which was to tow out the schooner.

While he was waiting for the three short whistles, Graines came forward and reported in what manner he had secured the captain, and that the two men on the cotton bales were still insensible.

"You may be sure the captain will not come out of his stateroom until we let him out," added the engineer; and Christy proceeded to explain what had passed between the schooner and the steamer.

"The Tallahatchie has one of the ablest commanders that sail the ocean, for I have seen and know him," continued the lieutenant. "It is Captain Rombold, now or formerly, of the British Navy. He is a gentleman and a scholar, as well as a brave and skilful officer."

"Then Captain Breaker may have his hands full before he captures the steamer," added the engineer.

"He certainly will; but a great deal depends upon the weight of the Tallahatchie's metal."

"We shall soon have a chance to judge of that."

"I should like to know something more about this steamer, though my father's letter gives us the principal details; but we have no time now to examine her," continued Christy.

"Who's that?" demanded Graines, as he saw a man walking forward over the bales of cotton.

It proved to be Bokes, who had slept off a part of the effects of the debauch; but Sopsy had probably consumed a large portion of the contents of his bottle.

"Does you uns happen to have any more apple-jack?" asked the fellow. "Somehow I lost nigh all o' mine, and I'm sufferin', dyin' for a drink."

"French, take him to the deck-house, and fasten him in," said Christy in a low tone.

"Come with me, my hearty, and we'll see what there is in the deck-house," said the seaman, as he took the man by the arm and led him to the place indicated. "Now go in and find your bunk. Get into it, and I will look for a bottle here."



"DOWSE THAT GLIM IN YOUR FO'CASTLE!" Page 111.

Bokes crept to his bunk, and stretched himself out there. French took the bottle the lieutenant had emptied into the bay, and gave it to him. Then he closed the door, and finding a padlock and hasp on it, he locked him in. Two of the three men who had remained on board of the schooner were now prisoners; and Sopsy was considered as harmless as a fishworm.

French had hardly reported what he had done before the three short whistles were sounded, and Christy gave the order to heave up the anchor.

"West Wind, ahoy!" shouted the same officer who had spoken before.

"On board the steamer!" replied French, when he was directed to reply.

"Dowse that glim on your fo'castle!" shouted the officer, as with a liberal dose of profanity he demanded if they were all fools on board of the schooner. "Put out every light on board!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" responded French, as Graines extinguished the lantern on the forecabin; and Christy directed him to do the same with the cabin lamp.

He looked at his watch before he put it out, and found it was quarter-past three. The captain of the steamer had evidently waited for a favorable moment to start on his perilous voyage, and the engineer noticed when he went forward after he had secured Captain Sullendine, that the fog was again settling down on the bay.

"On board the steamer!" shouted French, as directed. "Anchor aweigh, sir!" Then a minute later, "All clear, and the towline slack!"

From the sounds that came from the forward part of the steamer, it was evident that she had heaved up her anchor before she gave the three whistles for the schooner to do so.

"West Wind, ahoy!" called the officer from the Tallahatchie. "Stand by your helm with your best man!"

Graines had just gone aft, and had taken the wheel of the vessel; but Christy sent French to take his first trick at the helm. The tide was still setting into the bay, and it was within half an hour of the flood. The schooner was beginning to sway off from the shore as the tide struck her, when the gong bell in the engine-room of the steamer was heard. She went ahead very slowly, and straightened the towline. Christy took a careful survey of its fastenings, to assure himself that it was all right, and then mounted the cotton bales, to observe the progress of the vessel.

Of course the steamer was under the direction of a skilful pilot, doubtless the best that could be had, for the present venture was an exceedingly important one to the Confederate cause. The Tallahatchie was perhaps a better vessel than any of those which had done so much mischief among the ships of the loyal American marine, and in no manner could the Southern cause be more effectually assisted than by these cruisers.

As the vessels headed to the southward, Christy went to the binnacle, and watched the course.

CHAPTER X

THE CASTING OFF OF THE TOWLINE

Christy Passford had been through this channel at least half a dozen times in the *Bellevite*, and knew all the courses and bearings, though the latter did not count in the dense fog which had settled down on the vicinity of the fort. The lights in the binnacle of the *West Wind* had not been put out, though they could not be noticed outside of the schooner. The great fortress could not be seen, and it was as silent as a tomb.

"How does she head, Christy?" asked Graines, as they met at the wheel.

"South a quarter west," replied the lieutenant, "which is the correct course. The fog is very dense just now. I think we have passed the obstructions by this time, though I do not know precisely where they are placed."

"I should call it mighty ticklish navigation just here," added the engineer.

"It is all of that, or will be in five or ten minutes more. Sand Island Lighthouse is not more than a quarter of a mile from the middle of the channel, and at that point the course changes. Perhaps the pilot can make out the lighthouse in the fog. If he don't he will run into five or six feet of water in a few minutes, out of eight fathoms or more."

"I suppose you are prepared to let go the towline if anything goes wrong, Mr. Passford?" added the engineer, perhaps as a suggestion rather than as a question.

"I hope it will not come to that, for the schooner might get aground on the Knoll before we could make sail," replied Christy.

"The steamer has shifted her helm," said Graines, to the great relief of the lieutenant. "The fog is lifting again, and the pilot must have seen the lighthouse. We are headed more to the eastward now."

"The course is south by west, three-quarters west, when the lighthouse bears west by south. We are out of the woods now, and there will be no trouble at all till some blockader stirs up the waters," said Christy.

"I wonder where the *Bellevite* is just now," added Graines, as he looked all about him as the fog lifted a little more, though it was still too thick to make out any vessel, if there were any near.

"If my messenger reached the ship in time, she will be found somewhere near the channel," replied Christy. "Call Lines, if you please, Mr. Graines."

The seaman presently appeared; and the lieutenant directed him to take the wheel, French instructing him how to keep the vessel in line with the steamer.

"I believe you have sailed a schooner, French," said Christy, when he had taken the man to the quarter.

"Yes, sir; I was mate of a coaster for three years, and I should have become master of her if the war had not come, and I felt that I ought to go into the navy, though I haven't got ahead much yet, as I expected I should; but I am satisfied to fight for my country where I am."

"That is patriotic; and I hope a higher position will be found for you. But we have not time to talk about that now," continued Christy. "It may be necessary or advisable for Mr. Graines and myself to leave the *West Wind* at any moment now. In that case I shall place this vessel in your charge, and you will take her off where the *Bellevite* was moored last night, and come to anchor."

"Thank you, sir; and I will endeavor to do my duty faithfully," replied French, touching his cap.

"Now call the men aft, and I will explain the matter to them."

The lieutenant explained the situation, and directed the other five seamen to respect and obey the man he had selected as captain. Then he directed French to cast off the stops from the foresail and mainsail, and have the jib and flying-jib ready to set at a moment's notice.

"I don't think Captain Sullendine can get out of his stateroom, where he has been confined, or Bokes out of the deck-house; but if either of them should do so, you must secure them as you think best," continued Christy. "Do you fully understand your orders, French?"

"Perfectly, Mr. Passford; and I will do my duty as well as I know how," answered the able seaman, who, like many others in the service, deserved a better position.

The new officer and crew went to work on the sails, and in a few minutes they were ready to be set. Another bank of fog was rolling up, in which the two vessels would soon be involved. But the *Tallahatchie* was in a position where it was plain sailing now, and her future troubles would all come from the blockaders.

"There you are!" exclaimed the engineer, as the peal of a gun boomed over the water from the westward. "The steamer has been seen by a blockader, and she will catch it now."

"I don't believe that was one of the Bellevite's guns," added Christy. "Captain Breaker would not take a position over to the westward, for that would give him the outside track, and he always goes at anything by the shortest way."

"We have the fog again for the next ten or fifteen minutes. The blockader that fired that shot must have got a sight at the steamer, and she is still pegging away at her. We may get knocked over by our own guns," continued Graines.

"There is no danger at present. She can't hit anything in this fog except by a chance shot."

"And one of them sometimes does the most mischief. The fog is heavier just now than it has been at any time during the night. I can't see the Tallahatchie just now."

"It is blacker than a stack of blackbirds," added Christy. "I am confident that we are at least a mile south of the lighthouse, and we will take advantage of the gloom to hoist the mainsail, and then the foresail if it holds as it is now," and he gave the order to French, who was assisted by the engineer in the work.

The lieutenant took the wheel, and sent Lines to assist the others. The blockader to the westward continued to discharge her guns; but her people could see nothing, and her solid shot began to fall astern of the West Wind, and the Tallahatchie took no notice of her or her guns. Christy saw that the fog was lifting again, and this would reveal to the steamer ahead what he had been doing. Besides, he had gone in tow as long as he intended. Graines reported the two sails as set.

"Stand by to hoist the jib!" he shouted, deeming it no longer necessary to conceal his movements.

"What are you doing there?" demanded the officer, who seemed to be in charge of the after part of the steamer; and his tones, with the flood of profanity he poured out, indicated that he was in a violent fit of anger.

"I reckon we won't tow any farther," replied Christy, who was still at the wheel, and the officer yelled loud enough for him to hear at the helm; but French repeated his answer.

"All ready to hoist the jib," Graines reported.

"Cast off the towline!" shouted Christy at the top of his lungs. "Hoist the jib!"

"Towline all clear!" called the engineer a moment later, and the jib went up in a hurry.

The jib filled on the starboard tack, and the West Wind went off to the south-east as Christy put up the helm. The fog lifted just enough to enable the officer at the stern of the steamer to see the West Wind as she went off on her new course. No one on the former could have suspected that the latter had changed hands; for French had answered for Captain Sullendine every time a call was made, and his voice was not unlike that of the master of the schooner.

Christy could not understand why the officer who used so many expletives should be dissatisfied, for the Tallahatchie could certainly make better time when no longer encumbered by the towing of the West Wind. But it must look to him just as though the schooner would be captured by the steamer to the westward, which had been uselessly firing at the blockade-runners in the densest of the fog. He could not help seeing that the vessel in tow had set her sails, and therefore the casting off of the wire rope could not have been caused by an accident.

The action of the captain of the schooner, for they had no reason to suppose the change on board of the schooner was not made by him, must have bewildered the officers of the Tallahatchie. But the fog was lifting, the steamer to windward was now under way, though moving very slowly, and her solid shot fell very near to the Confederate vessel.

By this time the sails of the West Wind were all drawing full, and the craft was making very good headway through the water. The fog bank had scattered, and appeared now to be in a dozen smaller masses, floating off in the direction of Mobile Point. Christy still retained the wheel, while Graines was putting everything in order forward and in the waist, after setting the sails.

"Send French aft to take the wheel, Mr. Graines," called Christy, as the engineer came aft to see the main sheet.

This man, who was the captain of the forecabin, one of the most important and best-paid of the petty officers, hastened aft to relieve the chief of the expedition, who went to work with his own hands when the exigency of the service required.

"Make the course south-west, French," said Christy, as he abandoned the wheel to the petty officer.

"South-west, sir," repeated the seaman.

"Can you make out the Bellevite, Mr. Graines?" asked he, as he met the engineer on the quarterdeck.

"I have kept a sharp lookout for her, Mr. Passford, but I have not seen her yet," replied Graines, as he looked earnestly in the direction in which the schooner was headed.

"If Captain Breaker received my message sent by Weeks, the ship must have taken a position somewhere below the entrance to the channel, and that is about four miles south of the fort, and out of the reach of any of its guns," added the lieutenant.

"There are half a dozen of those fog banks floating about near the water in that direction, and she may be there," replied Graines, as he took a spy-glass from the brackets in the companion. "Very likely she is down that way somewhere, and the Tallahatchie may run right into her."

"I don't think Captain Breaker would place his ship where anything of this kind would be likely to happen," replied Christy. "It is still as dark as Egypt ahead, and I think we shall see the Bellevite very soon."

The Confederate steamer had sensibly increased her speed, and gave no attention whatever to the schooner or the blockader to the westward of her. Captain Rombold seemed to be possessed of a supreme confidence in the speed of his steamer, and a complete assurance that he should escape unscathed from all pursuers, if any attempted to follow him. He was not aware that the Bellevite had recently had her bottom cleaned, and her engine put in thoroughly good condition, so that she could make as many knots in an hour as ever before; and that was saying more than could be said of any other craft in the navy.

"I would give my month's pay to know what the Tallahatchie has for a midship gun," said Christy, still gazing at the Confederate vessel as she continued to increase her speed.

Suddenly, without saying anything, Graines, who had been at his side, left him, and hastened to the companion, where he stooped down and gazed into the cabin. Christy had heard nothing to attract his attention, but he concluded that Captain Sullendine had escaped from his prison, and he called the two men who had been stationed in the waist to the quarter-deck to render such assistance as the engineer might need; but this officer remained at the entrance to the cabin, and made no further movement.

CHAPTER XI

A HAPPY RETURN TO THE BELLEVITE

Although he anticipated a disagreeable scene with the captain of the West Wind, who, he supposed, had slept off the fumes of the inordinate quantity of liquor he had drunk, he did not consider that there was any peril in the situation, for he had plenty of force to handle him easily. His curiosity was excited, and he walked over to the companion, where Graines appeared to be gazing into the darkness of the cabin; but he did not interfere with the proceedings of his fellow-officer.

"We don't need the men you have called from the waist," said the engineer in a low tone.

Christy sent the two men back to their former station. As he was returning to his chosen position abaft the companion, he saw a glimmer of light in the gloom of the cabin. Graines invited him to take a place at his side, chuckling perceptibly as he made room for him. The lieutenant stooped down so that he could see into the cabin, and discovered a man with a lighted match in his hand, fumbling at the door of the closet where Captain Sullendine kept his whiskey.

"Is that the captain?" whispered Christy, who could not make out the man, though he was not as tall as the master of the West Wind.

"No; it is Bokes," replied Graines. "He must have got out of the deck-house through one of the windows. He found the bottle French gave him was empty, and I have no doubt his nerves are in a very shaky condition."

Both of the officers had leaned back, so that their whispers did not disturb the operator in the cabin. His first match had gone out, and he lighted another. Captain Sullendine had been too much overcome by his potations to take his usual precautions for the safety of his spirit-room, and the observers saw that the key was in the door. Bokes took one of the bottles, and carried it to the table. His match went out, and he poked about for some time in the cabin.

Presently he was seen again, coming out of the pantry with a lighted lantern in his hand, which he placed on the table. He had a corkscrew in the other hand, with which he proceeded, as hurriedly as his trembling hands would permit, to open the bottle, for the master had drained the last one. Then he poured out a tumblerful of whiskey, as the observers judged it was from its color, and drank it off. At this point Graines descended to the cabin and confronted the fellow.

Christy, after taking a long look to the south-east, followed the engineer into the cabin, for it was possible that his companion intended to look into the condition of Captain Sullendine, and he desired to be present at the interview.

"Good-morning, Bokes," said Graines, as he placed himself in front of the seaman.

"Mornin', Mr. Balker," replied Bokes; and the heavy drink he had just taken appeared to have done nothing more than steady his nerves, for he seemed to have the full use of his faculties.

"How do you feel this morning, my friend?" continued the engineer; and Christy thought he was making himself very familiar with the boozing seaman, who was at least fifty years old.

"Fine's a fiddle-string," replied Bokes. "We done got out all right, I reckon;" and it was plain that he had not taken notice that the schooner was no longer in tow of the steamer.

"All right," replied Graines, as he placed himself on a stool, and pushed another towards the sailor, who seated himself. "By the way, friend Bokes, I suppose you have been on board of the Tallahatchie?"

"More'n a dozen times, here 'n' up in Mobile. My fust cousin's an 'iler aboard on her," replied Bokes.

"How many guns does she carry?" asked the engineer in a very quiet tone, though the man did not seem to be at all suspicious that he was in the act of being used for a purpose.

"I don't jest know how many guns she kerries; but she's got a big A'mstrong barker 'midships that'll knock any Yankee ship inter the middle o' next year 'n less time 'n it'll take you to swaller a tot o' Kaintuck whiskey. It's good for five-mile shots."

"This is her midship gun, you say?"

"Midship gun, sir; 'n I heard 'em say it flung a shot nigh on to a hundred pounds," added Bokes.

Both Christy and Graines asked the man other questions; but he had not made good use of his opportunities, and knew very little about the armament of the Tallahatchie; yet he remembered what he had heard others say about her principal gun. The lieutenant knew all about the Armstrong piece, for he had in his stateroom the volume on "Ordinance and Gunnery," by Simpson, and he had diligently studied it.

"Mr. Passford," said one of the hands at the head of the companion ladder.

"On deck," replied Christy.

"Steamer on the port bow," added the seaman.

"That must be the Bellevite," said the lieutenant.

"Now you may go on deck, Bokes," added Graines, as he drove the boozer ahead of him, and followed his superior.

He instructed the men in the waist to keep an eye on Bokes, and sent him forward. Then he took the precaution to lock the doors at the companion-way, and joined Christy on the quarterdeck.

"That's the Bellevite without a doubt," said Christy, as he directed the spy-glass he had taken from the brackets, and was still looking through it. "But she is farther to the eastward than I expected to find her."

"I suppose her commander knows what he is about," replied Graines.

"Certainly he does; and I do not criticise his action."

All the steamers on the blockade except the Bellevite and the one in the west had been sent away on other duty, for it was believed that the former would be enough to overhaul anything that was likely to come out of Mobile Bay at this stage of the war. Sure of the steamer of which he was the executive officer, Christy directed his glass towards the one on the other side of the channel. She had received no notice of the approach of a powerful blockade-runner, and she had not a full head of steam when she discovered the Tallahatchie. Besides, she was one of the slowest vessels in the service.

The black smoke was pouring out of her smokestack as though she was using something besides anthracite coal in her furnaces, and she was doing her best to intercept the Confederate. She was still firing her heaviest gun, though it could be seen that her shots fell far short of the swift steamer.

"They have seen the Bellevite on board of the Tallahatchie, and she has changed her course," said Graines, while Christy was still watching the movements of the blockader in the west. "Probably Captain Rombold knows all about the Bellevite, and he is not anxious to get too near her."

"She has pointed her head to the south-west, and the Bellevite is changing her course. I hope we shall not miss her," added Christy.

When the fog bank blew over and revealed her presence on board of the West Wind, the Bellevite was not more than half a mile to the southward, but she was at least two miles to the eastward of her.

"Can we get any more sail on this craft, Mr. Graines?" asked the lieutenant.

"We can set her two gaff-topsails."

"Do so as speedily as possible."

Christy went to the wheel, and Graines, with three men at each sail, assisting himself, soon had shaken out and set the gaff-topsails. The effect was immediately apparent in the improved sailing of the schooner. A Confederate flag was found in the signal chest, and it was set at the main topmast head, with the American ensign over it, so that it could be easily seen on board of the Bellevite. The lieutenant was now very confident that he should intercept his ship.

"Now clear away that quarter-boat, so that we can drop it into the water without any delay," continued Christy, as he gave up the wheel to Lines again.

Graines hastened to obey the order, for the Bellevite was rushing through the water at her best speed, and it was evident enough by this time that Weeks had faithfully performed the duty assigned to him.

"A small pull on the fore-sheet, Londall," called Christy to one of the men on the forecastle. "Another on the main sheet," he added to Fallon in the waist.

The bow of the West Wind was thus pointed closer into the wind; and the gaff-topsails enabled her to hold her speed after this change. Paul Vapoor, the chief engineer of the Bellevite, was plainly doing his best in the engine-room, and if the lieutenant had been a sporting man, he would have been willing to wager that his ship would overhaul the Tallahatchie; for on an emergency she had actually steamed twenty-two knots an hour, and Christy believed she could do it now, being in first-rate condition, if the occasion required.

"What time is it now, Mr. Graines?" asked Christy.

"Quarter-past four," replied the engineer, when he had lighted a match and looked at his watch.

"I thought it was later than that, and I have been looking for some signs of daylight," replied the lieutenant.

"It is just breaking a little in the east."

"I suppose Captain Sullendine is still asleep."

"No doubt of it; he has not had two hours yet in his berth, and he is good for two hours more at least."

"I think we shall be on board of the Bellevite in ten minutes more," continued Christy, as he noted the position of the ship. "Have you instructed French what to do with Captain Sullendine if he should attempt to make trouble?"

"I told him to keep him in his stateroom, and I feel pretty sure he can't get out. If Bokes, who must have an idea of what is going on by this time, is troublesome, I told French to tie his hands behind him, and make him fast to the fore-rigging."

"The fog is settling down again on the Tallahatchie; but Captain Breaker knows where she is, and he will not let up till he has got his paw on her," said Graines. "The blockader in the west isn't anywhere now. She could not do a thing with such a steamer as that Confederate."

The West Wind was now directly in the path of the Bellevite, and in five minutes more she stopped her screw. Possibly her commander was bewildered at the sight of the schooner, whose flag indicated that she was already a prize, though he could hardly understand to what vessel; for nothing was known on board of her in regard to the cotton vessel the Tallahatchie was to tow to sea.

"Stand by to lower the boat on the quarter!" shouted Christy, perhaps a little excited at the prospect of soon being on the deck of his own ship, as he and Graines took their places in the craft.

The four men at the falls lowered the boat into the water in the twinkling of an eye, and the two officers dropped the oars into the water as soon as it was afloat. They pulled like men before the mast, and went astern of the schooner, whose head had been thrown up into the wind to enable the officers to embark in safety. French was now in command of the schooner, and he filled away as soon as the boat pulled off from her side.

The Bellevite had stopped her screw a little distance from the West Wind, and, as the boat approached her, she backed her propeller. Her gangway had been lowered, and the two officers leaped upon the landing. They had hardly done so before the great gong in the engine-room was heard, and the steamer went ahead again. The boat was allowed to go adrift; but Christy shouted to French to pick it up. The lieutenant's heart beat a lively tattoo as he mounted the steps, and ascended to the deck.

CHAPTER XII

ALIVELY CHASE TO THE SOUTH-WEST

Captain Breaker had been in the main rigging with his night-glass, watching the movements of the chase; but he recognized the voice of Christy when he shouted to French to pick up the quarter-boat of the schooner, as he could no longer make out the Tallahatchie in the fog.

"Good-morning, Mr. Passford," said he, as he met Christy when he descended from the rail. "I am glad to see you again."

"Good-morning, Captain Breaker," replied the lieutenant, as he took the offered hand of the commander. "I hope all is well on board, sir."

"Entirely well, and your messenger came on board in good time, so that we were in position to get the first sight of the Trafalgar when she showed herself off Sand Island Lighthouse," replied the captain, as he led the way to his cabin.

"Mr. Ballard, keep a sharp lookout for the chase," he added to the acting executive officer.

"Will you allow me to put on my uniform, Captain?" asked Christy. "I don't feel quite at home on board the ship in the rigout I have worn all night."

"Certainly; for I do not wish you to show yourself to the ship's company while you look so little like a naval officer," replied the captain, as he went to take another look at the darkness ahead.

The lieutenant hastened to his stateroom, and in a very short time he had washed off the smut from his face and hands, and dressed himself in his uniform, so that he looked like quite another person, Graines had gone to his room in the steerage for the same purpose, for neither of them desired to show himself as he had appeared before Captain Sullendine.

Christy hurried to the deck as soon as he had made the change, and met the commander on the quarter-deck. Lookouts were stationed aloft and on the top-gallant forecastle, and all hands were in a state of healthy excitement in view of the stirring event which was likely to transpire before the lapse of many hours; and doubtless some of the men were moved by the prospect of prize-money, not only from the proceeds of the sale of the steamer they were chasing, but from the full freight of cotton on board of the schooner, the deck load of which had been noted by some of the crew.

The schooner which had come so close aboard of the Bellevite was a mystery to all, from the captain down to the humblest seaman; but the American ensign over the Confederate flag had been observed by a few, and this settled her status. Not more than half of the seamen were aware that an expedition had left the ship at ten o'clock the evening before, and they had had no opportunity to notice the absence of the executive officer during the night; and even yet all hands had not been called, for the regular watch was enough to get the ship under way.

The commander conducted the executive officer to his own cabin, again reminding Mr. Ballard to keep a sharp lookout for the chase. Christy felt like himself again in his neat uniform, and his vigorous and well knit, as well as graceful form, did more to show off the dress than the dress did to adorn his person.

"I am very glad to see you again, Christy," said Captain Breaker, seating himself and pointing to an arm-chair for the lieutenant, while he came down from the stately dignity of the commander of a man-of-war to the familiarity with which he treated his chief officer when they were alone. "I had no doubt that you would give a good account of yourself, as you always do. You were going on the enemy's territory, and you were in peril all the time. Now you come off in a schooner, which appears to be loaded with cotton, and how or where you picked her up is a mystery to me;" and the commander indulged in a laugh at the oddity of the young officer's reappearance. "Your messenger reported that the Trafalgar would sail at three o'clock in the morning, and I judge that she left at about that hour."

"Within ten minutes of it, and probably made an arrangement with the commandant of the fort to that effect," added Christy. "But they do not call her the Trafalgar now; though Weeks was not aware of the fact when I sent him on board. She is now the Tallahatchie, though I noticed that some in the vicinity of the fort still called her by her old name."

"Never mind the name; she will answer our purpose as well under one appellation as another. When I asked your messenger about you and the other six men of your party, he was unable to give me any information in regard to your movements; and he could not tell me how you had ascertained the hour at which the steamer was to sail," continued the captain.

"Graines and myself separated from the party as soon as we landed on the point; and we had obtained our information before we joined them again on the shore of Mobile Bay, sir. At the same time we had learned all about the West Wind"--

"The what?" interposed the commander.

"I mean the schooner West Wind, the one from which we came on board of the Bellevite, which was to be towed out by the Tallahatchie, and which was towed out by her till we on board of her cast off the towline."

"Perhaps you had better narrate the events of your expedition *seriatim*, for all you say in this disconnected manner only thickens the mystery," said the commander: and he knew that his officer had an excellent command of the English language, and could make a verbal report in a very attractive and telling style, though perhaps his fatherly interest in the young man had something to do with the matter.

Christy began his narrative with the departure from the ship, passing lightly over the minor details till he came to the meeting with the deserters from the West Wind, bivouacking in the hollow. He described the drinking bout which followed, in which he and Graines had pretended to join, stating the information he had obtained from them. He rehearsed a portion of Captain Sullendine's speech, adding that most of his auditors were the seamen from the Bellevite, though he had sent four of them back to the ship before he reached the shore.

He detailed his interview with the master of the West Wind, explaining how he had shipped the new crew with him. The scenes in the cabin were described in full; in fact, every incident of any importance which had transpired during the night was related. The commander was deeply interested, and listened without comment to the narrative up to the moment when the narrator had come on board of the Bellevite. He was not sparing in his praise of the engineer, and separated what he had said and done as far as he could from his own words and actions.

The commander then questioned him in regard to the armament of the Tallahatchie, and he repeated the meagre information he had obtained from Bokes. Some conversation concerning Armstrong guns followed; but both of them were well posted in regard to this long-range piece. Christy read the satisfaction with which the captain heard his statements on his face.

A knock at the door of the cabin disturbed the conference, and the lieutenant was directed to open the door. The shaking and straining of the ship had for some time indicated that Paul Vapoor was fully alive to the importance of getting the Bellevite's best speed out of her on the present occasion; and he did not intrust the duty to his subordinates. Christy opened the cabin door, and Midshipman Walters asked for the commander, and was admitted.

"Mr. Ballard directs me to inform you, sir, that we are gaining on the chase," said the young officer. "The fog has lifted again, and we can make her out very clearly. The Holyoke has abandoned the chase, and appears to be headed for the schooner that came to on the starboard of the ship."

"Tell Mr. Ballard to keep the ship as she is, headed for the Tallahatchie," replied Captain Breaker.

"The Tallahatchie, sir?" queried the midshipman.

"Formerly the Trafalgar," added the commander.

The young officer touched his cap and retired.

"This Captain Sullendine is still secured in his stateroom on board of the West Wind, is he?" asked the captain, rising from his arm-chair.

"He was when I left the schooner, sir," replied Christy. "French, the captain of the fore-castle, is in charge of the vessel, with orders to anchor her a couple of miles to the eastward of the lighthouse. I have already commended French to your attention, Captain, as a faithful and reliable man, and I think he deserves promotion."

"Your recommendation will go a great way to procure it for him," added the commander with a significant smile.

"He is a thorough seaman, has been the mate of a large coaster, and would have become master of her if his patriotic duty had not led him to ship in the navy."

"He is a resolute and brave fellow in action, as I have had occasion to observe, and I shall remember him. When you are writing to your father it would be well for you to mention him; and the thing will be done at your request if not at mine."

"It certainly would not be done without your indorsement, for my father will not indulge in any favoritism aside from real merit," protested the lieutenant, with some warmth.

"You are quite right, Christy. We must go on deck now," added Captain Breaker, as he moved towards the door. "You have been up all night, my boy; it will be some hours before we come within reach of the chase, and you can turn in and get a little sleep before anything stirring takes place on board."

The excitement which had animated the young officer during the night had subsided with the rendering of his report, and the responsibility of a command no longer rested upon him, and for the first time since he embarked in the whaleboat, he began to feel tired and sleepy. He went on deck with the commander, and took a survey, first of the chase, then of the Holyoke, and finally of the West Wind.

Captain Breaker thought the Tallahatchie was about five miles distant. Seen through the glass, for the fog had all blown away, and the daylight had begun to obscure the stars, the steamer seemed to be doing her best. The Holyoke was headed to the eastward, evidently intending to chase the West Wind, for she could not yet make out her flags,

indicating that she was already a prize. She need not have troubled herself to pursue the schooner if she had known the facts in regard to her, for she was entitled to a share of the prize as a member of the blockading fleet at the time of her capture. But she could prevent her from being retaken by any boat expedition sent from the shore, as her lonely position where the *Bellevite* had been for several days might tempt some enterprising Confederate officer to do.

Although the last heaving of the log showed twenty knots, it was a quiet time of the deck of the *Bellevite*, and all the excitement on board was confined to the engine and fire rooms. With sundry gapes Christy had taken in the situation, and then he concluded to avail himself of the commander's permission to retire to his stateroom, where he was soon in a sound slumber.

Just before, Captain Breaker had retired to his cabin, where he had a chart of the Gulf of Mexico spread out on his table. Assuming the point where the *Tallahatchie* had changed her course to the south-west, he drew a line in that direction, and realized that the chase could not go clear of the Passes of the Mississippi River; and she was likely to sight some Federal steamer in that locality.

As the daylight increased the weather improved so far as the fog was concerned and it promised to be a clear day, for the stars had not been obscured at any time during the night. The only alternative the commander could see for the chase, as he studied the chart, was to go to the southward before he could sight the Pass a l'Outre. He was so confident that this must be his course, that he decided to take advantage of the situation, and he went on deck at once, where he ordered the officer of the deck to make the course south south-west.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FIRST SHOT OF BLUMENHOFF

Captain Breaker watched the Tallahatchie with the most earnest attention; and it was not five minutes after he had given out the new course before she changed her direction, though not to the south, but enough to carry her clear of the Passes of the Mississippi. Paul Vápoor was still crowding the engine to the utmost that could be done with safety, and he spent no little of his time in the fire room, personally directing the men in the work of feeding the furnaces.

It was evident to the commander that his ship was gaining on the Tallahatchie, at least a knot an hour, as he estimated it, and the chase could not now be more than four miles distant. This was within the range of her Armstrong gun, if it was of the calibre reported by Bokes, whose information was mere hearsay, and was open to many doubts.

"She is changing her course again, Captain Breaker," said Mr. Ballard, who had been observing the chase with the best glass on board.

"Probably she has discovered a man-of-war in the distance," added the captain.

"I cannot make out anything to the westward of her," said Mr. Ballard, who had directed his glass that way.

"She knows very well that she is liable to encounter a Federal ship on the course she is running. How does she head now?"

"As nearly south as I can make it out."

"Then we have made something on her by going to the south south-west in good season; and I am sorry I did not do it sooner," replied the commander, as he went into a fine calculation, estimating sundry angles, and figuring on the gain he was confident he had already made.

"I think she is headed due south now, Captain," said Mr. Ballard.

"So I should say, and we are headed a little too much to the westward. Make the course south by west half west, Mr. Ballard."

This course was given to the quartermaster conning the wheel. For another hour the two steamers kept on the course taken, at the end of which time the captain believed they were within three miles of each other; and the appearance, as viewed by skilful and experienced officers, verified his estimate of the relative speed of both--that the Bellevite was gaining about a knot an hour on the chase.

They had hardly agreed upon the situation before a cloud of smoke was seen to rise from the waist of the Tallahatchie, followed by the report of a heavy gun. The projectile struck the water at least a quarter of a mile ahead of the Bellevite, at which the watch on deck gave a half-suppressed cheer.

"They must have better gunners than that indicates on board of that steamer, for she has been fitted out as a cruiser," said the commander with a quiet smile.

Twenty minutes later another puff of smoke, followed by a second report, excited the attention of an officer on the deck of the loyal ship. The shot struck the water only a little less ahead of the ship than the former, and the crew gave a more vigorous cheer: but it was observed that it hit the sea a little on the starboard bow, so that if it had been better aimed it would not have reached the ship.

"She is wasting her ammunition," said the captain. "She seems to be jesting, or else she is trying to frighten us."

"I think it is some thing worse than that, Captain Breaker," replied Mr. Ballard.

"What could be worse?"

"I am inclined to the opinion that she cannot swing the gun around so as to make it bear on an object so far astern of her as this ship is at the present moment." said the lieutenant.

"He has an all sufficient remedy for that," added the captain. "He can swing his ship's head around so his gun will bear on us."

"But that would cause him to lose a quarter of a mile or more of his advantage; and she seems to be more inclined to run away from the Bellevite than to fight her," suggested the lieutenant.

"Call all hands, Mr. Ballard," said the commander; and in a few minutes all the officers and seamen were at their stations.

The call awoke Christy from his slumber, which the report of the gun and the cheering of the men had failed to do. But he understood the summons, and thought the action was about to begin. He adjusted his dress and hastened to the

quarter deck, where he reported in due form to the captain. Mr. Ballard was relieved of his duties as acting executive officer, and went to his proper station to take command of his division. Christy took a careful survey of the situation, and saw that the *Bellevite* had gained at least two knots on the chase. The *Holyoke* and the *West Wind* were no longer in sight, though the fog seemed to be still hanging about the entrance to Mobile Bay.

"The *Tallahatchie* has fired two shots at us, Mr. Passford; but she wasted her ammunition," said the commander. "I am inclined to agree with Mr. Ballard that she cannot swing her Armstrong gun so as to cover the *Bellevite*."

"She has stopped her screw, sir!" exclaimed the first lieutenant, who was looking at the chase through the best glass.

"Make the course west, Mr. Passford!" said the captain with energy.

"Quartermaster, make it west!" shouted Christy.

"West, sir!" repeated the quartermaster, as he caused the helmsmen to heave over the wheel.

Directing his glass to the chase again, Christy saw the *Tallahatchie* swing around so that she was broadside to the *Bellevite*. Almost at the same moment the smoke rose from her deck, and the sound of the gun reached the ears of the officers and crew. The shot passed with a mighty whiz between the fore and main mast of the ship, cutting away one of the fore topsail braces, but doing no other damage. The seamen cheered as they had before. The *Tallahatchie* started her screw as soon as she had discharged her gun, and resumed her former course, the *Bellevite* doing the same.

If the loyal ship had not promptly altered her course, the projectile would have raked her, and must have inflicted much greater injury in the spars and rigging. But both vessels promptly resumed their former relative positions, though the *Tallahatchie* had lost some of her advantage by coming to, while her pursuer had only made a small circuit without stopping her engine for a moment.

"If she does that again, Mr. Passford, we must be ready to return her fire," said the captain. "Have the pivot gun ready, and aim for her Armstrong, which seems to be sufficiently prominent on her deck to make a good target."

Christy hastened forward, and gave the order to Mr. Ballard, in whose division the great Parrot was included. The signal was promptly given for manning the gun, and seventeen men immediately sprang to their stations. The men were armed with cutlasses, muskets, battle-axes, pistols, and pikes, which were so disposed as to be in readiness for boarding the enemy, or repelling boarders.

"A solid shot, and aim at the pivot gun of the enemy," said Christy in a low tone to the second lieutenant, who had the reputation of being an expert in the handling of guns of the largest calibre.

There were two captains to the pivot gun, one on each side, stationed nearest to the base of the breech. Seventeen men were required to work the pivot gun, whose duties were defined in the names applied to them, the powderman being the odd one. The first and second captains were numbers one and two; the odd numbers being on the right, and the even on the left of the piece: number three was the first loader, four the first sponger, five the second loader, six the second sponger, seven the first shellman, eight the second shellman, nine the first handspikeman, ten the second handspikeman, eleven the first train tackleman, twelve the second train tackleman (the last two at the breech, next to the captains), thirteen first side tackleman, fourteen second side tackleman, fifteen first port tackleman, sixteen second port tackleman.

The gun crew had been frequently drilled in the management of the piece, and the men were entirely at home in their stations. Other hands had been trained in serving the gun, so that the places of any disabled in action could be replaced. The service at the Parrot was not all that was required of the men forming the gun crew, for each was also a first or second boarder, a pumpman, or something else, and to each number one or two weapons were assigned, as musket and pike, sword and pistol, battle-axe. When the order to board the enemy was given, every man knew his station and his proper officer.

"Silence, men!" commanded the second lieutenant, "Cast loose and provide!"

These orders were repeated by the first captain of the gun. It is his duty to see the piece cleared and cast loose, and everything made ready for action. He and the second captain "provide" themselves with waist belts and primers, and the first with some other implements. But the handling of one of these great guns is about as technical as a surgical operation would be, and it would be quite impossible for the uninitiated to understand it, though it is every-day work to the ordinary man-of-war's-man.

Prompted by the executive officer, who had been further instructed by the captain, all the series of steps had been taken which put the piece in readiness to be discharged, and all that remained to be done was to adjust the aim, which is done by the first captain. At this time the distance between the two ships had been considerably reduced. The captain and the first lieutenant were closely watching the chase with glasses.

The crew of the *Tallahatchie* could be seen at work at the long gun, and another shot from it was momentarily expected. The instant the bow of the enemy began to swerve to port, the captain of the *Bellevite* gave the order to put the helm to starboard. Almost at the same instant the enemy stopped her screw, swung round and fired her long gun. The projectile crashed through the bulwarks between the foremast and top-gallant forecastle, wounding two men with the splinters which flew in every direction.

Dr. Linscott and his mates had established themselves in the cockpit, to which the wounded are conveyed, in action, for treatment. The two men who had been injured by the splinters were not disabled, and they were ordered to report to the surgeon. Before the enemy could resume her course, the captain of the pivot gun had caught his aim, and discharged the Parrot. All hands watched for the result of the shot, and the glasses of the captain and the first lieutenant were directed to the chase.

She was near enough now to be observed with the naked eye with tolerable accuracy, and a shout went up from the men at the pivot gun, in which the rest of the crew on deck joined, as they saw that the shot had struck the midship gun of the enemy, or very near it; and this was the point where old Blumenhoff, the captain of the gun, had been directed to aim. He was a German, but he had served for twenty-one years in the British navy, and had won a brilliant reputation in his present position.

It could not be immediately determined whether or not the Armstrong had been disabled. The Tallahatchie had swung round again and resumed her flight; but her commander must have realized by this time that he was getting the worst of it. Paul Vapoor had not left his post in the engine and fire room, to ascertain how the battle was going, but still plied all his energies in driving the Bellevite to the utmost speed she could possibly attain. The log was frequently heaved, and the last result had been sent down to him by Midshipman Walters, and it was twenty-one knots.

During the next hour the long gun of the enemy was not again discharged, and the officers of the loyal ship were assured that it had been rendered useless by Blumenhoff's only shot.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PROGRESS OF THE ACTION

The tremendous speed of the *Bellevite* had been telling with prodigious effect upon the distance between the two steamers, which was now reduced to not more than a mile and a half. Captain Rombold could not help realizing by this time that the American-built vessel outsailed the English-built. If the *Trafalgar* was good for twenty knots an hour, as represented, she had hardly attained that speed, as Captain Breaker judged by comparison with that of his own ship.

The Armstrong gun was still silent and it was pretty well settled that it had been disabled. In this connection Christy recalled something he had read in Simpson about the "inability of the Armstrong gun to resist impact," and he sent Midshipman Walters to bring the volume from his state-room. When it came he found the place, and read that three shots had been fired into one of them from a nine-pounder, either of which would have been fatal to the piece; and the section described the effect of each upon it.

He showed the book open at the place to Captain Breaker; but he had read it, and carried the whole matter in his mind. The gun quoted was weak, though the one on the deck of the *Tallahatchie* was vastly larger; but a correspondingly heavy force had been brought to bear upon it.

"I am satisfied that the enemy's long gun has been disabled; and while she continues the attempt to run away from us, she is unable to use her broadside guns to advantage, for she cannot bring them to bear upon us without coming to," said the commander. "But we are gaining at least a knot and a half an hour on her, and she must soon change her tactics."

"That is evident enough, sir," added Christy.

"The captain of that ship is a brave fellow, and I am confident he will fight as long as there is anything left of him," continued the captain as he occasionally directed his glass at the chase.

"He certainly will, sir, for I have seen his ship knocked out from under him, when he had abundant excuse for hauling down his flag before he did so; and we had hardly time on board of the *Chateaugay* to save his people before his vessel went to the bottom," continued Christy. "More than that, he is a gentleman and a scholar."

"You have told me about him, Christy; and I believe you suggested to Captain Chantor his best plan of action."

"I simply indicated what I should do in his place, and he adopted the method I mentioned," added Christy modestly.

"We may find it advisable to resort to the same plan, though I must add that it is by no means original with you. It was adopted in the war of 1812 with England."

"I did not claim the method as original, and knew very well that it was not so," replied the lieutenant.

"The conditions on both sides must be favorable to the method or it cannot be adopted. One of the ships must have heavier metal than the other, so that she can knock her enemy to pieces at her leisure, and at the same time greater speed, so that she can keep out of the reach of guns of shorter range."

"I am sorry I could not obtain more definite information in regard to the broadside guns of the *Tallahatchie*," added Christy. "Bokes was a stupid fellow, drunk whenever he could obtain liquor, and could remember very little of what he heard on board of the steamer. But you have the long range *Parrot*, and I have no doubt you can knock her to pieces in your own time, since it has been demonstrated that we can outsail her."

But at this moment the conversation was disturbed by the movement of the chase, which appeared to be again preparing to come about. The commander ordered the helm to be put to starboard to avoid being raked, and directed that the pivot gun should be discharged at the enemy. The enemy fired a broadside of three guns in quick succession, the solid shots from all three striking the *Bellevite* between wind and water. The carpenter's gang was hurried below to plug the shot holes.

Blumenhoff secured his aim and fired; but this time he was less happy than on the former occasion, and though the shot went between the masts, no great damage appeared to be done. The enemy started her screw immediately, and swung around so as to present her starboard broadside before the *Parrot* could be made ready for another shot. The *Tallahatchie* delivered another three shots, two of which went wide of the mark. The third struck the carriage of the pivot gun, but fortunately it was not disabled, for it had been built to resist a heavier ball than the one which had struck it.

The captain of the *Bellevite* gave the order to Christy to swing to the ship, and give the enemy a broadside. The order was promptly executed as the enemy came about and resumed her course to the southward, which was certainly a very bad movement on her part. The four guns on the port side, two sixties and two thirties, sent their solid shots over the stern of the *Tallahatchie*.

A moment later, as the fresh breeze carried away the smoke to the north-east, the crew set up a lively cheer, for the mizzen mast of the chase toppled over into the water, and the pilot house seemed to have been knocked into splinters.

"Well done!" exclaimed Captain Breaker, clapping his hands as he faced the guns' crews on the port side, and Christy joined him in the demonstration.

The men of the division gave another lusty cheer in response to the approval of the two chief officers. The captain had already ordered the ship to be put about so as to deliver the starboard broadside, and the other division of guns were impatient to have their chance at the enemy.

Christy had clapped his hands with his spy-glass under his arm, and when he had rendered his tribute of applause, he directed the instrument to the enemy. A squad of men were at work over the ruins of the pilot house, which was still forward, as the vessel had been built for a pleasure yacht, and another gang were getting the extra wheel at the stern ready for use.

The Bellevite came about in obedience to the order Christy had given to the quartermaster conning the wheel, and the guns on the starboard side were all ready to deliver their messengers of death and destruction.

"Aim at that extra wheel," said the captain; and Christy delivered the order to the officers of the division.

The broadside was of the same metal as on the port side, and the result was looked for with even more interest than before. The appearance was that all three shots had struck at or near the wheel at the stern, and Christy promptly directed his glass to that part of the steamer, the captain doing the same thing.

"There is nothing of the wheel left in sight," said the lieutenant. "The taffrail is knocked away, and at least one of those shots must have knocked the captain's cabin into utter confusion."

"Go ahead at full speed, Mr. Passford," said Captain Breaker, after he had fully measured with his eye the damage done to the enemy.

"Her steering gear seems to be entirely disabled, sir," continued Christy, after he had given the order to the chief engineer. "She does not appear to be able to come about, as no doubt she would if she could, so as to bring her broadside guns to bear upon us."

The order had been given before to load the broadside and pivot guns with shells. The enemy had not started her screw for the reason that the ship was unmanageable with her steering gear disabled. The action had certainly gone against her; but she gave no indication that she was ready to surrender for the Confederate flag, which had been hoisted at the mainmast head when the mizzen was shot away, still floated in the breeze.

A gang of men were still at work where the extra wheel had been, and the commander evidently expected he should be able to repair the damage in some manner so that he could steer his ship. Captain Breaker gave the command to stop the screw, and a mighty hissing and roaring of steam followed when Christy transmitted it to the engine room. The order to come about on the headway that remained succeeded, and the three shells immediately exploded on the deck or in the hull of the enemy; but the extent of the damage could not be estimated.

The three from the starboard guns were next sent on their mission; but so far as could be seen no damage was done. The big Parrot was next discharged; but the expert captain of the gun was unfortunate this time, for the projectile dropped into the water beyond the steamer, though it seemed to pass very near the stern. For the next half hour the midship piece was kept busy, and its shots made destructive work about the deck of the Tallahatchie.

"I think we had better finish this business at once, and before the enemy has time to rig a new steering apparatus, Mr. Passford," said Captain Breaker, as they came together on the quarter-deck.

"I think we can knock her all to pieces with the Parrot gun, sir," replied Christy.

"But it might take all day to do that; and the Tallahatchie exhibits an astonishing power of resistance. Besides, she will soon repair her extra wheel, and have it ready for use. I am inclined to believe that we are wasting time, which will make it all the worse for us in the end," reasoned the commander. "I am prepared to board her, for I think she must have lost a great many men."

"No doubt of it, sir," added the lieutenant.

"Lay her aboard on the port side, and have everything ready," continued Captain Breaker.

Christy gave the necessary orders for this decided action, and the officers and the crew seemed to be delighted with the prospect of a hand-to-hand fight with the enemy. The lieutenant was not wholly confident that the commander was right in his reasoning, but like a loyal officer and a true sailor who knows no duty but obedience, he heartily supported his superior. He walked the deck in the discharge of his duty; but he was thinking of something since the order to board had been given.

"Is there anything like a flank movement in boarding, Captain Breaker?" he asked, as he halted at the side of the commander.

"Of course the officers do their best to flank the enemy after they reach the deck," replied the captain, looking with

some astonishment at the lieutenant.

"I have reference to another sort of flanking," added the inquirer.

"Of course in a squadron some of the ships may be ordered to operate in that manner; but a single ship acting against another can hardly do any flanking."

"But I mean in boarding."

"You had better explain yourself a little more definitely, for I do not understand you," replied the commander with a puzzled expression on his face.

"We have one hundred and twenty men, with six absent on other duty," continued the lieutenant. "Judging by what I learned from Bokes, I believe the Tallahatchie has less than a hundred, for he said she expected to recruit twenty or thirty men at Nassau. She has lost more men so far than we have, sir."

"Grant all that you say, and where does the flanking come in?"

"Your order is to board on the port side of the enemy, which will bring the starboard side of the Bellevite alongside of her. Suppose you put twenty men or more into the launch, on the port side of the ship, where it cannot be seen by the enemy, just before the order to board is given. At the right time let this boat hurry to the starboard side of the Tallahatchie, where the twenty men or more will board, and take the enemy in the rear."

The commander took off his cap and rubbed his bald head as if to stimulate his ideas; but he made no answer then to the suggestion.

Paul Vápoor was driving the engine to its utmost, and the ship was rapidly approaching the enemy.

CHAPTER XV

A FLANK MOVEMENT UNDERTAKEN

The commander of the enemy's ship could not know that the *Bellevite* intended to board; but he could hardly help regarding with anxiety the rapid progress she was making through the water. The loyal ship was getting nearer to him, and Captain Rombold could not avoid seeing that his situation was becoming desperate. It was absolutely necessary for him to do something, unless he was ready to haul down his flag, which Christy, for one, having been present at a battle with him, did not expect him to do yet.

The executive officer kept a close watch upon the enemy, frequently using his glass, even while he was discussing his suggestion with the captain. There was great activity on deck near the stern of the *Tallahatchie*, and her commander must have been at least hopeful that the steering apparatus could be restored to some degree of efficiency. In the meantime he could not bring his broadside guns to bear on the *Bellevite* for he was unable to come about. The Federal ship was headed directly for the enemy, and as Captain Breaker was impatient to board, he could not fire the *Parrot* or the broadside battery without losing time to put his vessel in position for throwing shot or shell.

"She is starting her screw again!" exclaimed Christy suddenly, as he discovered the stirring up of the water astern of the enemy.

"I see she is," added the commander. "She has not got her extra wheel in position yet, and probably she has pried her tiller over, or hauled it over with a purchase. Make the course west, Mr. Passford."

Christy gave the order to the quartermaster, and without checking her speed, the *Bellevite* described a quarter of a circle and came to the desired course. The three guns of her port battery were immediately discharged, loaded with shell as on the last occasion. One of them was seen to explode in the midst of the gang of men who were at work on the extra wheel. The other two burst in the air, too far off to do any serious damage.

Very slowly, and apparently with great difficulty, the *Tallahatchie* swung around, so that her port guns could be brought to bear upon the *Bellevite*, and the two ships were abreast of each other so that neither could rake the other. The loyal ship continued on her course to the westward, and in ten minutes she had made three miles and a half, which placed her out of the reach of the broadside guns of the *Tallahatchie*.

Christy did not abate his watchfulness over the movements of the enemy. The shot from the sixty-pounder which had struck on the quarter of the Confederate, had evidently created a great deal of confusion in that part of the vessel. She had intended to describe a quarter of a circle in order to render her port broadside guns available, but she had not made more than the eighth of the circuit before she appeared to be going ahead, and her direction was diagonal to that of the *Bellevite*.

"What does that mean?" asked Christy of the commander who stood near him, though he had a very decided opinion of his own on the subject.

"It simply means that the last shot which struck her deranged whatever expedient her captain had adopted for controlling the rudder," replied the commander. "It failed when she was half round, and then she went ahead."

"She has stopped her screw again, sir," added the first lieutenant.

"It is time for her to haul down her flag; but she does not seem to be disposed to do it," continued Captain Breaker. "It is certainly a hopeless case, and he ought to spare his men if not himself."

"Captain Rombold is not one of that sort. Though he is a Briton, he is a 'last ditch' man."

"Probably a very large majority of his ship's company are English, or anything but Southern Americans, and he ought to have a proper regard for them."

"I think he must see some chance of redeeming himself and his ship, for I never met a more high-toned and gentlemanly man in all my life, and I don't believe he would sacrifice his people unless with a hope that he considers a reasonable one."

"Come about, Mr. Passford, and bear down on the enemy. Unless he works his steering gear, we have her where she is utterly helpless," said the commander.

"I wonder she does not get a couple of her heaviest guns in position on her quarter-deck, and use them as stern chasers," said Christy, after he had obeyed the captain's order, and the *Bellevite* was again headed directly for the enemy.

"She appears to require all the space there for the work on her steering appliances," replied Captain Breaker. "In ten minutes more I hope we shall be able to board her; and I think we can then make very short work of this business."

About the flanking movement you propose, Mr. Passford, I have never seen anything of the kind done, for most of my fighting experience with blockade-runners has been at long range, though I was in the navy during the Mexican war, where our operations were mostly against fortifications and batteries."

"I do not consider the plan practicable except under peculiar circumstances, like the present," returned Christy. "I am confident that we outnumber the enemy, and the men for the flank movement are available."

"If we were boarding in boats we should naturally attack both on the starboard and port sides. But, Mr. Passford, the executive officer cannot be spared to command the launch and its crew."

"I was not thinking of commanding the flanking party myself, sir."

"Neither can the officers of divisions be spared."

"I think I can find a volunteer, not in the sailing department, who would conduct the movement to a successful issue, Captain," added Christy, very confidently.

"Mr. Vápoor? But we cannot spare him from the engine room for a minute," protested the commander, who was well aware that the chief engineer was the lieutenant's especial crony. "That would not do at all."

"I was not thinking of Mr. Vápoor, sir," interposed Christy.

"Who, then?" demanded the commander, lowering his spy-glass to look into the young man's face.

"My associate in the expedition to Mobile Point, who did quite as much as I did, if not more, to make it a success. I mean Mr. Graines, the third assistant engineer. I know that he is a brave man and an officer of excellent judgment," replied the lieutenant, with more enthusiasm than he usually manifested when not in actual combat.

"Very well, Mr. Passford; I give you the order to carry out your plan, and I hope it will work to your satisfaction. But you must not take more than twenty men," said the commander in conclusion of the whole matter.

"Mr. Walbrook," called Christy without losing a moment in the preparations for carrying out his scheme, which neither the captain nor himself could say was an original idea.

The station of the second lieutenant at quarters is on the fore-castle, and of the third in the waist, or the middle of the ship. The third lieutenant stepped forward at the call of the executive officer, touched his cap, for "the honors due the quarter-deck cannot be dispensed with," even at exciting times.

Christy gave him the order to cast loose the launch, and have it in readiness to lower into the water at a moment's notice; and Mr. Walbrook proceeded to obey it without delay. The first lieutenant then called Mr. Walters, a midshipman, and directed him to give his compliments to Mr. Vápoor, and ask him if he could spare the third assistant engineer for special duty for a couple of hours, more or less.

The messenger returned with the reply that the chief engineer would be happy to detail Mr. Graines for special duty at once. In five minutes more the assistant engineer appeared upon the quarter-deck in uniform, and touched his cap to the executive officer.

"I am directed to report to you, Mr. Passford, for special duty," added Graines.

"I wish you to assume this duty, Mr. Graines, as a volunteer, if at all," replied Christy. "All the officers on deck are required at their stations, and the commander has authorized what I call a flanking movement, which I purpose to send out under your orders."

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Passford, for the honor you do me in selecting me for this duty; and I accept the position with pleasure," answered the engineer, touching his cap again.

"But this is a fighting position, Mr. Graines," added Christy with a smile.

"So much the better, sir; and if my education permitted, I should prefer to be in the thickest of the fight rather than shut up in the engine room," returned the engineer; and this was just the estimate the lieutenant had made of him.

He had been well educated; but he had learned the trade of a machinist, and the want of any naval training rather than his own inclination had driven him into the engine room. But he had been three years at sea as a sailor, and came home as second mate of an Indiaman.

Christy explained to him very fully the plan he had suggested, and Graines readily grasped the idea. He provided himself with a cutlass and revolver, and became very enthusiastic in the discharge of his special duty. With the aid of the first lieutenant he selected the men for the movement, though Christy would not permit the detail to consist of all the best men, for that would not be fair or generous to the officers of divisions. They were a fair average of the quality of the seamen.

The Tallahatchie made an attempt to come about in order to make her guns available; but for some unknown reason it appeared to be a failure, for she presently stopped her screw again. The Bellevite was rapidly approaching her, and her commander evidently realized that the loyal ship intended to board, for he made his preparations to meet the onslaught.

Captain Rombold, in spite of his misfortune in the Dornoch the year before, was inclined to disparage the bravery and

skill of the officers of the United States Navy, and to regard the seamen as inferior to those of his own country, though he was too gentlemanly to express himself directly to this effect. Christy had drawn this inference from what he said in the conversations with him when Colonel Passford and he were prisoners on board of the Chateaugay.

Holding this view, as Christy was confident he did, it was plain from his action that he expected, or at least hoped, to win a victory in the hand-to-hand encounter which was impending. Of course it was possible that he might do so, and come into possession of the Bellevite, which had outsailed him, and disabled his ship for a combat at longer range.

As the Federal steamer drew near to the enemy a volley of musketry was poured into her, which was promptly returned, and several of the crew on both sides dropped to the deck, and were borne to the cockpit, though the relative strength of each remained about as before, as nearly as the officers on the quarter-deck of the Bellevite could judge.

The speed of the attacking ship had been greatly reduced as she neared the Tallahatchie, and the launch was already in the water with its crew of twenty men on board. The crew of the latter were armed with all the boarding weapons in use, and before the hands on deck had fastened to the enemy, the flanking party were working their heavy craft around the stern of the steamer.

The loyal ship came in contact with the side of the Confederate. The grappling irons were cast, and in an incredibly short space of time the two vessels were firmly attached to each other. The supreme moment had come, as all thought, but for some reason not apparent, the command to board was withheld. Captain Breaker who stood on the quarter deck with Christy, appeared to be perplexed. He saw that the seamen of the enemy were drawn up on the starboard side, instead of at the port bulwarks.

CHAPTER XVI

THE LIEUTENANT'S DARING EXPLOIT

Captain Breaker was perplexed when his ship came alongside the enemy and was made fast to her, for things were not working according to the usual rules made and provided for such occasions, and Captain Rombold was evidently resorting to some unusual tactics. The two steamers were of about the same height above water, so their decks were very nearly on a level.

The men with muskets on both sides were reloading their weapons, and those with navy revolvers were discharging them at the enemy; but the officers of divisions concealed their men behind the bulwarks when the order to board did not come.

Christy saw the perplexity of the commander at his side, and it was evident to both of them that some unusual strategy was to be adopted, and Captain Breaker did not intend to fall into a trap if he could avoid it. They could see nothing that looked suspicious except the position of the enemy's force on the starboard side of the ship.

Before the captain could stop him, the first lieutenant had leaped into the mizzen rigging, and ascended far enough to obtain a view of the quarter deck over the bulwarks, while the commander walked aft far enough to accomplish the same purpose by looking through the aperture made by the shot which had carried away the wheel of the enemy, without exposing himself to the fire of the seamen on board of her.

Christy's action occupied but the fraction of a minute; but several muskets and revolvers were discharged at him in this brief time. Letting go his hold of the rigging, he dropped to the deck before the captain could see what he was doing; and it was supposed that the daring officer had been brought down by the shots fired at him.

"Second division, follow me!" he cried, as he picked up the cutlass he had dropped.

About thirty men rushed to the quarter-deck, hurried on by Mr. Walbrook. Christy leaped upon the rail, with the cutlass in his right hand, and the revolver in his left, and dropped down upon the quarter deck of the Tallahatchie, upon a squad of seamen who were lying low behind a thirty-pounder, whose carriage was close to the bulwark, the piece pointed forward.

The first lieutenant had seen from his position in the mizzen rigging the trap which had been set for the crew of the Bellevite. They were expected to leap to the rail, and cut away the boarding nettings--not always used, but were on this occasion--and then drop down to the deck. The first command would naturally have been to "Repel boarders;" but this was not given, and no fighting was to be done till the boarders reached the ship, when the thirty-pounder, doubtless loaded with grape or shrapnel, was to mow down the invaders of the deck.

Christy's men poured down after him, and before the crew of the gun, who had no doubt been ordered to conceal themselves, could get upon their feet they were cut down by the impetuous tars from the Bellevite. It was the work of but a moment. Christy had taken some pains to have the opinion of Captain Rombold that American seamen were inferior to British circulated, and the men evidently intended to prove that they were the equals of any sailors afloat.

"Swing the muzzle of the gun to starboard!" shouted Christy, as he took hold with his own hands to point the piece, which was in position in a moment.

Captain Rombold stood but a short distance from the stump of the mizzen mast with a cutlass in his hand. He rushed forward to rally his crew; and he seemed to be rendered desperate by the failure of the scheme to which he had resorted. At this moment Christy heard Captain Breaker shout the order to board, and the men were springing to the rail, and tearing away the boarding netting.

"Stand by the lanyard!" cried the first lieutenant on the quarter-deck of the enemy, and he had sighted the piece himself in the absence of any regular gun crew. "Fire!"

The cloud of smoke concealed all of the deck forward of the mizzen mast, and Christy could not see what effect had been produced by the charge of grape, or whatever it was. At any rate the men the commander had rallied for a charge did not appear.

The smoke was blown away in a minute or so, and the Bellevite's sailors had made a lodgment on the deck of the enemy. They were led by the officers of the divisions, and were rushing over to the starboard, where the enemy's men had been concentrated. They were brave men, whether English or not, and the moment they could see the boarders, they rushed at them by command of their officers; but they pushed forward, as it were, out of a heap of killed and wounded, those who had fallen by the grape-shot intended to decimate the ranks of the loyal band.

Christy rallied his men as soon as they had done their work in the vicinity of the thirty-pounder, and ordered them to join their division under the command of the third lieutenant. But the seamen on the part of the Confederates seemed to

be dispirited to some extent by the bad beginning they had made, and by the heap of slain near them. Captain Rombold lay upon the deck, propped up against the mizzen mast. He looked as pale as death itself; but he was still directing the action, giving orders to his first lieutenant. Two of his officers were near him, but both of them appeared to be severely wounded.

The battle was raging with fearful energy on the part of the loyal tars, and with hardly less vigor on the part of the enemy, though the latter fought in a sort of desperate silence. The wounded commander was doing his best to reinspire them; but his speech was becoming feeble, and perhaps did more to discourage than to strengthen them.

At this stage of the action Graines, closely followed by his twenty men, sprang over the starboard bulwarks, and fell upon the enemy in the rear. Finding themselves between an enemy in front and rear, they could do no more; for it was sure death to remain where they were, and they fled precipitately to the forecastle.

"Quarter!" shouted these men, and the same cry came from the other parts of the deck.

"Haul down the flag, Mr. Brookfield!" said the commander in a feeble tone.

The first lieutenant of the Tallahatchie, with his handkerchief tied around his leg, directed a wounded quartermaster to strike the colors, and three tremendous cheers from the victorious crew of the Bellevite rent the air. Captain Breaker had come on board of the enemy, sword in hand, and had conducted himself as bravely as the unfortunate commander of the prize.

The moment he saw Christy he rushed to him with both hands extended, and with a smile upon his face. The four hands were interlocked, but not a word was spoken for the feelings of both were too big for utterance. A loyal quartermaster was ordered to hoist the American ensign over the Confederate flag which had just been hauled down.

The situation on board of the prize was so terrible that there was no danger of an attempt to recapture the vessel, and immediate attention was given to the care of the wounded, the survivors in each vessel performing this duty under its own officers.

Mr. Brookfield, the executive officer of the Tallahatchie, was wounded in the leg below the knee, but he did not regard himself as disabled, and superintended the work of caring for the sufferers. Mr. Hungerford, the second lieutenant, appeared to be the only principal officer who had escaped uninjured; while Mr. Lenwold, the third lieutenant, had his arm in a sling in consequence of a wound received from a splinter in the early part of the action. These gentlemen, who had seemed like demons only a few minutes before, so earnest were they in the discharge of their duties, were now as tender and devoted as so many women.

Captain Breaker directed his own officers to return to the deck of the Bellevite and provide for the wounded there; but they were few in number compared with those strewn about the deck of the prize. While the Confederate ship had been unable to discharge her guns, and the officers were using their utmost exertions to repair the disabled steering apparatus, the Bellevite had had a brief intermission of the din of battle, during which the wounded had been carried below where the surgeon and his mates had attended to their injuries.

It was ascertained that only six men had been killed during the action, and their silent forms had been laid out in the waist. Seventeen men were in their berths in the hospital or on the tables of the surgeon, eight of whom had been wounded by the muskets and revolvers of the enemy as the ship came alongside the prize. Four others had just been borne to the cockpit with wounds from pikes and cutlasses.

The loss of the enemy was at least triple that of the Bellevite, a large number of whom had fallen before the murderous discharge of the thirty-pounder on the quarter-deck, which had been intended to decimate the ranks of the loyal boarders; and, raking the column as the men poured into the ship, it would probably have laid low more than one in ten of the number. This was an original scheme of Captain Rombold; and but for the coolness and deliberation of Captain Breaker, and the daring of his chief officer, it must have been a terrible success. As it was, the Confederate commander, who was the only foreign officer on board, "had been hoisted by his own petard."

Christy had done all that required his attention on board of the Bellevite, and he paid another visit to the deck of the Tallahatchie, where he desired to obtain some information which would enable him the better to understand the action which had just been fought. He was especially anxious to ascertain the condition of the Armstrong gun which had been disabled by the first shot of Blumenhoff with the midship Parrot. As he went on deck, he saw Captain Rombold, seated in an arm-chair his cabin steward had brought up for him, with his right leg resting on a camp stool.

"Good-morning, Mr. Passford," said the wounded commander, with a slight smile on his pale face. "*Comment allez-vous ce matin?*" (How do you do this morning?)

"*Tres bien, Monsieur le capitaine. Je suis bien fache que vous etes blesse.* (Very well, Captain. I am very sorry that you are wounded.) You need the attention of the surgeon, sir," replied the loyal officer.

"I take my turn with my men, Mr. Passford, and my officers do the same. The fortune of war is with you again, and I congratulate you on the success which has attended you. I saw that it was you who upset my plan for receiving your boarders. I was confident, with that device of mine, I should be able to beat off your boarders, and I intended to carry your deck by boarding you in turn. I think your commander can give you the credit of winning the victory for the

Bellevite in his despatches; for I should have killed more of your men with that thirty-pounder than you did of mine, for I should have raked the column. You saved the day for the United States when you ran up the mizzen rigging and unmasked my battery. You are a gentleman and a magnanimous enemy, Mr. Passford, and I congratulate you on your promotion, which is sure to come. But you look pale this morning."

"One of your revolvers had very nearly pinked me when I was in the rigging; for the ball passed between my arm and my side, and took out a piece of the former, Captain Rombold," replied Christy, who was beginning to feel languid from the loss of blood, for the drops of red fluid were dropping from the ends of his fingers. "But you exaggerate the service I rendered; for Captain Breaker, suspecting something from the position in which your men were drawn up, had dropped a hawser port, and intended to look through the aperture made by one of our solid shots. He would have discovered your trap."

"He could not have seen the gun or the men." At that moment Christy sank down upon the deck.

CHAPTER XVII

A MAGNANIMOUS ENEMY

It had not occurred to Christy Passford before Captain Rombold mentioned it that his daring exploit had in any especial manner assisted in the final and glorious result of the action. He was confident that, if he had not unmasked the plan of the Confederate commander, Captain Breaker would have discovered it, and perhaps had already done so when, without any order, he had impetuously leaped over the rail, followed by a portion of the second division, urged forward by lieutenant Walbrook, to capture the gun before it could be discharged.

He realized, as the thought flashed through his brain like a bolt of lightning, that the Confederate commander's scheme must be counteracted on the instant, or Captain Breaker might give the command to board, for which the impatient seamen on his deck were waiting. He had accomplished his purpose in a few seconds; and the enemy's force, huddled together on the starboard side, were suddenly piled up in a heap on the planks, weltering in their gore, and a large proportion of them killed.

Captain Rombold was standing abreast of the stump of his mizzen mast observing the whole affair, and he had a better opportunity to observe it than any other person on the deck of either ship. He had ordered up his men to receive the boarders on the quarter-deck when the gun was discharged, and before he believed it could be done. Christy had only to reverse the direction of the carriage, hastily sight the piece, and pull the lanyard. The missiles with which the thirty-pounder was loaded cut down the advancing column, rushing to obey their commander's order, and then carried death and destruction into the crowd of seamen in their rear.

"Good Heavens, Mr. Passford!" exclaimed the Confederate commander, rising with difficulty from his seat. "You are badly wounded!"

"Not badly, Captain Rombold," replied the young officer, gathering up his remaining strength, and resting his right arm upon the planks.

"But my dear fellow, you are bleeding to death, and the blood is running in a stream from the ends of the fingers on your left hand!" continued the Confederate commander, apparently as full of sympathy and kindness as though the sufferer had been one of his own officers. "Gill!" he called to his steward, who was assisting in the removal of the injured seamen. "My compliments to Dr. Davidson, and ask him to come on deck instantly."

Christy had hardly noticed the ball which passed through the fleshy part of his arm above the elbow at the time it struck him. While he kept the wounded member raised the blood was absorbed by his clothing. It had been painful from the first; but the degree of fortitude with which a wounded person in battle endures suffering amounting to agony is almost incredible. So many had been killed, and so many had lost legs and arms on both sides, that it seemed weak and pusillanimous to complain, or even mention what he regarded as only a slight wound.

"This is the executive officer of the Bellevite, Dr. Davidson," said Captain Rombold when the surgeon appeared, not three minutes after he had been sent for. "But he is a gentleman in every sense of the word, and the bravest of the brave. It was he who defeated my scheme; but I admire and respect him. Attend to him at once, doctor."

"If he saved the day for the Yankees, it is a pity that his wound had not killed him," added the surgeon, with a pleasant smile on his handsome face. "But that is taking the patriotic rather than the humane view of his case."

"It would have been better for us, and especially for me, if he had been killed; but I am sincerely glad that he was not," added the commander.

"Thank you, Captain Rombold," said Christy. "You are the most magnanimous of enemies, and it is a pleasure to fight such men as you are."

"Good-morning, Mr. Passford," continued Dr. Davidson, as he took the right hand of the patient. "I like to serve a brave man, on whichever side he fights, when the action is finished."

"You are very kind, doctor," added Christy faintly.

With the assistance of Gill, the surgeon removed the coat of the lieutenant, and tore off the shirt from the wounded arm.

"Not a bad wound at all, Mr. Passford," said Dr. Davidson, after he had examined it. "But it has been too long neglected, and it would not have given you half the trouble if you had taken it to your surgeon as soon as the action was decided. You have lost some blood, and that makes you faint. You will have to lie in your berth a few days, which might have been spared to you if you had had it attended to sooner."

The doctor sent for needed articles; and as soon as Gill brought them he dressed the wound, after giving the patient a restorative which made him feel much better. While the surgeon was still at work on his arm, Captain Breaker rushed in desperate haste to the scene of operations, for some one had informed him that the surgeon of the Tallahatchie was

dressing a wound on his executive officer.

"Merciful Heaven, Mr. Passford!" exclaimed the loyal commander. "Are you wounded?"

"Nothing but a scratch in the arm, Captain. Don't bother about me," replied Christy, whose spirits had been built up by the medicine Dr. Davidson had given him; but he did not know that it was half brandy, the odor of which was disguised by the mixture of some other ingredient.

"I did not know that you were wounded, my dear boy," said his commander tenderly; so tenderly that the patient could hardly restrain the tears which were struggling for an outflow.

"Mr. Watts," called Captain Breaker to the chief steward of the *Bellevite*, who happened to be the first person he saw on the deck of his own ship.

"On deck, Captain," replied the steward, touching his cap to the commander.

"My compliments to Dr. Linscott, and ask him to come to the deck of the prize without any delay," added the captain.

Such a message implied an emergency; and the surgeon of the *Bellevite*, who was a man well along in years, hastened with all the speed he could command to the place indicated. The captain, who had heard the name of the Confederate medical officer, introduced his own surgeon, with an apology for summoning him.

"My executive officer, the patient in your hands, is the son of my best friend on earth, for whom I sailed for years before the war, and I hope you will pardon my great anxiety for your patient, Dr. Davidson," said he.

"The most natural thing in the world, Captain Breaker, and no apology or explanation is necessary," politely added the Confederate surgeon, as he and Dr. Linscott shook hands. "My patient is not severely wounded; but I should be happy to have you examine his injury. It was too long neglected, and he is rather weak from the loss of blood."

"Mr. Passford was too proud a young man to mention his wound or to call upon the surgeon of his ship; but I was determined that he should no longer be neglected," interposed Captain Rombold.

Christy was aware that the two commanders had never met before, and he introduced them while Dr. Linscott was examining his arm. They were both brave and noble men, and each received the other in the politest and most gentlemanly manner. It was evident to all who witnessed the interview that they met with mutual respect, though half an hour before they had been engaged in a desperate fight the one against the other. But enemies can be magnanimous to each other without any sacrifice of their principles on either side.

"I thank you most heartily, Captain Rombold, for your kindness to my principal officer; and if the opportunity is ever presented to me, I shall reciprocate to the extent of my ability," continued Captain Breaker. "You have been more than magnanimous; you have been a self-sacrificing Christian, for you have required your surgeon to bind up the wound of an enemy before he assuaged your own. This is Christianity in war; and I shall strive to emulate your noble example."

"You are extremely considerate, Captain; and we are friends till the demands of duty require us to become technical enemies on the quarter-deck each of his own ship," said Captain Rombold, as he grasped the hand of the loyal commander.

"I heartily approve of the treatment of my friend Dr. Davidson, and fully indorse his opinion that the wound of Mr. Passford is not a dangerous or very severe one," interposed Dr. Linscott. "I agree with him that the patient had better spend a couple of days or more in his berth."

The Confederate surgeon had finished the dressing of Christy's wound, and he was in a hurry to return to his duty in the cockpit. He shook hands with Dr. Linscott, and both of them hastened to their posts. The patient had been seated on a bench, and Captain Rombold had returned to his former position. He had tied his handkerchief around his thigh, and both of them appeared to be very comfortable.

"Well, Mr. Passford, if you are ready to return to the *Bellevite*, I will assist you to the ward room," said Captain Breaker.

"Excuse me, Captain, if I detain you a few minutes, for I desire to settle a point in dispute between Mr. Passford and myself, though it is doubtless his extreme modesty which creates this difference between us," interposed the Confederate commander.

He proceeded to state his view of the exploit of Christy, by which he had rendered inutile the scheme to slaughter the loyal boarders.

"I was absolutely delighted, Captain Breaker, when I realized that you intended to board the *Tallahatchie*," he continued. "I was confident that I should defeat your boarders, and board and carry your deck in my turn. I have not yet changed my view of the situation. You can judge of my consternation when I saw Mr. Passford leap into the mizzen rigging with the agility of a cat, and especially when the order to board my ship was withheld."

"Mr. Passford acted without orders, for I should hardly have sent him into the rigging while we were alongside, for it was almost sure death, for your men, armed with muskets and revolvers, were all looking for the firing of the thirty-pounder," added Captain Breaker.

"He was as nimble as a cat, and it seemed to me that he was twice as quick. But all he needed to unearth my scheme

was a single glance at the gun and its crew on the quarter-deck. In the twinkling of an eye he dropped to the deck, called his boarders, and leaped over the rail into our midst. It was the most daring and quickly executed manoeuvre I ever observed," continued the Confederate commander with enthusiasm.

"I quite agree with you, Captain Rombold," replied Captain Breaker, as he looked with an affectionate expression upon the pale face of the patient.

"Now, Mr. Passford chooses to regard his brilliant exploit as a matter of little consequence, for he declares that you had discovered, or would have discovered, my plan to annihilate your boarders."

"Mr. Passford is entirely in the wrong so far as I am concerned," protested Captain Breaker with a good deal of earnestness. "To make the matter clear, I will explain my own actions. When the *Bellevite* ranged alongside the *Tallahatchie*, everything was in readiness for boarding. I was about to give the order to do this when I discovered that the crew of your ship were drawn up on the starboard side, instead of the port, and it suggested to me that something was wrong, and I withheld the command. In order to obtain more information, I went further aft, where I hoped to get a view of a portion of the deck of your ship. I had raised a hawser port with the assistance of a quartermaster; but I could see only the wreck of your spare wheel. At this moment Mr. Passford was in the mizzen rigging. He did all; I did nothing."

"I hope your report of the action will do him full justice, for he deserves promotion," added Captain Rombold.

"My admiration of the conduct of Mr. Passford is equal to yours."

They separated after some further conversation, and her commander and Christy returned to the *Bellevite*.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE REIGN OF CHRISTIANITY

Captain Breaker took Christy by his right arm to support him as they returned to the deck of the *Bellevite*, and to assist him over the bulwarks. The wounded had all been cared for, and the crew were swabbing up the deck; but the moment they discovered the captain and the executive officer on the rail, they suspended their labor and all eyes were fixed upon the latter.

"Three cheers for Mr. Passford!" shouted the quartermaster who had been at the wheel when Christy sprang into the mizzen rigging.

Three heartier cheers were never given on the deck of any ship than those which greeted the hero of the action as he appeared on the rail. Not satisfied with this demonstration, they all swung their caps, and then gave two volleys more. There was not a man that did not take part in this triple salute, and even the officers joined with the seamen in this tribute.

"I hope Mr. Passford is not badly wounded, sir," said Quartermaster Thompson, touching his cap most respectfully. "And I speak for the whole ship's company, sir."

"Mr. Passford is not very severely wounded, Thompson," replied the commander, while Christy was acknowledging the salute. "He did not mention the fact that he was hurt, and lost more blood than was necessary, so that he is very weak."

The quartermaster reported the answer of the captain to the ship's company, whereupon they gave three more cheers, as Christy and his supporter descended to the deck; and the hero acknowledged the salute. At the companion they encountered Dr. Linscott, who had just come on deck from the cockpit. Graines was standing near, waiting for an opportunity to speak to his late associate in the expedition.

"You gave us a bad fright, Mr. Passford," said the surgeon, as he took the right hand of the wounded officer. "But you will do very well now. I have something here which will keep you comfortable;" and he proceeded to place the left arm in a sling, which he adjusted with great care, passing a band from it around his body so as to prevent the member from swinging, or otherwise getting out of position.

"Is it necessary that I should take to my berth, Dr. Linscott?" asked the patient. "I am feeling very nicely now; and since my arm was dressed it gives me very little pain."

"Dr. Davidson ordered you to your berth because you were so weak you could not stand," replied the surgeon.

"But I have got over that, and I feel stronger now."

"We will see about that later, Mr. Passford. Captain Breaker, all our wounded except a few light cases, which my mates can treat as well as I can, are disposed of," added the doctor.

"I am very glad to hear it," replied the captain.

"May I stay on deck, doctor?" asked Christy, who did not like the idea of being shut up in his stateroom while the arrangements for the disposal of the prize were in progress.

"You may for the present if you feel able to do so," answered the surgeon. "But you must have a berth-sack or an easy chair on deck, and keep very quiet."

"Punch!" called the commander; and this was the name of the cabin steward, who was not, however, as bibulous as his surname indicated. "Pass the word for Punch."

The steward, like everybody else on board able to be there, was on deck, and immediately presented himself.

"Bring up the large easy-chair at my desk, and place it abreast of the mizzen mast," added the commander.

Something else called off the attention of Captain Breaker at this moment, and the surgeon remained in conversation till Punch reported the chair in position. Dr. Linscott conducted Christy to it, and adjusted him comfortably, sending for a blanket to cover his lower limbs. The captain soon returned, and saw that the patient was easy in a position where he could see all that transpired on the deck.

"As you have finished your duties on board of the *Bellevite*, I desire to reciprocate the kindness of Captain Rombold in attending to Mr. Passford when perhaps he needed the attention of his own surgeon more than our patient, and I desire to have you dress the Confederate commander's wound," said Captain Breaker.

"With all my heart!" exclaimed the surgeon earnestly. "I will be with you in a moment, as soon as I procure my material;" and he hurried below.

"You will find me with Captain Rombold," added the commander, as he hastened to the deck of the prize.

"I am glad to see you again, Captain Breaker," said the Confederate chief very politely.

"I have come to tender the services of our surgeon, who has disposed of all our seriously injured men, to dress your wound, in the first instance, for I fear you were more in need of such assistance than my officer when you so magnanimously called Dr. Davidson to dress Mr. Passford's wound. He will be here in a few minutes," returned Captain Breaker, proceeding to business at once.

"I am exceedingly obliged to you, Captain, for I am beginning to feel the necessity of attending to my wound. The thirty-pounder, which was to have reduced the ranks of your crew by one-half, as I am assured it would have done, made terrible havoc among my own men. In addition to the dead who have already been committed to the deep, we have a great number wounded," replied Captain Rombold. "The cockpit is full, and I have given up my cabin to the surgeon, who is extremely busy. I accept the services of Dr. Linscott very gratefully."

"He is extremely happy to serve you."

By this time the surgeon of the *Bellevite* appeared with one of his mates, and some pleasant words passed between him and his new patient.

"Now, where is your wound, Captain Rombold?" asked Dr. Linscott.

"In the right thigh," replied the patient; and the bullet hole in his trousers indicated the precise spot.

"It will be necessary to remove your clothing, Captain," continued the surgeon.

"My cabin is already turned into a hospital, and Dr. Davidson is hard at work there," replied the patient. "I shall have to send for a berth-sack, and let you operate on deck, for"--

"My cabin is entirely at your service, Captain Rombold," interposed the commander of the *Bellevite*. "It will afford me the very greatest pleasure in the world to give it up to you."

"Oh, no, Captain!" exclaimed the sufferer, as he really was by this time. "That is too great a sacrifice."

"Not at all; do me the very great favor to accept the use of my cabin," persisted Captain Breaker. "How shall we move him, doctor?"

"Call four of your men; we will carry him to your cabin in his chair, just as he sits; and we can do it without incommoding him at all," answered Dr. Linscott, as he sent his mate to call the men required.

"Really, Captain,"--the sufferer began, but rather faintly.

"The surgeon thinks you had better not talk any more, Captain Rombold," interposed the commander. "Here are the men, and we will handle you as tenderly as an infant."

"You are as kind as the mother of the infant," added the sufferer with a slight smile; but he made no further opposition.

The four men lifted the chair, and the doctor instructed them how to carry it. The *Bellevite* had been moved aft a little so as to bring the gangways of the two ships abreast of each other. The commander was so interested and so full of sympathy for his injured enemy, now a friend, that he could not refrain from assisting with his own hands, and he directed the operations of the seamen when they came to the steps. They lifted the chair down to the deck of the ship, and then it was borne to the captain's cabin.

The wounded commander was placed in the broad berth of the cabin, and the seamen sent on deck. Dr. Linscott, with the assistance of his mate, proceeded to remove the clothing of the patient, Captain Breaker aiding as he would hardly have thought of doing if the sufferer had been one of his own officers. The injury proved to be of about the same character as that of Christy; it was a flesh wound, but the ball had ploughed deeper than in his case, and was therefore severe. A stimulating remedy was given to the patient, and the doctor dressed the wound with the utmost care, as he always did, whether the patient was a commander or a coal-heaver from the bunkers.

The sufferer had revived somewhat under the influence of the medicine administered; and after taking the hand of Captain Rombold, with a hearty wish for his early recovery, the captain of the *Bellevite* took his leave, and went on deck.

He proceeded first to the chair of the wounded lieutenant, reporting to him the condition of the Confederate commander. Christy was extremely glad to hear so favorable a report of the condition of the patient, and so expressed himself in the heartiest terms. "Federal" and "Confederate" seemed to be words without any meaning at the present time, for all had become friends. The officers were vying with each other in rendering kindly offices to the vanquished, and even the seamen were doing what they could to fraternize with the crew of the *Tallahatchie*, while both were engaged in removing the evidences of the hard-fought action.

It was now only nine o'clock in the morning, and six hours had elapsed since the prize, with the *West Wind* in tow, had sailed from Mobile Point on what had proved to be her last voyage in the service of the Confederacy. Events had succeeded each other with great rapidity, as it may require a whole volume to report in detail a naval battle begun and ended in the short space of an hour.

The men were piped to breakfast; and during the meal there was an interchange of good feeling when it was found that

the crew of the Tallahatchie had only a short supply of coffee and bread, intending to supply these articles at Nassau. The loyal tars were as magnanimous as the officers of both ships had proved themselves to be; and they passed the needed articles over the rails, till they exhausted their own supply, hungry as they were after six hours of active duty. The commander discovered what his men were doing; and he ordered the rations to be doubled, besides sending a quantity of ship bread and coffee on board of the prize. War had mantled his savage front, and Christianity was presiding over the conduct of those who had so recently been the most determined enemies.

There was something forward of the foremast to remind all who approached of the battle which had been fought. It was a spare sail which covered the silent and motionless forms of those whose loyalty to their country had led them through the gates of death to "the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns," but whose fadeless record is inscribed in the hearts of a grateful nation.

During or after a severe action on board a ship of war, the dead are usually disposed of with but little or no ceremony, as the exigency of the hour may require, as had been done on board of the prize. But Captain Breaker was more considerate, as the conditions permitted him to be; and the killed had been sewed up in hammocks, properly weighted.

"All hands to bury the dead;" piped the boatswain of the Bellevite, when breakfast was finished.

By this time the deck had been cleaned up, and dried off under the warm sun which had dissipated the fog and the morning mists. The bodies of the slain had been previously placed at the port gangway, covered with the American flag. The seamen removed their caps, the commander read the service, and the bodies were committed to the deep. The officers and seamen witnessed the ceremony with uncovered heads, and in reverent silence.

CHAPTER XIX

COLONEL HOMER PASSFORD OF GLENFIELD

As soon as the battle on the deck of the Tallahatchie had been decided, Graines, in command of the flanking party, had returned to the engine room of the Bellevite. He and his men had fought bravely and effectively in the action, though the full effect of the movement under his charge could not be realized in the change of circumstances. The engine of the ship had now cooled off, and Paul Vápoor hastened to the deck to see his friend and crony, the news of whose wound had been conveyed to the engine room in due time.

He was heartily rejoiced to find that it was no worse, and he had news for the patient. Just before the burial of the dead he had been sent by the commander to examine and report upon the condition of the engine of the prize. Captain Rombold had protected it with chain cables dropped over the side, so that it remained uninjured, and the British engineers declared that it was in perfect working order.

"But whom do you suppose I saw on board the prize, Christy?" asked the chief engineer, after he had incidentally stated the condition of the engine.

"I cannot guess; but it may have been my cousin Corny Passford, though he has always been in the military service of the Confederacy," replied the wounded lieutenant.

"It was not Corny, but his father," added Paul.

"His father!" exclaimed Christy. "Uncle Homer Passford?"

"It was he; I know him well, for I used to meet him at Glenfield in other days. I am as familiar with his face as with that of your father, though I have not seen either of them for over three years."

"Where was he? What was he doing?" asked Christy curiously.

"He was just coming up from below; and Mr. Hungerford, the second lieutenant, told me he had been turned out of the captain's cabin, which had been made into a hospital for the wounded," added Paul. "I had no opportunity to speak to him, for he averted his gaze and moved off in another direction as soon as he saw me. He looked pale and thin, as though he had recently been very sick."

"Poor Uncle Homer!" exclaimed the lieutenant. "He has been very unfortunate. The last time I saw him, I conducted him to my father's place at Bonnydale, after he had been a prisoner on board of the Chateaugay. He was on parole then, and I suppose he and Captain Rombold were both exchanged."

"Doubtless he will tell you all about it when you see him, as you will soon."

"He had his eyes opened when he passed through New York City with me, for he did not find the grass growing in the streets, as he had expected, in spite of all I had said to him at sea. He was astonished and confounded when he found business more lively than ever before there; but he remained as virulent a rebel as ever; and I am sure he regards it as a pious duty to stand by the Southern Confederacy as long as there is anything left of it. I know no man more sincerely religious than Uncle Homer."

"He is as good a man as ever walked the earth," added Paul heartily.

"For his sake, if for no other reason, I shall rejoice when this war is over," said Christy, with a very sad expression on his pale face.

"Was Mr. Graines of any use to you on deck, Christy?" asked the chief engineer, as he turned to take his leave.

"He behaved himself like a loyal officer, and fought like a tiger on the deck of the Tallahatchie. I shall give a very good report of him to the captain for his conduct in the action, and for his valuable services in the expedition last night. I did not over-estimate him when I selected him for both of the positions to which he was appointed."

"He wants to see you, and I told him he should come on deck when I returned," added Paul, as he took the hand of Christy and retired.

"How do you feel now, Mr. Passford?" asked Captain Breaker, coming to his side the moment the chief engineer left him.

"I feel quite weak, but my arm does not bother me much. The Confederate surgeon did a good job when he dressed it," replied Christy with a smile.

"I will get him to send you a second dose of the restorative that strengthened you before," said the commander, as he pencilled a note, which he tore out of his memorandum book, and sent it by Punch to Dr. Davidson.

"Mr. Vápoor brought me a piece of news, Captain," continued Christy. "Uncle Homer Passford is on board of the

Tallahatchie."

"Your uncle!" exclaimed the commander. "I supposed he was still on parole at the house of your father."

"I did not know to the contrary myself, for I have had no letter from my father for a long time. He and Captain Rombold must have been exchanged some time ago. Mr. Vápoor says my uncle looks pale and thin, as though he had recently been very sick."

"I am very sorry for him, for he was the equal of your father in every respect, except his loyalty to his true country," added the captain.

"Poor Uncle Homer!" exclaimed Christy, as he wiped a tear from his eye. "He was the guest of Captain Rombold; but he has been turned out of his cabin to make room for the wounded."

"Dr. Linscott with his two mates has gone to the assistance of Dr. Davidson, whose hands are more than full, and perhaps he will see your uncle. Where is he now?" inquired the captain.

"Mr. Vápoor saw him on the deck, but he did not speak to him, for Uncle Homer avoided him. The ward room of the prize has at least two wounded officers in it, and I don't know how many more, so that my poor uncle has no place to lay his head if he is sick," said Christy, full of sympathy for his father's brother.

"That will never do!" exclaimed the commander brusky. "He shall have a place to lay his head, sick or well. Captain Rombold occupies one of the staterooms in my cabin, and your uncle shall have the other."

"But where will you berth, captain?" demanded Christy.

"No matter where! I will go and find your uncle at once;" and Christy saw him next mounting the gangway steps.

The commander had no difficulty in finding the gentleman he sought; for he was wandering about the deck of the prize, and no one seemed to take any notice of him. He had been the honored guest of Captain Rombold, though he had hardly shown himself on deck since the steamer left Mobile, and few of the ship's company seemed to know who he was.

"Good-morning, Colonel Passford," said Captain Breaker, as he confronted him in the midst of the ruins of the spare wheel, the wrecks of the mizzen mast, and the bulwarks on the quarterdeck.

"Good-morning, Captain Breaker," replied the planter, taking the offered hand of the commander, with a feeble effort to smile. "Of course I knew that you were near, for you have given abundant proofs of your presence on board of this vessel."

"But we meet now as friends, and not as enemies. I know that you have done your duty to your country as you understand it, and I have done the same," continued the commander, still holding the hand of the colonel.

"You have been very kind to Captain Rombold, Gill informs me, and"--

"He set the example for me, and I have striven to follow it," interposed the captain. "But his generosity was first exercised in behalf of your nephew, Christy."

"The steward informed me that Christy had been wounded; and Captain Rombold assured me that the Tallahatchie was captured in consequence of a very daring act on the part of my nephew," added the planter.

"I should not state it quite so strongly as that, though his action certainly enabled us to capture the ship sooner, and with less loss on our part than would otherwise have been the case. As to the ultimate result of the battle, Captain Rombold and myself would disagree. But with your assent, Colonel Passford, I think we had better cease to discuss the action, which is now an event of the past. I am informed that you have been compelled to leave the captain's cabin."

"And I cannot find a resting place in the ward room or steerage," added the planter.

"I have come on board of the prize to invite you to share my cabin with Captain Rombold, for I have two staterooms," said Captain Breaker, suddenly changing the subject of conversation.

"You are very kind, my dear sir; but your arrangement would incommode yourself," suggested the colonel.

"My cabin is quite large, and I shall be able to make ample accommodations for myself," persisted the commander, as he took the arm of the planter. "Permit me to conduct you to your new quarters."

"As I am once more a prisoner"--

"Hardly," interposed the captain, as he led the planter to the gangway, "I shall regard you as a non-combatant, at least for the present; and I desire only to make you comfortable. The flag-officer must decide upon your status."

Colonel Passford allowed himself to be conducted to the deck of the Bellevite; and he was no stranger on board of the ship, for when she was a yacht he had made several excursions in her in company with his family. The first person he observed was his nephew, seated in his arm-chair where he could overlook all that took place on the deck. He hastened to him, detaching his arm from the hand of the captain, and gave him an affectionate greeting.

"I was very sorry to learn that you were wounded, Christy," said he, holding the right hand of the young officer.

"Not badly wounded, Uncle Homer," replied Christy. "I hope you are well."

"I am not very well, though I do not call myself sick. Have you heard from your father lately, Christy?" asked his uncle.

"Not for a long time, for no store-ship or other vessel has come to our squadron for several months, though we are waiting for a vessel at the present time. You look very pale and thin, Uncle Homer."

"Perhaps I look worse than I feel," replied the planter with a faint smile. "But I have suffered a great deal of anxiety lately."

"Excuse me, Colonel Passford, but if you will allow me to install you in your stateroom, you will have abundance of time to talk with your nephew afterwards," interposed Captain Breaker, who was very busy.

"Certainly, Captain; pardon me for detaining you. I am a prisoner, and I shall need my trunk, which is in my stateroom on board of the Tallahatchie. Gill will bring it on board if you send word to him to do so," replied the colonel.

He followed the captain to his cabin. The door of the Confederate commander's room was open, and the planter exchanged a few words with him. He was shown to the other stateroom, and Punch was ordered to do all that he could for the comfort of the passenger. Captain Breaker spoke a few pleasant words with the wounded commander, and then hastened on deck.

Mr. Ballard, the second lieutenant, had again been duly installed as temporary executive officer; Mr. Walbrook had been moved up, and Mr. Bostwick, master, had become third lieutenant. As usual, the engineers were Englishmen, who had come over in the Trafalgar, as well as the greater part of the crew, though the other officers were Southern gentlemen who had "retired" from the United States Navy. The foreigners were willing to remain in the engine room, and promised to do their duty faithfully as long as their wages were paid; but Leon Bolter, the first assistant engineer of the Bellevite, was sent on board of the prize to insure their fidelity.

Ensigns Palmer Drake and Richard Leyton, who were serving on board of the steamer while waiting for positions, were sent to the Tallahatchie, the first named as prizemaster, and the other as his first officer, with a prize crew of twenty men, and the two steamers got under way.

CHAPTER XX

A VERY MELANCHOLY CONFEDERATE

Notwithstanding his military title, Colonel Homer Passford was not a soldier, though he had once been a sort of honorary head of a regiment of militia. His brother, Captain Horatio Passford, Christy's father, was a millionaire in the tenth degree. More than twenty years before the war he had assisted Homer to all the money he required to buy a plantation in Alabama, near Mobile, where he had prospered exceedingly, though his possessions had never been a tenth part of those of his wealthy brother.

Homer had married in the South, and was the father of a son and daughter, now approaching their maturity, and Comy, the son, was a soldier in the Confederate army. The most affectionate relations had always subsisted between the two families; and before the war the Bellevite had always visited Glenfield, the plantation of the colonel, at least twice a year.

Florry Passford, the captain's daughter, being somewhat out of health, had passed the winter before the beginning of the war at Glenfield, and was there when the enemy's guns opened upon Fort Sumter. Captain Passford had not supposed that his brother in Alabama would take part with the South in the Rebellion, and with great difficulty and risk he had gone to Glenfield in the Bellevite, for the purpose of conveying his daughter to his home at Bonnydale on the Hudson, not doubting that Homer and his family would be his passengers on the return to the North.

He was entirely mistaken in regard to the political sentiments of the colonel, and found that he was one of the most devoted and determined advocates of the Southern cause. The southern brother did not conceal his opinions, and it was plain enough to the captain that he was entirely sincere, and believed with all his mind, heart, and soul, that it was his religious, moral, and social duty to espouse what he called his country's cause; and he had done so with all his influence and his fortune. He had even gone so far in his devotion to his duty as he understood it, as to attempt to hand over the Bellevite, though she was not in Mobile Bay on a warlike mission, to the new government of the South, and had taken part personally in an expedition extended to capture her.

The steam-yacht had been armed at the Bermudas, and fought her way out of the bay; and on her return to New York her owner presented her to the Government of the United States. She had done good service, and Christy had begun his brilliant career as a naval officer in the capacity of a midshipman on board of her. In spite of the hostile political attitude of the brothers to each other, the same affectionate relations had continued between the two families, for each of them believed that social and family ties should not interfere with his patriotic duty to his country.

The commander of the Confederate forces at Hilton Head--one of the highest-toned and most estimable gentlemen one could find in the North or the South--informed the author that his own brother was in command of one of the Federal ships that were bombarding his works. While Commodore Wilkes, of Mason and Slidell memory, was capturing the Southern representatives who had to be given up, his son was in the Confederate navy, and then or later was casting guns at Charlotte for the use of the South: and the writer never met a more reasonable and kindly man. Fortunately our two brothers were not called upon to confront each other as foes on the battlefield or on the sea, though both of them would have done their duty in such positions.

The last time Christy had seen his Uncle Homer was when he was captured on board of the Dornoch with Captain Rombold, as he was endeavoring to obtain a passage to England as a Confederate agent for the purchase of suitable vessels to prey upon the mercantile marine of the United States. He and the commander of the Tallahatchie had been exchanged at about the same time; and they had proceeded to Nassau, where they embarked for England in a cotton steamer. There they had purchased and fitted out the Trafalgar; for the agent's drafts, in which the last of his fortune had been absorbed, could not be made available to his captors. Colonel Passford had an interview with Captain Rombold after Gill had brought his trunk on board; and it was a very sad occasion to the planter, if not to the naval officer. They had not had an opportunity to consider the disaster that had overtaken the Confederate steamer, which had promised such favorable results for their cause; for the commander had been entirely occupied till he received his wound, and even then he had attended to his duties, for, as before suggested, he was a "last ditch" man. He was not fighting for the South as a mere hireling; for he had married a Southern wife, and she had enlisted all his sympathies in the cause of her people.

"I suppose we have nothing more to hope for, Captain Rombold; and we can only put our trust in the All-Wise and the All-Powerful, who never forsakes his children when they are fighting for right and justice," said Colonel Passford, after he had condoled with the commander on his wounded condition.

"We shall come out all right in the end, Colonel; don't be so cast down," replied the captain.

"I raised the money by mortgaging my plantation and what other property I had left for all the money I could get upon it to a wealthy Englishman, the one who came to Mobile with us from Nassau, to obtain the cargoes for this steamer. I had borrowed all I could before that for the purchase of the Trafalgar; and if the current does not change in our favor

soon, I shall be a beggar," added the colonel bitterly.

"The tide will turn, my good friend; and it would have turned before now if all the planters had been as self-sacrificing as you have," said the captain.

"Cotton and gold are about the same thing just now; and with the large cargo on board of the West Wind, which I induced my friends to contribute to the good cause, and that in the hold of the Tallahatchie, I was confident that I could purchase the Kilmarnock, which you say is good for eighteen knots an hour. Now the West Wind and the Tallahatchie are both prizes of the enemy, and there is no present hope for us," continued the colonel; and there was no wonder that he had become pale and thin.

"We are in a bad situation, Colonel Passford, I admit, for both of us are prisoners of war, so that we can do nothing, even if we had the means; but everything will come out right in the end," replied the wounded officer, though he could not explain in what manner this result was to be achieved.

"Well, Captain Rombold, how are you feeling?" asked Dr. Linscott, darkening the door when the conversation had reached this gloomy point.

"Very comfortable, Doctor," replied the commander. "My friend is Colonel Passford."

"Bless me!" exclaimed the surgeon, as he extended his hand to the visitor. "I am very glad to see you, and I hope you are very well. I am happy to inform you that your nephew, who was wounded in the engagement, is doing very well."

"Yes; I met him on deck," replied the planter very gloomily.

"What is the matter, Colonel Passford? You look quite pale, and you have lost flesh since I met you last. Can I do anything for you?"

"Nothing, Doctor; I am not very well, though nothing in particular ails me. With your permission I will retire to my stateroom," said the colonel, as he rose from his seat.

"By the way, Colonel Passford, the captain wished me to ascertain if you have been to breakfast," added the surgeon, following him out into the cabin.

"I have not, Doctor; but it was because I wanted none, for I do not feel like eating," replied the pale planter.

"Punch, go to the galley, get a beefsteak, a plate of toast, and a cup of coffee. Set out the captain's table, and call this gentleman when it is ready."

"Yes, sir," replied Punch, who was a very genteel colored person.

The colonel attempted to protest, but the surgeon would not hear him. He remained with the planter, whom he already regarded as a patient, and though he could not say anything to comfort him, he talked him into a pleasanter frame of mind. Punch set the table, and in due time brought the breakfast. The doctor sat down opposite to him at the table, and actually compelled him to eat a tolerably hearty meal. He was decidedly less gloomy when he had finished, and it was plain to his companion that his empty stomach was responsible for a portion of his depression of spirits.

The surgeon had remained on board of the prize till the order to get under way was given, and then Captain Breaker sent for him; but the two medical gentlemen had disposed of most of the wounds among the Confederate crew. As the English engineer had reported, the machinery and boilers of the Tallahatchie were in good condition, and the two steamers went on their course towards the entrance to Mobile Bay, where French had been ordered to anchor the West Wind, at full speed, though neither was driven; but the log showed that they were making about eighteen knots.

After the brief talk with his uncle, Christy had waited for him to return to the deck, as he supposed he would after what the captain had said to him; but he did not appear. In fact, Colonel Passford was too much cast down by the capture of the two vessels, and the loss of his fortune thereby, that he was not disposed to see any person if he could avoid it.

"Don't you think you had better turn in, Mr. Passford?" asked the commander, as he halted in his walk at the side of the lieutenant.

"I have been waiting here to see my uncle; for I thought, after what you said to him, that he would come back," added Christy.

"I sent Dr. Linscott down to see him, for he looks so pale and feeble that I thought he must be sick. The surgeon reported to me half an hour ago that he had made him eat his breakfast against his will, and he was feeling better and more cheerful. He thinks your Uncle Homer's trouble is entirely mental, and he does not feel like seeing any person," answered the commander.

"What mental trouble can he have?" asked Christy, as he gazed into the face of the captain, wondering if his father's brother was insane.

"The colonel has shipped a vast amount of cotton intending to use the proceeds of its sale to purchase ships for the Confederacy; and he has lost most of them, for you captured quite a number of them when you were in command of the Bronx. I have no doubt he was interested in the cargoes of the prize and the West Wind; and the capture of these two vessels involves a fearful loss. I believe that is all that ails him," the captain explained. "Doubtless he feels as kindly

towards his nephew as ever before in his life; but he does not care to see him just now."

Early in the afternoon the *Bellevite* and her prize came in sight of the *West Wind*, anchored in accordance with French's orders, with the *Holyoke* almost within hail of her; for the captain of the steamer had doubtless considered the possibility of a recapture of the schooner by boats from the shore, if she was left unprotected.

In due time the *Bellevite* let go her anchor at about a cable's length from the *West Wind*, and the prize-master of the *Tallahatchie* had done the same at an equal distance from the ship. Mr. Graines, who had not met his late associate on shore since he was wounded, came to his side as soon as the steamer had anchored; for both Christy and he were anxious to hear the report of French in regard to the prisoners left in his care.

The anchor of the *Bellevite* had hardly caught in the sand before a boat put off from the *West Wind* containing four persons. Two of the ship's seamen were at the oars, French was in the stern sheets, and the engineer soon recognized Captain Sullendine as the fourth person.

CHAPTER XXI

CAPTAIN SULLENDINE BECOMES VIOLENT

French ascended the gangway followed by Captain Sullendine. The seaman who had acted as prize-master of the West Wind touched his cap very respectfully to the first officer he met when he came on board. Christy had asked the chief engineer to send Mr. Graines to him, and he was talking to him about the prize and the chief prisoner when French presented himself before them.

"I have come on board to report, sir," said the prize-master of the West Wind.

"Is all well on board, French?" asked the wounded lieutenant.

"All well now, sir," replied the seaman, with a suggestive emphasis on the last word. "I am very sorry to learn that you have been wounded, Mr. Passford."

"Not severely, French," replied Christy. "I am ready to hear your report."

"I have something to say about this business, Jerry Sandman," interposed the captain of the West Wind, whose wrath had suddenly got the better of his judgment, interlarding his brief remark with a couple of ringing oaths.

"I will hear the prize-master first," replied Christy very quietly.

The discomfited master of the schooner called down a shocking malediction upon the prize-master just as Captain Breaker presented himself before the group assembled at the arm-chair of the lieutenant, and had heard the last oaths of the angry man.

"Who is this man, Mr. Passford?" asked the commander.

"I'll let you know who I am!" exclaimed Captain Sullendine, with another couplet of oaths.

"I do not permit any profane language on the deck of this ship," said Captain Breaker. "Pass the word for the master-at-arms," he added to the nearest officer.

"Oh, you are the cap'n of this hooker," added the master of the West Wind, this time without any expletives. "I have somethin' to say to you, Cap'n, and I want to complain of your officers."

"When you have learned how to behave yourself, I will hear you," replied the commander, as the master-at-arms, who is the chief of police on board a ship of war, presented himself, touching his cap to the supreme authority of the steamer. "What is the trouble here, Mr. Passford?" asked Captain Breaker in a very gentle tone, in contrast with the quiet sternness with which he had spoken to Captain Sullendine.

"No trouble at all, sir; I was about to hear the report of French, the prize-master of the schooner, when the captain of her interfered," replied Christy.

"My story comes in before the prize-master's, as you call him, though he ain't nothin' but a common sailor," interposed Captain Sullendine again.

"Will you be silent?" demanded the commander.

"No, I will not! This is an outrage!" stormed the captain of the West Wind, with a liberal spicing of oaths in his speech.

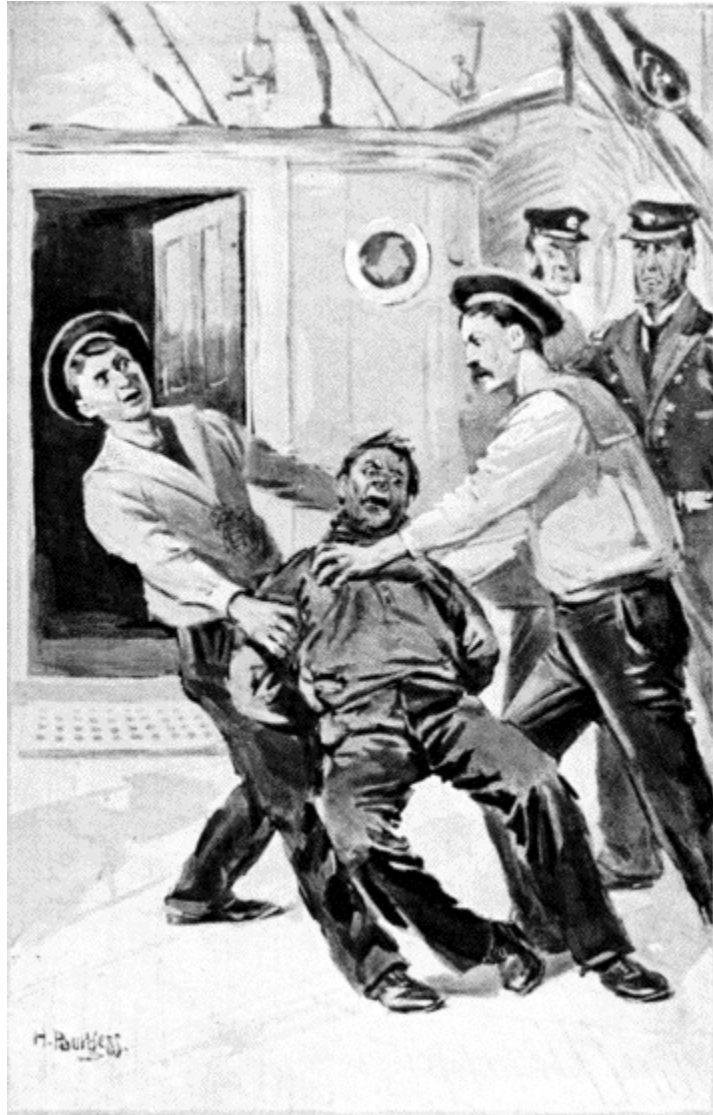
"Put this man in irons, master-at-arms, and commit him to the brig," added Captain Breaker.

The petty officer called upon the ship's corporal, whom he had brought with him, and placed his hand on the arm of the rebellious master, who showed fight. A couple of seamen were called to assist the police force, and Captain Sullendine was dragged below with his wrists ironed behind him.

"Now you can proceed, French," said the captain.

"When I left you, all was quiet on board of the West Wind," added Christy, beginning to make a slight explanation for the benefit of the commander. "Captain Sullendine was very drunk, asleep in his berth, with the door of his stateroom securely fastened upon him. Bokes the seaman and Sopsy the cook were in the same condition. Go on, French."

"I picked up the boat you set adrift, Mr. Passford, and then headed for the eastward of Sand Island lighthouse, where you ordered me to anchor. The Holyoke followed the schooner, and came to anchor near the West Wind. She sent a boat on board, and I told my story to the second lieutenant. We did not need any assistance, and he left us."



"CAPTAIN SULLENDINE WAS DRAGGED BELOW." Page 238.

"About four bells in the forenoon watch I heard a tremendous racket in the cabin, and I went below. Captain Sullendine was doing his best to break down the door of his stateroom, cursing hard enough to make the blood of a Christian run cold. But he had nothing to work with, and I let him kick and pound till he got tired of it. I put Vogel in the cabin to keep watch of him, and went on deck.

"He kept it up for half an hour or more, and then he seemed to have enough of it. Vogel came on deck and told me the prisoner was very humble then, and wanted to come out. I knew you did not mean that I should starve him, and I made Sopsy put his breakfast on the table in the cabin; but I did not do so till I had locked the liquor closet and put the key in my pocket.

"I let him out then, and his first move was to get at his whiskey; but the door was locked. He begged like a child for a drink; but I did not give him a drop. Sopsy and Bokes, who were tied up forward, did the same; but they did not get any. Captain Sullendine ate his breakfast, and I told him his vessel was a prize to the United States steamer *Bellevite*. Then he was so furious that we had to shut him up in his stateroom again.

"After a while he promised to behave himself, and I let him out again. He declared that his vessel was not a legal prize, and got off a lot of stuff that I did not take any notice of. He wanted to make a protest to the commander of the *Bellevite*, and when he promised to behave like a gentleman, I let him come on board with me."

"You acted with very good judgment, French, and Mr. Passford has already commended your good conduct in the expedition last night," said the commander.

"Thank you, sir," replied the prize-master, touching his cap, and backing away without another word.

"Loring," called the captain to the master-at-arms, who had just returned to the quarter-deck, or as near it as etiquette permitted him to go. "How is your prisoner?"

"He broke down completely after he had been in the brig a few minutes, and promised to behave like a gentleman if the commander would hear him."

"Bring him to the quarter-deck," added the captain.

In a few minutes, the ship's corporal conducted him into the presence of the commander. He began with a very lame apology for his previous conduct, and then declared that he was the victim of a "Yankee trick," and that the West Wind had not been fairly captured.

"Your officers imposed upon me," he continued. "Mr. Balker and Jerry Sandman"--

"Who are they?" inquired Captain Breaker, interrupting him.

"I was Mr. Balker, engaged as mate of the West Wind, selected for that position by Mr. Passford, while the lieutenant was Jerry Sandman, second mate, which he chose to be himself so that he could be with the men," interposed Mr. Graines.

"I did not know what their names was, and I reckoned all was honest and square. These men, whoever they were, got me drunk, and got drunk themselves; and while I was taking a nap, waiting for the steamer to get under way, they fastened me into my stateroom so I couldn't get out."

"I went through the forms, but I did not take a drop of liquor into my mouth," said Christy.

"I did not take more than a tablespoonful both on board and at the camp of the runaways," added Mr. Graines.

"Then you cheated me more'n I thought."

"Is this all the complaint you have to make, Captain Sullendine?" asked Captain Breaker, turning to the master of the West Wind.

"I reckon that's enough!" protested the complainant. "I say it was not a fair capture, and you ought to send my vessel back to Mobile Point, where your officers found her."

"I shall not do that, but I will compromise the matter by sending you to Mobile Point, as I have no further use for you," replied the commander. "You are a non-combatant, and not a prisoner of war."

French was ordered to leave Captain Sullendine, Bokes, and Sopsy at the shore where the whaleboat had made a landing, as soon as it was dark. For some reason not apparent, the master of the West Wind protested against this sentence; but no attention was given to his protest. The commander was confident that he had evidence enough to secure the condemnation of the prize, and he regarded such an unreasonable fellow as her late captain as a nuisance. That night the order in regard to him and his companions were carried out.

Captain Breaker asked some questions in regard to French, which Christy and Mr. Graines were able to answer. He was one of those men, of whom there were thousands in the army and navy who had become soldiers and sailors purely from patriotic duty, and at the sacrifice of brighter present prospects. French had been the mate of a large coaster, whose captain had become an ensign in the navy, and he might have had the command of her if he had not shipped as an able seaman in the same service.

He understood navigation, and had been the second mate of an Indiaman. The commander said nothing when he had learned all he could about the prize-master; but it was evident that he had something in view which might be of interest to the subject of his inquiries. He turned his attention to the condition of his first lieutenant then, asking about his arm.

"It does not feel quite so easy as it did," replied Christy, who had been suffering some pain from his wound for the last two hours, though he was so interested in the proceedings on board, and especially in the report from the West Wind, that he had not been willing to retire to his stateroom.

"Then you must turn in at once, Mr. Passford," said the commander, with more energy than he had spoken to the lieutenant before. "I am afraid you have delayed it too long."

"I think not, sir," replied the wounded officer.

"Mr. Graines shall go with you and assist you," added the captain. "I will send Dr. Linscott to you as soon as you get into your berth."

Christy had been sitting so long that he was quite stiff when he attempted to get out of his chair, and the engineer assisted him. He was still very weak, and Mr. Graines supported him, though he presently recovered himself. The ship's company, by this time relieved of all heavy work, had been observing him with affectionate admiration, and rehearsing the daring exploit in which he had received his wound, gave three rousing cheers as he rose to leave the quarter-deck.

Christy turned his pale face towards them, raised his cap, and bowed to them. Another cheer followed, and then another. The men knew that his prompt action in mounting the mizzen rigging, boarding the Tallahatchie, and firing the thirty-pounder after he had reversed its position, had saved the lives or limbs of a great number of them, and they were extremely grateful to him.

With the assistance of his friend the engineer, Christy was soon between the sheets in his berth. Dr. Linscott came in as

soon as he was in his bed, spoke very tenderly to him, and then proceeded to dress his injured arm. He found the member was somewhat swollen, and the patient's pulse indicated some fever.

"I must send you home, Mr. Passford," said the surgeon. "You are the hero of the day, you have earned a vacation, and you will need your mother's care for the next three weeks."

In spite of Christy's protest, the doctor insisted, and left him.

CHAPTER XXII

THE DISPOSITION OF THE TWO PRIZES

The surgeon reported the condition of the first lieutenant to the commander at once, and a long conversation between them followed. Devoted as Captain Breaker was to his executive officer, and filled with admiration as he was for the gallant exploit of that day, he was not willing to do anything that could be fairly interpreted as favoritism towards the son of Captain Passford. The summer weather of the South was coming on, and the heat was already oppressive, even on board of the ships of war at anchor so much of the time on the blockade, and this was the strong point of the doctor in caring for his patient.

Dr. Linscott was very earnest in insisting upon his point; and the commander yielded, for he could hardly do otherwise in the face of the surgeon's recommendation, for the latter was the responsible person. The next morning, after the wounded officer had passed a feverish night, Captain Breaker visited him in his stateroom, and announced the decision. Christy began to fight against it.

"I am not so badly off as many officers who have been treated in the hospital down here; and if I am sent home it will be regarded as favoritism to the son of my father," protested the lieutenant.

"You are too sensitive, my dear boy, as you have always been; and you are entirely mistaken. You have earned a furlough if you choose to ask for it, and every officer and seaman who has served with you would say so," argued the captain. "I shall insert in my report, with other matter concerning you, Christy, that you were sent home on the certificate of the surgeon; and even an unreasonable person cannot call it favoritism."

"I don't know," added Christy, shaking his head.

"I know, my boy. Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Captain Breaker. "You did enough yesterday to entitle you to any favor it is possible for the department to extend to you. You saved the lives of a quarter or a third of the ship's company. But it was not simply a brave and daring exploit, my boy, though even that would entitle you to the fullest commendation; but it included sound judgment on the instant, lightning invention, and consummately skilful action;" and the commander became positively eloquent as he proceeded.

"Come, come, Captain Breaker! You are piling it on altogether too thick," cried Christy, overwhelmed by the torrent of praise. "I only did what I could not help doing."

"No matter if you did; it was the right thing to do, and it was done at precisely the right instant. A moment's delay would have brought the whole force of the enemy down upon you. It was absolutely wonderful how you got that gun off in such a short space of time. I report Captain Rombold's words to you."

"He is a magnanimous gentleman," said Christy.

"He says, too, that a dozen muskets and revolvers were discharged at you, and it is a miracle that only one bullet struck you."

"I found a bullet-hole in my cap, and two more in the skirt of my coat," added the patient with a smile, as he pointed to his coat and cap.

"But we are off the subject; and I was only trying to show that you are entitled to a furlough," said the commander; but the discussion was continued for some time longer, though Christy consented to be sent home in the end.

The thought of going to Bonnydale was exceedingly pleasant to him, and he allowed his mind to dwell upon each member of the family, and to picture in his imagination the greeting they would all give him. Not to the members of his family alone did he confine his thoughts; for they included the beautiful Bertha Pembroke, whom, with her father, he had taken from the cabin of a cotton steamer he had captured. He concluded that the surgeon's certificate would shield him from adverse criticism, after he had fully considered the matter.

The flag-officer of the Eastern Gulf Squadron was not off Mobile Point; and Captain Breaker, as the senior officer present, was obliged to dispose of his prizes himself. Some necessary repairs had to be made upon both ships before anything could be done; and the carpenter and his gang, with all the other seamen who could handle an axe or an adze, were hurrying forward the work. The prize had lost her mizzen mast, her steering gear had been knocked to pieces both forward and aft, she had been riddled in a dozen places, and shot-holes in the hull had been hastily plugged during the action.

Her Armstrong gun amidships had been disabled by Blumenhoff at his first fire. Christy had not found the opportunity to examine this piece, as he desired; but Mr. Graines had done so for him; and it was found that the gun carriage had been knocked into a shapeless mass so that it could not be put in condition for use. The machinists from the engine room of both vessels, for those of the Tallahatchie had no feeling on the subject, were restoring the steering apparatus,

and were likely to have the work completed the next day.

Captain Breaker was in great doubt as to what he ought to do with Colonel Passford. He was certainly a non-combatant; and it could not be shown that he had any mission to Nassau or elsewhere in the service of the Confederacy, though it would have been otherwise if the steamer and the West Wind had not been captured, for he was to sell the cotton in England, and purchase a steamer with the proceeds; but his mission ended with the loss of the vessels. He finally decided to send him to Fort Morgan under a flag of truce.

Before he left he called upon his nephew. He was still in a state of despondency over his own losses, and his failures to benefit the Confederacy, whose loss he counted as greater than his own. He stated that the commander had announced his intention to send him on shore. Christy had seen him but for a moment, for his uncle had not desired to meet him again.

"We will not talk about the war, Uncle Homer," said Christy. "How are Aunt Lydia, Corny, and Gerty? I hope they are all very well."

"Your aunt is not very well, for the hardships of the war have worn upon her. Except Uncle Jerry and Aunty Chloe, the cook, all our negroes have left us, or been taken by the government to work on fortifications, and my wife and Gerty have to do most of the housework," replied Uncle Homer very gloomily; and it was plain to Christy that the mansion at Glenfield was not what it had been in former years.

"How is Corny? I have not heard from him lately."

"Corny is now a captain in the Army of Virginia, and is doing his duty like a man," answered the colonel proudly; and this fact seemed to be almost the only pleasant feature of his experience. "We have been called upon to endure a great many hardships; but we still feel that the God of justice will give us the victory in the end, and we try to bear our burdens with resignation. The captain informs me that you are going home, Christy."

"The surgeon has ordered me to the North on account of the heat in this locality."

"I learned in Nassau as well as when I was at Bonnydale, that your father holds a very prominent and influential position among your people, and your advancement seems to be made sure," added the planter.

"He has never held any office under the United States government, and I hope I do not owe my advancement to him; and he has often assured me that he never asked for my promotion or appointment," said Christy.

"You have been of very great service to your government, as I know to my sorrow, and I have no doubt you deserved whatever promotion you have obtained," added the colonel, observing that he had touched his nephew in a very tender spot. "But I suppose the boat is waiting for me, and I must bid you good-by. Remember me in the kindest manner to your father and mother, and to Miss Florry. They were all as good to me when I was on parole at Bonnydale as though no war had ever divided us."

The colonel took Christy by the hand, and betrayed no little emotion as they parted. The lieutenant realized that his uncle was suffering severely under the hardships and anxieties of the war, and he was profoundly sorry for him, though he uttered no complaint. Both on his own account and on that of the Confederacy, he had shipped several cargoes of cotton to Nassau to be sent from there to England; but every one of them had been captured, most of them by his nephew while in command of the Bronx. But he was still confident that the Confederacy would triumph.

Colonel Passford had been sent to the fort under a flag of truce, and had been received by the commandant. In a couple of days the repairs of both ships had been completed. Captain Rombold, though his wound was quite severe, was getting along very well. Captain Breaker had completed his arrangements for the disposal of the prizes and prisoners; and it became necessary to remove the wounded commander to the cabin of the Tallahatchie, to which he did not object, for the wounded in his cabin had been placed in a temporary hospital between decks. He was permitted to occupy the stateroom he had used while in command, while the other was reserved for the prize-master.

Ensign Palmer Drake, the senior of the two officers waiting appointments, was made prize-master of the Tallahatchie, for he had proved to be an able and brave man in the recent action. Mr. Ballard became executive officer of the Bellevite, and Mr. Walbrook the second lieutenant, while the place of the third was filled by Mr. Bostwick, who had been master. French was appointed prize-master of the West Wind, with a crew of five men, as she was to be towed by the prize steamer.

It was found that the Tallahatchie had gone into the action with ninety-five men, including the forward officers. More than one-third of them had been killed or disabled, without counting those who were still able to keep the deck and sleep in their hammocks. Fifty of them were in condition to do duty; and Captain Breaker did not consider it prudent to send so many prisoners to the North in the prize. He therefore sent forty of them to Key West in the Holyoke, assured that the Bellevite was abundantly able to maintain the blockade, even with her reduced ship's company, during the absence of his consort.

The engineers of the prize were willing to continue their services at the expense of their new employer, or even to accept permanent appointments; for they did not belong to the upper classes in England who favored the cause of the Confederacy, and were only looking for the highest wages. Weeks, the oiler, and Bingham, a boatswain's mate, were

appointed first and second officers of the Tallahatchie, and twenty seamen were detailed as a prize crew. To insure the fidelity of the four foreign engineers Mr. Graines was sent as a sort of supervisor, with the knowledge and assent of those in actual charge of the machinery.

When all was ready for her departure, Christy went on board of the Tallahatchie in the same boat with the engineer, after a rather sad parting with the captain and his fellow-officers, and amid the cheers of the seamen, who had mounted the rail and the rigging to see him off. Mr. Drake conducted him to the captain's cabin when he went on board of the prize, where he met Captain Rombold, with whom he exchanged friendly greetings.

"Fellow passengers again, Mr. Passford; but you are going to your reward, and I to my punishment," said the late commander very cheerfully.

"Hardly to my reward, for I neither desire nor expect any further promotion," replied Christy. "I am not yet twenty years old."

"But God makes some fully-developed men before they are twenty-one, and you are one of them."

"Thank you, Captain."

"I am willing to wager the salary I have lost that you will be promoted whether you desire it or not."

"I hope not," replied the lieutenant, as he went to the temporary stateroom which had been prepared for him.

The apartment was much larger than the permanent ones, and it was provided with everything that could contribute to his comfort. While Mr. Graines was assisting him to arrange his baggage, the steamer got under way.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE WELCOME HOME AT BONNYDALE

Even with the West Wind in tow, the Tallahatchie could make fifteen knots an hour; for the sea was smooth, with every prospect of continued fine weather. Dr. Davidson was a prisoner of war, but he remained on board in charge of the wounded of both sides. He was very devoted to Christy, and dressed his wound every morning as tenderly as his mother could have done it. He was a gentleman in the highest sense of the word, and belonged to one of the best families in the South.

Captain Rombold was a very agreeable person; and most of the conversation in the cabin was carried on in French, for the commander was delighted when he could obtain an opportunity to practise the language, and Dr. Davidson spoke it as fluently as a Frenchman, though Captain Drake was unable to understand a word of it. If one had looked in upon them he would have supposed they were enjoying a yachting excursion, and could not have told who were prisoners and who were not.

The two wounded officers passed a portion of every day on deck, and the time slipped away very pleasantly. Mr. Graines spent much of his days and some of his nights in the engine-room, and was on the best of terms with the English engineers; but he could discover no signs of treachery on their part. The prisoners forward were well treated and well cared for, and they made no trouble.

The ship made a quick passage to New York, and went into the harbor with the American flag flying over the Confederate; but this was not an uncommon sight, and it did not attract much attention. The pilot brought a file of newspapers, and the lieutenant learned that Grant was still "hammering away" at the Confederate forces in Virginia, though without any decided success. The ship came to anchor at the navy yard, and Captain Drake reported to the commandant.

Lieutenant Passford was well known there, though the intelligence of his latest achievement had not yet reached there. Christy had written out his report of the expedition to Mobile Point, and Captain Drake brought that of Captain Breaker of the action with the Tallahatchie. The lieutenant had no official duty to perform, and he was at liberty to go where he pleased. He procured leave of absence for Mr. Graines; for he was himself still on fever diet, and was rather weak so that he needed his assistance.

"Home again, Charley!" exclaimed Christy, when they had landed at the navy yard.

"That's so, and my folks at home will not expect to see me," replied the engineer.

"Neither will any one at Bonnydale anticipate a visit from me," added Christy. "We know all about the sharp action of the Bellevite with the Tallahatchie; but no one in these parts can have heard a word about it. Now, Charley, see if you can find a carriage for me;" and the wounded officer went into an office to wait for it.

The uniform of the messenger carried him past all sentinels; and in half an hour he returned in a carriage, which was permitted to enter the yard on Mr. Graines's statement of its intended use. Christy was assisted into it. "Wall Street Ferry," said the lieutenant to the driver.

"Why do you go there?" asked the engineer. "You wish to go to the railroad station, do you not?"

"I want to find my father if I can, and I think he must be in the city," replied Christy, as he gave his companion the location of the office where he did his business with the government, though he made frequent visits to Washington for consultation with the officials of the Navy Department.

The carriage was retained, and in another hour they reached the office. Captain Passford was not there; he had gone to Washington three days before, and no one knew when he would return. Christy was prepared for this disappointment, and he had arranged in his mind the wording of a telegraphic message to his father. While he was writing it out a gentleman came out of the office whom the lieutenant had met before.

"I am delighted to see you, Mr. Passford!" exclaimed the gentleman, who was in the uniform of a naval officer, as he extended his hand to the visitor. "One of our people informed me that the son of Captain Passford was at the door, and I hastened out to see you. Won't you come into the office?"

"No, I thank you; I am not very well, for I was wounded in the left arm in our last action, and I am sent home by the surgeon on a furlough," replied Christy. "Permit me, Captain Bentwick, to introduce my friend, Mr. Graines, third assistant engineer of the Bellevite."

"I am very happy to know you, Mr. Graines," added Captain Bentwick, taking his hand. "I am very sorry you are wounded, Mr. Passford. What can I do for you?"

"Nothing, I thank you, at present. I am writing a message to send to my father. I was just finishing it when you came,"

replied Christy, as he added the finishing words, and passed it to the official.

"Sent home on furlough, slightly wounded. Wish paroles for Captain George Rombold and Dr. Pierre Davidson," Captain Bentwick read from the paper. "I will have it sent at once from this office. But, Mr. Passford, I can parole these officers, and it is not necessary for you to trouble your father with such a matter. Who and what are the officers?"

"Captain Rombold was the commander of the Tallahatchie, prize to the Bellevite," answered Christy. "When I was in danger of fainting after the action on the deck of his ship, he sent for his surgeon, Dr. Davidson, though his own wound had not been dressed. Both he and the surgeon were extremely kind to me, and I desire to reciprocate their good offices by inviting them to my father's house."

"Where are these gentlemen now, Mr. Passford?"

"I left them on board of the prize at the navy yard, sir. I am not sure that they will accept parole, for I have not spoken to them about it; but I am very anxious to serve them."

"I know what your father would say if he were here, and I will send an officer authorized to take their parole to the navy yard at once. I will instruct him to represent your desire to them in the strongest terms, and if they accept, to conduct them to Bonnydale, for I know you must be in a hurry to get there," continued Captain Bentwick, as he shook the hands of both officers, and returned to the office.

"That shows what it is to have powerful friends," said Mr. Graines, when his companion had directed the driver to the railroad station.



"MRS. PASSFORD RUSHED DOWN THE STEPS." Page 264.

"I have not asked anything unreasonable, Charley," replied Christy, sensitive as usual in regard to influential assistance.

"Certainly not; but if I had asked to have your Confederate friends paroled, a thousand yards of red tape would have to

be expended before it could be done," added the engineer with a laugh.

They reached the station, and discharged the carriage; but they found they had to wait two hours for a train to Bonnydale. As it was after noon, they went to a hotel for dinner, and passed the time very impatiently in waiting for the train. Both of them were burning with the desire to see their friends at home; but the train started in due time, and they left it at the nearest station to Bonnydale, proceeding there in a carriage.

Christy gave the bell a very vigorous pull, and the servant that came to the door was a stranger to him. He wished to see Mrs. Passford; and the man was about to conduct him to the reception room, when he bolted from him.

"Mrs. Passford is engaged just now, sir; but she will be down in a few minutes," said the servant, laying his hand on his arm for the purpose of detaining him.

"But I cannot wait," returned the lieutenant very decidedly, and he shook off the man, and began to ascend the stairs.

An instant later there was a double scream on the floor above, and Mrs. Passford rushed down the steps, followed by Florry. Christy retreated to the hall, and a moment later he was folded in the arms of his mother and sister, both of whom were kissing him at the same time.

"But, my son, your arm is in a sling!" exclaimed Mrs. Passford, falling back with an expression of consternation on her face.

"You are wounded, Christy!" cried Florry, as a flood of tears came into her eyes.

"Only a scratch, mother; don't be alarmed," protested the lieutenant. "It was all nonsense to send me home on a furlough; but it was the commander's order, at the recommendation of Dr. Linscott."

"But you are wounded, my son," persisted his mother.

"You have been shot in the arm, Christy," added Florry.

"But I was not shot through the head or the heart; it is not a bit of use to make a fuss about it; and Paul Vápoor was not wounded, for he had to stay in the engine room during the action, and he is as hearty as a buck," rattled the lieutenant, and making his pretty sister blush like a fresh rose.

"I am really worried about it, my son. Where is the wound?" asked his mother.

"Here, Charley, tell them all about it," called Christy to his companion, who had been forgotten in the excitement of the moment.

"Why, Charley Graines!" exclaimed Florry, rushing to him with an extended hand. "I did not know you were here."

"I am glad to see you, Charley, especially as you have been a friend and associate of my son, as you were before the war," added Mrs. Passford.

"I am very glad to see you, Mrs. Passford and Miss Passford," said he, bowing to both of them. "I have been on duty recently with Christy, and I have been looking out for him on the voyage home."

"Charley has been a brother to me, and done everything under the canopy for me. I am somewhat fatigued just now," added the lieutenant, as he seated himself on a sofa in the hall. "He will answer your questions now, and tell you that I am not killed."

"But come into the sitting-room, my son, for we can make you more comfortable there," said his mother, taking him by the right arm, and assisting him to rise.

"I don't need any help, mamma," added Christy playfully, as he rose from the sofa. "I have not been butchered, and I haven't anything but a little bullet-hole through the fleshy part of my left arm. Don't make a baby of me; for a commander in the Confederate navy told me that God made some fully-developed men before they were twenty-one, and that I was one of them. Don't make me fall from my high estate to that of an overgrown infant, mother."

"I will not do anything of the kind, my son," replied Mrs. Passford, as she arranged the cushions on the sofa for him. "Now, Florry, get a wrap for him."

Christy stretched himself out on the sofa, for he was really fatigued by the movements of the forenoon and the excitement of his return to the scenes of his childhood.

"Tell them what the doctors said about my wound, Charley," he continued, as he arranged himself for the enjoyment of a period of silence.

"Mr. Passford has had two surgeons," Mr. Graines began.

"Then he must have been very badly wounded!" ejaculated Florry, leaping to a very hasty conclusion.

"Not at all," protested the engineer. "Both of them said he was not severely wounded."

"Why was he sent home on a furlough?" asked Mrs. Passford.

"Because the weather was getting very hot in the Gulf of Mexico, and it was believed that he would do better at home."

He has been somewhat feverish; but he is improving every day, and in a couple of weeks he will be as well as ever."

"Thank God, it is no worse!" exclaimed Mrs. Passford.

Then she insisted that he should be quiet, and they all retired to the library.

CHAPTER XXIV

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER CHRISTOPHER PASSFORD

Christy Passford dropped asleep when left alone in the sitting-room, and his slumber lasted a full hour. During this time Mr. Graines had related the incidents of the action in which he had been wounded, and given a full account of the expedition to Mobile Point. He was not sparing in his praise; but he brought it out in what had been said by others, especially by the commanders of both vessels and in the demonstrations of the seamen of the *Bellevite*.

When the wounded officer awoke it was with a start, and he was surprised to find he had been asleep in the midst of such happy surroundings. He rose from his couch, and found that his mother and sister had left the room. He passed out into the hall, and there heard the voice of the engineer in the library which he entered at once.

"I hope you feel better, my son," said his mother, as she and Florry rose from their chairs rejoicing anew at his return home after the fearful peril through which he had passed, for the recital of his brilliant exploits by his friend had been intensely thrilling to both of them.

"I'm all right, mother dear; I was only tired a little, for I have taken more exercise to-day than usual lately," replied Christy, as Mrs. Passford kissed him again and again, and Florry followed her example.

"Charley Graines has told us all about it, Christy," said his sister.

"So you have been spinning a yarn, have you, Charley?" asked the hero.

"I have related only the simple truth, Christy, for I knew you would not tell them the whole of it," replied the engineer.

"I am afraid you were reckless, my son," added Mrs. Passford.

"Reckless!" exclaimed Christy. "When I saw my duty there was no alternative but to do it; and that was all I did. You have been decorating your yarn, Charley."

"Not a particle; and Captain Breaker would confirm everything I have said," protested Mr. Graines. "So would Captain Rombold, if he were here, as I suppose he will be soon."

"That reminds me, mother, that you are to have some visitors; for I expect Captain Rombold and Dr. Davidson will be here some time to-day, for I have spoken to have them paroled," interposed Christy.

"Who is Dr. Davidson, my son?" asked his mother.

"He was the surgeon of the *Tallahatchie*. Both of your visitors are rebels to the very core," added the lieutenant playfully. "I was hit in the arm by a bullet when I was in the mizzen rigging; but I did not report to the surgeon"--

"As you ought to have done," interrupted the engineer.

"Dr. Linscott had his hands full, and I did not want to bother him then. I went on board of the prize to take a look at the disabled *Armstrong* gun. Captain Rombold, who was wounded in the right thigh, was sitting on the quarter-deck. He spoke to me, for I was well acquainted with him. While we were talking, I began to feel faint, and slumped down on the deck like a woman. The captain sent for his surgeon, though his own wound had not been dressed; and Dr. Davidson was the gentleman who came, and very soon I felt better. They treated me like a brother; and that is the reason I have asked to have them both sent here."

"I am very glad you did, Christy; and we will do everything we can for them," added Mrs. Passford.

The father and mother of Mr. Graines lived in Montgomery, two miles distant, and he was anxious to see them. Leaving Christy in the hands of his mother and sister, he took his leave early in the afternoon. Later in the day a carriage stopped at the mansion, and the expected visitors, attended by the naval officer who had paroled them, were admitted by the servant. As soon as they were announced, Christy hastened to the hall, followed by his mother and sister. The captain carried a crutch, and was also supported by the doctor and the naval lieutenant.

"I am very glad to see you, Captain Rombold," said Christy, as he gave his hand to the commander. "And you, Dr. Davidson;" and he proceeded to present them to his mother and sister.

"This is Lieutenant Alburgh of your navy, Mr. Passford; and he has been very attentive to us," interposed the surgeon, introducing the paroling officer.

"I am very happy to know you, Mr. Alburgh;" and he presented him to Mrs. Passford and Florry.

The lieutenant declined an invitation to dinner; for he was in haste to return to New York, going back to the station in the carriage that had brought him. Mrs. Passford invited the party to the sitting-room, and Christy and the doctor assisted the wounded commander. He was placed upon the sofa, where he reclined, supported by the cushions arranged by the lady of the house.

"I am extremely grateful to you both, gentlemen, for your kindness to my son when he was beyond my reach, and it affords me very great pleasure to obtain the opportunity to reciprocate it in some slight degree," said Mrs. Passford, when the captain declared that he was very comfortable in his position on the sofa.

"And I thank you with all my heart for what you did for my brother," added Florry.

"You more than repay me; and, madam, permit me to congratulate you on being the mother of such a son as Lieutenant Passford," replied Captain Rombold warmly. "I am still a rebel to the very centre of my being; but that does not prevent me from giving the tribute of my admiration to an enemy who has been as brave, noble, and generous as your son. The brilliant exploit of Mr. Passford, I sincerely believe, cost me my ship, and at least the lives or limbs of a quarter of my ship's company. It was one of the most daring and well-executed movements I ever witnessed in my life, madam."

"Please to let up, Captain," interposed Christy, blushing as Florry would have done if Paul Vapoor had entered the room at that moment.

"He is as modest as he is brave, Mrs. Passford. It was sheer admiration for the young officer which compelled me to send for my own surgeon when he sank fainting upon the deck, with the blood streaming from the ends of his fingers," added the commander.

"If you are going to talk about this matter the rest of the day, Captain Rombold, I must beg you to excuse me if I retire," interposed Christy, rising from his chair.

"I won't say another word about it, Mr. Passford!" protested the captain. "But I hope your mother will have a chance to read Captain Breaker's report of the action, for he and I are of the same opinion in regard to the conduct of your son."

"My husband will doubtless bring me a copy of it," added the lady.

In deference to the wishes of Christy, nothing more was said about the action, at least so far as it related to him. After some general conversation, the surgeon suggested that he had not dressed the wounds of his patients that day, and the commander was assisted to the principal guest chamber, while the lieutenant went to his own apartment.

Captain Passford was detained three days in Washington by important business at the Navy Department. Captain Breaker's report of the action resulting in the capture of the Tallahatchie had reached its destination, and the proud father was in possession of all the details of the battle. He telegraphed and wrote to his son; and it was another joyful occasion at Bonnydale when he arrived there.

Dr. Davidson remained at the mansion for three weeks, until his patients were convalescent, though he went every day to the hospital of the prisoners of war to see the wounded of his ship. Captain Passford had given the visitors a very cordial and hearty welcome on his return, and expressed his gratitude to them for their kindness to his son in the strongest terms. He did every possible thing to promote their comfort and happiness, and the reign of Christianity continued at Bonnydale as it had been begun on board of the Bellevite and the Tallahatchie.

In two weeks Christy's wound had practically healed, though his arm was not yet the equal of the other. His father spent all the time he could spare at home, and long talks between father and son were the order of the day. The lieutenant had been informed on his arrival of the death of Mr. Pembroke, Bertha's father, two months before; but she had gone to visit an uncle in Ohio, and Christy had not yet seen her.

"I expect Miss Pembroke will be here to-morrow, Christy," said Captain Passford one day, about three weeks after his return. "I suppose you are of the same mind in regard to her."

"I am, father," replied Christy, for he was about the same as a younger brother in his relations with him. "But I have not heard a word from her, any more than from you, since I left home."

"There has been no occasion to send a store-ship or other vessel to the Eastern Gulf squadron, though one sailed about a week before your arrival, and letters were forwarded to you," replied the captain. "Doubtless one or more went from her to you. She cannot have heard of your arrival; for I lost the address of her uncle in Ohio, and we could not write to her. Her father had a little property; and at her request I have been appointed her guardian, and she will reside at Bonnydale in the future."

Bertha Pembroke arrived the next day, and what Christy needed to complete his happiness was supplied, and now his cup was overflowing. But he did not forget that he still owed a duty to his suffering country. Even the fascinations of the beautiful girl could not entice him to remain in his beloved home while his arm was needed to help on the nation's cause to a victorious Union.

At the end of four weeks, he felt as well as ever before in his life, and he was impatient to return to the Bellevite. For a week before he had been talking to his father about the matter; and Bertha knew her betrothed, as he was by this time, too well to make any objection to his intended departure.

The Tallahatchie had been promptly condemned, and the fact that she was a superior vessel for war purposes, and her great speed compared with most vessels in the navy, had caused her to be appropriated to the use of the government. Orders had been given weeks before for her thorough repair and better armament, all of which had been hastily accomplished. Christy had not been to New York since his return; and for some reason of his own, his father had said

very little to him about the service, perhaps believing that his son had better give his whole mind to the improvement of his health and strength.

"I hope you have found a vessel by which I can return to the Eastern Gulf squadron, father," said Christy one morning, with more earnestness than usual. "I begin to feel guilty of neglect of duty while I am loafing about home."

"Don't trouble yourself, my son," replied Captain Passford, who seemed to be rather exhilarated about something. "You shall return to your duty in due time, though not in exactly the same position as before."

"Am I to be appointed to some other ship, father?" asked Christy, gazing earnestly into the captain's face to read what was evidently passing in his mind, for it made him very cheerful.

"You are to sail in another ship, Christy; but wait a minute and I will return," said Captain Passford, as he left the sitting-room and went to his library.

Opening his safe he took from it a ponderous envelope bearing official imprints, and returned to the sitting-room. Handing it to his son, he dropped into an arm-chair and observed him with close attention.

"What's this, father?" asked the young officer.

"I have had it about three weeks, but waited for your entire recovery before I gave it to you," replied the captain. "Open it."

Christy did so, read it, and then in his excitement, dropped it on the floor. It was his commission as a lieutenant-commander.

CHAPTER XXV

THE PRINCIPAL OFFICERS OF THE ST. REGIS

Christy Passford was astounded and confounded when he read the commission. He modestly believed that he had already been promoted beyond his deserving, though no one else, not even his father, thought so. He had not sought promotion at any time, and he had been hurried through four grades in something over three years. He was the heir of millions, and he had given all his pay to wounded sailors and the families of those who had fallen in naval actions.

His share of the prize money resulting from the captures in which he had taken part as commander or in some subordinate position had made him a rich man; and with his mother's assistance, he was disbursing no small portion of his wealth among those who had been deprived of their support by the casualties of the war. He had not expected or even hoped for any further promotion, though the newspaper had extolled to the skies his brilliant exploit in the Gulf.

"What does this mean, father?" asked Christy, dropping into a chair as if overwhelmed by the contents of the envelope.

"It means just what it says, my son," replied Captain Passford. "But I know that it is necessary now for me to explain that this promotion is none of my doing; for I have not asked it, I have not urged it, I have not made the remotest suggestion that you should be made a lieutenant-commander, as I have not done on any former occasion."

"That is enough, father; your plea of not guilty would have been enough to satisfy me," added Christy.

"I prevented your appointment to the command of the Chateaugay, and procured your position as second lieutenant of the Bellevite; and these two instances are absolutely all the requests I have ever made to the department in relation to you," protested the captain.

"That helps the matter very much," answered Christy. "I have been the victim of supposed partiality, 'a friend at court' and all that sort of thing, till I am disgusted with it."

"And all that has been in consequence of your over-sensitiveness rather than anything that ever was said about you."

"Perhaps it was. But as a lieutenant-commander I might still remain as executive officer of the Bellevite, for Captain Breaker has been a commander for over two years," suggested Christy.

"The department has made another disposition of you, and without any hint or suggestion from me, my son," said Captain Passford, as he took another envelope from his pocket, and presented it to his son. "This came to me by this morning's mail; and I have withheld the commission till I received it."

"And what may this be, father?" asked Christy, looking from the missive to the captain's face, which was glowing with smiles, for he was as proud of his only son as he ought to have been.

"Christy, you remind me of some old ladies I have met, who, when they receive a letter, wonder for five or ten minutes whom it is from before they break the envelope, when a sight of the contents would inform them instantly," added the captain, laughing.

"But I am afraid the contents of this envelope will be like the explosion of a mine to me, and therefore I am not just like the old ladies you have met," returned the lieutenant-commander. "One mine a day let off in my face is about all I can stand."

"Open the envelope!" urged his father rather impatiently.

"It never rains but it pours!" exclaimed Christy, when he had looked over the paper it enclosed. "I am appointed to the command of the St. Regis! I think some one who gives names to our new vessels must have spent a summer with Paul Smith at his hotel by the river and lake of that name; and the same man probably selected the name of Chateaugay. I suppose it is some little snapping gunboat like the Bronx; but I don't object to her on that account."

"She is nothing like the Bronx, for she is more than twice as large; and you have already seen some service on her deck."

"Some steamer that has had her name changed. But I have served regularly only on board of the Bellevite and the Bronx, and it cannot be either of them," said Christy, with a puzzled expression.

"She is neither the one nor the other. She has had three names: the first was the Trafalgar, the second the Tallahatchie, and the third the St. Regis," continued the captain.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Christy, relapsing into silent thoughtfulness, for he could hardly believe the paper from which he had read his appointment; and officers far his senior in years would have rejoiced to receive the command of such a ship.

"Not only possible, but an accomplished fact; and the only sad thing about it is that you must sail in the St. Regis day after to-morrow."

"I am informed that my orders will come by to-morrow," added the lieutenant-commander.

"The ship is all ready for sea. An eight-inch Parrot has been substituted for the Armstrong gun, the same as the midship gun of the Bellevite," the captain explained. "Perhaps you would like to know something about your fellow-officers, Christy."

"I certainly should, father, for whatever success I may have will depend largely upon them," replied the embryo commander of the St. Regis.

"Your executive officer will be Lieutenant George Baskirk," continued Captain Passford, reading from a paper he took from his pocket.

"Good! He was the second lieutenant of the Bronx when I was in command of her; and a better or braver officer never planked a deck."

"He was available, and I suggested him. Your second lieutenant is Joel Makepeace, just promoted from the rank of master. He is fifty-two years old, but as active as ever he was. He is a regular old sea dog, and commanded an Indiaman for me fifteen years ago; but you never met him. He has made a good record in the war, and I feel sure that you will like him."

"I have no doubt I shall, father; and I like the idea of having an officer who is old enough to be my father, and who has had a great deal of experience at sea," replied Christy.

"He was an able seaman and petty officer in the navy for three years when he was a young man, and has served as a master from the beginning of the war," continued Captain Passford.

"Probably he does not like the idea of being under the command of one who has not yet reached his majority in years," suggested the commander of the St. Regis.

"On the contrary, he seemed to be delighted with his appointment. Your third lieutenant is Ensign Palmer Drake who brought home your prize."

"He is a good man and a good officer, and I am entirely satisfied with him."

"Ensign Barton French is to serve as master on board of your ship. Some doubts were expressed in regard to his knowledge of navigation, and he passed a very creditable examination."

"I am very glad indeed that he has obtained his promotion, and that he is to sail with me," added Christy, who had taken quite an interest in him as an able seaman, and had procured his appointment as prize-master of the West Wind.

"Dr. Connolly, who was with you in the Bronx, is your surgeon. The chief engineer of the St. Regis is one Paul Vápoor," continued Captain Passford, with a very obvious twinkle of the eyes.

"Paul Vápoor!" exclaimed Christy, leaping out of the chair in which he had just settled himself after the excitement of his father's first announcement had partly subsided.

"Paul Vápoor," repeated the captain.

"It can hardly be possible," persisted Christy.

"What is the matter? Has Captain Breaker fallen out with him?"

"Not at all; the commander of the Bellevite thinks as much of him as ever he did, and even a great deal more."

"Then how under the canopy does Paul happen to be appointed to the St. Regis?" demanded Christy.

Captain Passford took from his pocket a letter he had received from Captain Breaker, and proceeded to read portions of it, as follows: "If Christy is not promoted and given an adequate independent command, I shall be disappointed; and given such whether he consents or not. He has never been wanting in anything; and though I say it to his father, there is not a more deserving officer in the service, not even one who is ten years older. I have expressed myself fully in my report. I believe his gallant exploit in the late action with the Tallahatchie saved the lives of at least one-fourth of my ship's company; and it thinned out the ranks of the enemy in about the same proportion. Captain Rombold insists that he should have captured the Bellevite if the tide had not been thus turned against him; but I do not admit this, of course.

"I still set the highest value upon the services of Chief Engineer Paul Vápoor, and I should regret exceedingly to lose him. But Christy and Paul have been the most intimate friends from their school days; and if your son is appointed to an independent command, as I believe he ought to be, it would do something towards reconciling him to his appointment if his crony were in the same ship with him. For this reason, and this alone, I am willing to sacrifice my own wishes to the good of the service. I have talked with Paul about the matter, and he would be delighted to be the companion of Christy, even in a small steamer."

"Captain Breaker is very kind and very considerate, as he always was; and I shall certainly feel more at home on board

of the St. Regis with Paul Vapoor as her chief engineer," replied Christy; and the effect seemed to be what the commander of the Bellevite anticipated. "Go on with the list, father."

"Paul's first assistant engineer will be Charles Graines," continued Captain Passford.

"That is very good; but Charley is a sailor as well as a machinist, and I may borrow him of Paul on some special occasions, for he has what Captain Breaker calls ingenuity, as well as bravery and skill."

"The second assistant is Amos Bolter, a brother of Leon, who has been first assistant of the Bellevite from the beginning of the war, and who has been promoted to chief at the suggestion of the commander in the letter from which I have just read. The third assistant is John McLaughlin, whom Paul knows if you do not. These are your principal officers; and we had better go and see your mother and Florry now."

"I have good news for you and your family, Captain Passford, for I am informed that I have been exchanged, and need trespass no longer upon your generous and kindly hospitality," said the commander.

"That is no news to me, Captain Rombold, for I had the pleasure of suggesting the officers for whom you and the doctor might be exchanged," replied the host with a pleasant laugh. "But I assure you in all sincerity that you have both of you been the farthest possible from trespassers."

"I do not feel that I have yet half reciprocated the kindness you extended to my son," added Mrs. Passford.

"I wish I could do ten times as much for you as I have been able to do," said Florry.

"Though wounded I have passed four of the pleasantest weeks of my life here; and I shall never forget your kindness to me," said the commander, grasping the hand of his host; and his example was followed by the surgeon.

"We have been made happier by your presence with us than we could have made you, gentlemen," added Mrs. Passford.

Not a word about politics or the cause of the war had been spoken.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ST. REGIS IN COMMISSION

The kindly expressions of feeling which passed between the hosts and their guests were far from being mere compliments, for the Confederate commander and surgeon had made themselves very agreeable. Quite a number of pleasant parties had been given in compliment to them and Christy. But the family felt that they owed a debt of gratitude to their guests which they could not repay; and enemies though they were, the most eminent personages on the Federal side could not have been better treated.

"I am sorry you are going, though I congratulate you on the prospect now before you of returning to your friends," said Captain Passford, after the conversation had continued for half an hour. "But I did not come in to receive your adieus; only to introduce to you, and to Mrs. Passford and Florry, a new character, who has just stepped upon the stage of action."

"Draw it mild, papa," interposed Christy, shrugging his shoulders.

"I have the pleasure of presenting to you Lieutenant-Commander Christopher Passford."

Captain Rombold and Dr. Davidson set to clapping their hands as though they had suddenly gone crazy. When the former had nearly blistered his own, he rushed to the newly-promoted, and grasped his hands with a pressure which made the recipient of his warm greeting squirm with pain.

"I congratulate you with all my heart and mind, Commander Passford," he added, with exceeding warmth. "I know that you deserved this promotion, and I was sure you would get it from the moment I saw you in the mizzen rigging of the *Bellevite*, and within the same minute leaping over the rail of the *Tallahatchie*, closely followed by thirty or forty of your seamen. I lost all hope of taking your ship then, for almost at the same instant came the discharge of the thirty-pounder I had prepared to lay low half your boarders. I told you this would come, but you seemed to be doubtful of it; and I repeat what I have said before, that God makes some fully-developed men before they are twenty-one."

The surgeon followed the example of his fellow-prisoner; and then Christy's mother and sister hugged and kissed him, and he heartily returned their affectionate embraces.

"I have only to add that my son has been appointed to the command of the *St. Regis*, a steamer of over eight hundred tons, and reputed to have a speed of twenty knots an hour, though I have some doubts in regard to the last item," said Captain Passford.

"I cannot wish him success in his new command, for that would be treason; but I have no doubt he will damage our cause even more than he has in the past; and so far as he is personally concerned, I can wish him success with all my heart," added Captain Rombold. "I have kept a list of the names of the vessels in the Federal navy so far as I could obtain them; but it does not include the *St.*-- What you call her? I never heard the name before."

"The *St. Regis*, after a river in the Adirondacks," said Captain Passford, laughing. "But I can assure you, Captain, that you know her better than any of the rest of us, for I never even saw her."

"The *St. Regis*?" interrogated the commander, puzzled by the assertion.

"Just now this steamer is something like a newly-married widow, for she is entering upon her third name," continued the host, very lightly. "Formerly she was the *Trafalgar*, a highly honored name in British history; but more recently she received the name of *Tallahatchie*; and now she becomes the *St. Regis*."

"I see," replied the Confederate commander, evidently trying to hide his intense chagrin that the magnificent steamer, purchased by Colonel Homer Passford for him, had so soon become a ship belonging to the Federal navy. "You expressed a doubt in regard to her speed, my dear Captain."

"I simply doubted if she could make twenty knots an hour, for the *Bellevite* overhauled her without difficulty."

"That was because our coal was very bad. The *Trafalgar* made twenty knots an hour several times when she was under my command."

"So much the better, Captain; if the speed is in her, her new engineer will get it out of her," replied the host. "But I must take the next train for New York, and I am going over to see the *St. Regis*, for she has been put in the best of repair. Perhaps you would like to go with me, Christy."

"I should, father; I was expecting Charley Graines over this morning, and he would like to see his future home on the deep," replied the lieutenant-commander.

"He is in the reception-room now, waiting to see you," said Florry.

"I have his appointment in my pocket, and you may give it to him, my son," added the captain.

The guests were not to leave at once, and the trio hastened to the train. As soon as they were seated, Christy gave his friend the envelope containing his appointment, and Charley Graines was quite as happy as the future commander of the St. Regis. On the way the latter gave the other all the news that had come out that morning.

"I suppose Paul Vápoor will not come on board till we get to the Gulf, father," said Christy.

"You will receive your orders to-morrow, as you have been advised; and though I cannot properly inform you where you will be bound, I can tell you where you are not bound; you are not going to the Gulf of Mexico," answered Captain Passford.

"Not to the Gulf? All my service so far in blockaders has been in the Gulf, and this will be a tremendous change for me. But where shall we pick up our chief engineer?"

"About all the business growing out of the capture of the Tallahatchie, including the promotions, was done very nearly four weeks ago. I was in Washington when Captain Breaker's very full report came, and the officers were promoted then. The appointments were also made then; but I have been obliged, for reasons not necessary to be named, to keep them to myself. The steamer that carried a cargo of coal, provisions, and stores to the Eastern Gulf squadron, was the bearer of Paul's appointment to the St. Regis, and Mr. Bolter's commission as chief engineer of the Bellevite. Your friend was ordered to report at the Brooklyn Navy Yard at once. The steamer in which he came put in at Delaware Breakwater, short of coal. He will be here by to-morrow morning, or sooner."

After a visit at his office Captain Passford and his companions proceeded to the navy yard. The St. Regis was off the shore at anchor. She was a magnificent steamer; and the captain indulged in an exclamation, which he seldom did, when she was pointed out to him. She was all ready for sea, and would go into commission as soon as her commander presented himself. They went on board of her, and were heartily welcomed by such officers as had already occupied their staterooms.

Captain Passford went all over her, accompanied by Christy, while the new first assistant engineer confined his attention to the engine. The lieutenant-commander informed the proper officer of the yard that he would hoist the flag on board of the St. Regis at noon the next day. The party took their leave, and in the afternoon returned to Bonnydale.

The guests were now relieved from their parole, and they took their leave before night, with a repetition of the good wishes which had been expressed before. The next morning Christy was at the railroad station on the arrival of the train from New York, and the first person that rushed into his arms like a school-girl was Paul Vápoor. Of course Christy was delighted to see him, but he kept watching the steps of the principal car all the time. At last he discovered Bertha Pembroke, and he rushed to her, leaving Paul talking into the air.

He grasped the beautiful maiden by both hands, and both of them blushed like a carnation pink. The young officer was not given to demonstrations in public, and he reserved them to a more suitable occasion. He picked up her hand-bag and bundles which she had dropped when the lover took possession of her, and conducted her to his father's carriage.

Christy presented her to Paul, who had heard much about her, but had never seen her. He was simply polite, though there was mischief in his eye, and the commander was in danger of being teased very nicely when they were alone together. Both Bertha and Paul were cordially welcomed by Mrs. Passford and Florry, and Christy needed nothing more to complete his happiness.

But there was no time to spare, and Captain Passford hurried them without mercy, and without considering that the lovers had not met before for several months; but the commander of the St. Regis was to hoist his flag at noon, and there was no room for long speeches. Christy and Paul hurried themselves into their new uniforms, not made for the occasion, but kept in store. The engineer's uniform was all right as it was, for he had before reached the top of the ladder in his profession, but Flurry had changed the shoulder-straps of her brother.

Captain Passford was not remorseless in separating the newly reunited friends; for Paul and Flora had done some blushing, and had crept away into a corner of the great drawing-room as soon as he had put on his best uniform, and he finally insisted that all the ladies should go to the navy yard and witness the ceremony. The company were rather late; but the captain had sent a man to the station in advance, and the train was held for them.

It is hardly necessary to state in what manner the seats in the car were occupied; but the captain and Mrs. Passford had to sit together. A navy yard tugboat was at the foot of Grand Street on the arrival of the party, for it had been telegraphed for early in the morning. Captain Passford was a very distinguished magnate in the eyes of all naval officers, not only on account of his great wealth, but because he was the most influential man in the city at the department.

Half an hour before the time the party were on the deck of the St. Regis. All the officers were now on board; and while Paul was showing the ladies over the vessel, the commander was renewing his acquaintance with Mr. Baskirk, the executive officer. His father introduced Mr. Makepeace to him; and he found him a sturdy old salt, without as much polish as many of the officers, but a gentleman in every respect.

"I am very glad to know you, Captain Passford," said Mr. Makepeace. "We have one of the most brilliant commanders in the service, and I suppose he will make things hum on board of the St. Regis, if we get into action, as we are likely to do under his lead."

"I shall try to do my whole duty, and I shall endeavor not to make any sensation about it," replied Christy, as he turned from the second to greet the third lieutenant, Mr. Drake, who had been his shipmate on board of the *Bellevite*, and the commander of the *Tallahatchie* while he was a passenger on board.

The ship's company had already been mustered on deck. They were dressed in their best uniforms, and they were a fine-looking set of men. They had all heard of Lieutenant Passford, and they were proud and happy to serve under his command. Promptly at noon, as the church bells on shore were striking the hour, Commander Passford mounted a dais, and his commission was read to the ship's company. He then made a short speech suited to the occasion, and ordered the colors to be run up to the peak. The ship was then in commission, and she was to sail on the tide the next day. The subordinate officers and seamen then gave three cheers, in which every person seemed to put his whole heart.

Christy conducted Bertha to the captain's cabin, which had been restored to its original condition and refurnished. A lunch was served to the whole party under an awning on the quarter-deck. Mr. Drake, an eye-witness and actor in the battle, fought it over for the benefit of the ladies; and before night they all returned to *Bonnydale*, where it required at least three rooms to accommodate them during the evening.

CHAPTER XXVII

CAPTAIN PASSFORD ALONE IN HIS GLORY

Christy Passford was stirring at an early hour the next morning, and so was Bertha Pembroke; for the St. Regis was to sail that day, though the tide did not serve till four in the afternoon. After breakfast his father called him into the library, and closed the door. Captain Passford had remained in the city the evening before till the last train, and it was evident that he had something to say to his son.

"I have no information to give you this time, Christy, in regard to the coming of blockade-runners or steamers for the Confederate navy," said he. "But I have been instructed to use my own judgment in regard to what I may say to you about your orders. Of course you have observed that the blockading squadrons in the Gulf have been greatly reduced."

"Only the Bellevite and Holyoke remained off the entrance to Mobile Bay," added Christy. "We have had a very quiet time of it since I joined the Bellevite, and the action with the Tallahatchie was really the only event of any great importance in which I have been engaged."

"The enemy and their British allies have been so unfortunate in the Gulf that they have chosen a safer approach to the shores of the South. Nearly all the blockade-runners at the present time go in at the Cape Fear River, where the shoal water favors them. A class of steamers of light draft and great speed are constructed expressly to go into Wilmington. Over \$65,000,000 have been invested in blockade-running; and in spite of the capture of at least one a week by our ships, the business appears to pay immense profits. The port of Charleston is closed to them now, as well as many others."

"I have studied this locality of the coast at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, and the blockade-runners certainly have their best chance there," said Christy.

"The whole attention of the government, so far as blockade-running is concerned, has been directed to the approaches of Wilmington. Forts Fisher, Caswell, and Smith afford abundant protection to the light draft steamers as soon as they get into the shoal water where our gunboats as a rule cannot follow them. The one thing we need down there is fast steamers. It is a stormy coast, and our smaller gunboats cannot safely lie off the coast."

"I have read that a single successful venture in this business sometimes pays for the steamer many times over."

"That is quite true, and the business prospers, though there are fifty or more Federal cruisers and gunboats patrolling the shore. Now, Christy, you are to be sent to this locality with the St. Regis; but you are to be in the outer circle of blockaders, so to speak, as your sealed orders will inform you."

"Of course I shall obey my orders, whatever they are," added the commander.

"I have nothing more to say, and you will regard what has passed between you and me as entirely confidential," said Captain Passford, as he rose to leave the library.

"By the way, father, what has become of Monsieur Giffleur?" asked Christy. "I have not seen him since my return."

"Just now he is working up a case of treason in Baltimore, though I expected him home before this time," replied the captain.

"I am sorry I have not seen him, for he and I had become great friends before we parted. I think he is in some respects a remarkable man."

"In his profession he is unexcelled; and what is more in that line, he is honest and reliable."

"I learned all that of him while we were operating together. It is said, and I suppose it is true, that about every one of the blockaders makes a port at Halifax, the Bermudas, or Nassau, as much to learn the news and obtain a pilot, as to replenish their coal and stores."

"That is unfortunately true; and the neutrality of these places is strained to its utmost tension, to say nothing of its manifest violations."

"I think if Monsieur Giffleur and myself could make another visit to the Bermudas and Nassau, we might pick up information enough to insure the capture of many blockade-runners, and perhaps of an occasional Confederate cruiser," said Christy, laughing as he spoke.

"That is not the sort of business for a lieutenant-commander in the navy, my son; but I have thought of sending the detective on such a mission since the remarkable success you and he had in your former venture. But you escaped hanging or a Confederate prison only by the skin of your teeth. The difficulty in another enterprise of that sort would be for Mr. Giffleur to put the information he obtained where it would do the most good. If he wrote letters, they would

betray him; and if he went off in a Bahama boat, as he did before, we should have to keep a steamer cruising in the vicinity of his field of operations to meet him when he came off. I came to the conclusion that the scheme was impracticable, for it was only a combination of favorable circumstances that rendered your operations successful. I prefer to trust to the speed of the St. Regis to enable you to accomplish the same results off the coast," said Captain Passford, as they left the library.

"I should really like to see Monsieur, for he is a very agreeable companion," replied Christy.

"He would be exceedingly pleased to meet you again, for he had become very much attached to you."

After lunch the same party that had visited the St. Regis the day before left on the train for New York, and proceeded to the navy yard from the foot of Grand Street, for all of them wished to see Christy off. Captain Passford, Junior, was received on board of his ship with all due form and ceremony. Paul Vápoor had been to his home for a brief visit to his mother and sisters; but he had gone to Bonnydale as early in the morning as it was decent to do so, and was all devotion to Florry.

Mr. Baskirk, the executive officer, had the ship in first-rate order when the commander went on board with his party; and as there was nothing for him to do, Christy devoted himself to the entertainment of his friends. The ladies with their escorts went all over the steamer again; the commander and Paul opened their staterooms for their examination, and Charley Graines showed them that of the first assistant engineer in the steerage.

"But you have a whole cabin to yourself, Christy," said Bertha, after she looked into all the other rooms.

"I have the honor to be the commander of the ship," replied Christy lightly. "I have two state-rooms, so that if I had the happiness to relieve a forlorn maiden from captivity on board of one of the enemy's vessels, as I did in your case, Bertha, I should have a better apartment to offer her than I had then."

The first half of the afternoon passed away all too soon for those who were to sail on the tide, and those who were to return to Bonnydale. The commander took leave of his parents, his sister, and Bertha in his cabin, where Paul passed through the same ordeal with Miss Florry. The navy-yard tender was alongside; and the ladies were assisted on board of her by the officers, while the seamen under the direction of Mr. Makepeace were heaving up the anchor.

"Cable up and down, sir," reported the second lieutenant.

This was the signal for the departure of the tender; and another hasty adieu followed, when the commander and the chief engineer hastened to the deck. The men forward had suspended their labor when the cable was up and down. The commander gave the order to weigh the anchor. The tide was still on the flood, and the head of the ship was pointed very nearly in the direction she was to sail.

"Anchor aweigh, sir!" reported Mr. Makepeace.

"Strike one bell, Mr. Baskirk," said Christy; and the order was repeated to the quartermaster who was conning the wheel.

The screw of the St. Regis began to turn, and she went ahead very slowly. The tender was a short distance from her, and all the ladies were waving their handkerchiefs with all their might; and their signals were returned, not only by Christy and Paul, but by all the officers on deck. The seamen could not comfortably "hold in," and they saluted the tender with three rousing cheers, for they knew that the family of their young commander were on board of her.

The little steamer followed the ship till she had passed the Battery, a repetition of the former salute, and then the tender sheered off, and went up North River, the ship proceeding on her course for the scene of her future exploits. The parting of Christy with his father, mother, and sister had been less sad than on former occasions; for they believed, whether with good reason or not, that the son, brother, and lover was to be exposed to less peril than usual.

Christy had received his sealed orders on board from an officer sent specially to deliver them to him in person; and he was instructed to open the envelope off Cape Henlopen. At six o'clock the St. Regis was off Sandy Hook. Four bells, which was the signal to the engine room to go ahead at full speed, had been sounded as soon as the ship had passed through the Narrows.

After the young commander had taken his supper, solitary and alone in his great cabin, he went on deck. No one shared his spacious apartment with him, and he was literally alone in his glory. But he did not object to his solitude, for he had enough to think of; and though he did not betray it in his expression, he was in a state of excitement, for what young fellow, even if "fully developed before he was twenty-one," could have helped being exhilarated when he found himself in command of such an exceptionally fine and fast ship as the St. Regis.

When he went on deck, for he seemed to need more air than usual to support the immense amount of internal life that was stirring his being, he met Paul Vápoor coming up from the ward room, where he messed with seven other officers.

"I hope you are feeling very well, Captain Passford," said Paul, as he touched his cap to the commander, for all familiarities were suspended unless when they were alone; and habit generally banished them even then.

"As well as usual, Mr. Vápoor," replied Christy. "How do you find the engine?"

"In excellent condition, Captain. It was thoroughly overhauled at the yard, boilers and machinery, and I have examined it down to the minutest details."

"I have an idea that our speed will be more in demand than our fighting strength on this cruise," added Christy.

"We are ready for speed in the engine room. The coal that remained on board on the arrival of the ship at the yard was very bad; but it has all been taken out, and our bunkers are filled with the best that could be had, the master-machinist informed me yesterday," replied the chief engineer. "I don't believe she could overhaul the *Bellevite*, for I am of the opinion that she is the fastest sea-going steamer in the navy."

"I don't think we shall find any blockade-runner that can run away from the *Bellevite*; for she has overhauled every one she chased off Mobile Bay, and made a prize of her. I am to open my orders off Henlopen, and then we shall know what our work is to be."

"About eight hours from Sandy Hook, as we are running now," added Paul.

"I am very impatient to read my orders, and I shall be called at one o'clock for that purpose," added Christy, as he began to plank the deck on the weather side.

The wind was from the north-west, and quite fresh. The men had had their suppers, and he ordered Mr. Baskirk to make sail. The *St. Regis* was bark rigged, and could spread a large surface of canvas. He desired to test the qualities of his crew; and in a short time everything was drawing. Christy "turned in" at nine o'clock; but he was excited, and he had not slept a wink when he was called at the hour he had indicated.

CHAPTER XXVIII

OFF THE COAST OF NORTH CAROLINA

Having assured himself that the ship was fully up with Cape Henlopen, Christy retired to his cabin, and still "alone in his glory," he broke the seal of the official envelope. He was to cruise outside of the blockaders, and report to the flag-officer when opportunity presented. Just then it was believed that Richmond, which received all its foreign supplies from Wilmington, could not long hold out if it was captured; and the Secretary of the Navy was giving special attention to the forts which protected it.

It was evident to the young commander that he was not to rust in inactivity, as had been the case of late off Mobile Bay, and a wide field of operations was open to him. His instructions were minute, but they did not confine his ship to the immediate vicinity of the mouth of the Cape Fear River. It was evident that the speed of the *St. Regis* had been an important factor in framing the secret orders.

If a blockade-runner eluded or outsailed the vessels of the fleet near the coast, the *St. Regis* was expected to "pick her up." On the other hand, the fastest of the vessels were sent out farther from the shore, and the ship was expected to support them. Christy realized that he should be called upon to exercise his judgment in many difficult situations, and he could only hope that he should be equal to such occasions.

"Good-morning, Captain Passford," said Paul Vápoor, saluting him on the quarter-deck. "I hope you slept well in your brief watch below."

"I did not sleep a wink, I was so anxious to read my orders. But I know them now, and I feel as cool as an arctic iceberg. I shall sleep when I turn in again."

"Well, where are we going, Captain, if it is no longer a secret?" asked the engineer.

"It is not a secret now; and we are to cruise off the mouth of the Cape Fear River," replied the commander, as he proceeded to give the information more in detail.

"We are not likely to have any hot work then if we are only to chase blockade-runners," added Paul.

"Probably we can render greater service to our country in this manner than in any other way, or we should not have been sent to this quarter," said Christy, with a long gape.

Paul saw that his friend was sleepy, and he bade him good-night. The commander went to his stateroom, and was soon fast asleep, from which he did not wake till eight o'clock in the morning. When he went on deck the ship was carrying all sail. The second lieutenant had the deck, and he asked him what speed the steamer was making.

"The last log showed seventeen knots an hour," replied Mr. Makepeace.

"I hope you slept well, Captain Passford," said the chief engineer, saluting him at this minute.

"I slept like a log till eight bells this morning," replied Christy.

"Mr. Makepeace reports the last log at seventeen knots," continued Paul. "But the ship is not making revolutions enough per hour for more than fifteen, for I have got the hang of her running now. The wind is blowing half a gale, and the canvas is giving her two knots."

No events transpired on board worthy a special chronicle during the day. The men were drilled in various exercises, and gave excellent satisfaction to their officers. The next morning the *St. Regis* was off Cape Hatteras, and though it is a greater bugbear than it generally deserves, it gave the ship a taste of its quality. The wind had hauled around to the south-west, and was blowing a lively gale. The sails had been furled in the morning watch, and off the cape the course had been changed to south-west.

Just before eight bells in the afternoon watch, when the ship was making fifteen knots an hour, the lookout man on the top-gallant forecastle called out "Sail, ho!" and all eyes were directed ahead.

"Where away?" demanded the officer of the deck sharply.

"Close on the lee bow, sir!" returned the lookout.

The commander was in his cabin studying the chart of the coast of North Carolina; but the report was promptly sent to him, and he hastened on deck.

"Another sail on the port bow, sir!" shouted a seaman who had been sent to the fore cross trees with a spy-glass.

"What are they?" asked Christy, maintaining his dignity in spite of the excitement which had begun to invade his being.

"Both steamers, sir," replied the officer of the deck.

"The head one is a blockade-runner, I know by the cut of her jib, sir," shouted the man with the glass on the cross trees.

All the glasses on board were immediately directed to the two vessels. Christy could plainly make out the steamer that had the lead. She was a piratical-looking craft, setting very low in the water, with two smoke stacks, both raking at the same angle as her two masts. The wind was not fair, and she could not carry sail; but the "bone in her teeth" indicated that she was going through the water at great speed.

"A gun from the chaser, sir!" shouted the man aloft.

The cloud of smoke was seen, and the report of the gun reached the ears of all on board the St. Regis.

"There is no mistaking what all that means, Mr. Baskirk," said Christy when he had taken in the situation.

At the first announcement of the sail ahead, the commander had ordered the chief engineer to get all the speed he could out of the ship. The smoke was pouring out of the smoke stacks, for the St. Regis had two, and presently she indicated what was going on in the fire room by beginning to shake a little.

"Another sail dead ahead, sir!" called the man on the fore cross trees.

The glasses were directed to the third sail, and she proved to be a steamer, also pursuing the one first seen. It was soon evident to the observers that the blockade-runner, for the man aloft who had so defined her was entirely correct, was gaining all the time on her pursuers. If she had nothing but her two pursuers to fear, her troubles were really over.

Both of the Federal ships were firing at the chase; but they might as well have spared their powder and shot, for they could not reach her into at least a quarter of a mile. The wind was still at the south-west, and already there were signs of fog. The rakish steamer had probably come from the Bermudas, where she must have obtained a skilful pilot, for without one she would have had no chances at all; and she stood boldly on her course as though she had nothing to fear on account of the navigation.

"What are we going to have for weather, Mr. Makepeace?" asked Christy, after a long look to windward.

"It looks a little nasty off towards the shore, sir," replied the second lieutenant. "I should say it was going to be just what that pirate would like to have."

"Why do you call her a pirate?" asked the commander with a smile. "Probably she is not armed."

"I call her a pirate because she looks like one; but I think a blockade-runner is a hundred degrees better than a pirate; and our British friends plainly look upon them as doing a legitimate business. I rather think that highflyer will run into a fog before she gets to the shore."

"She has nothing to fear from the two steamers that are chasing her," added Christy. "We are to have a finger in this pie."

"No doubt of that; and I hope we shall make a hole through her before she gets to the coast."

"She is not more than a mile and a half from us now, and our midship gun is good for more than that; but I don't think it is advisable to waste our strength in firing at her just yet."

"That's just my way of thinking," said Mr. Makepeace, with something like enthusiasm in his manner; and he was evidently delighted to find that the commander knew what he was about, as he would have phrased it.

"The rakish steamer seems to be headed to the west south-west, and she is exactly south-east of us. We can see that she is sailing very fast; but how fast has not yet been demonstrated. How high should you rate her speed, Mr. Makepeace?"

"I should say, Captain Passford, that she was making eighteen knots an hour. She is kicking up a big fuss about it; and I'll bet a long-nine cigar that she is doing her level best."

"I don't believe she is doing any better than that," added Christy. "Make the course south south-west, Mr. Baskirk."

"South south-west, sir," replied the executive officer.

The course of the ship was changed, and Christy planked the deck from the quarter-deck to the fore-castle in order to obtain the best view he could of the relative positions of the St. Regis, the chase, and the two steamers astern of her. The blockade-runner showed no colors; and no flag could have been of any service to her. She appeared still to be very confident that she was in no danger, evidently relying wholly upon her great speed to carry her through to her destination.

The "highflyer," as the second lieutenant called her every time he alluded to the blockade-runner, and the two pursuers, occupied the three angles of a triangle. The latter were both sending needless cannon balls in the direction of the chase, but not one of them came anywhere near her.

On the other hand, the highflyer and the St. Regis formed two angles of another triangle, the third of which was the

point where they would come together, if nothing occurred to derange their relative positions. By this time Paul Vapoor had developed all the power of the ship's boilers, and the screw was making more revolutions a minute than her highest record, which was found in a book the former chief engineer had left in his stateroom.

"I don't think that highflyer quite understands the situation, Mr. Baskirk," said the commander, as he observed that she did not vary her course, and stood on to her destination, apparently with perfect confidence.

"I don't think she does, sir," replied the first lieutenant. "She can see the American flag at the peak, and she knows what we are. Doubtless she is making the mistake of believing that all the Federal ships are slow coaches."

"Heave the log, Mr. Baskirk," added Christy, and he walked forward.

It was a matter of angles when it was desirable to come down to a close calculation, and the young commander found his trigonometry very useful, and fortunately not forgotten. With an apparatus for taking ranges he had procured the bearing of the highflyer accurately as soon as the last course was given out, perhaps half an hour before. He took the range again, and found there was a slight difference, which was, however, enough to show that the form of the triangle had been disturbed.

Both ships were headed for the same point, and the sides of the triangle were equal at the first observation. Now the St. Regis's side of the figure was perceptibly shorter than its opposite. This proved to the captain that his ship had gained on the other. The two chasers had been losing on the chase for the last half-hour, and Christy regarded them as out of the game.

There was some appearance of fog in the south-west, and no land could be seen in any direction. For another hour the St. Regis drove ahead furiously on her course, and the highflyer was doing the same. The two steamers, regardless of the speed of either, were necessarily approaching each other as long as they followed the two sides of the triangle. They had come within half a mile the one of the other, when the commander gave the order to beat to quarters. Ten minutes later the frame of the ship shook under the discharge of the big Parrot. The shot went over the chase; but she promptly changed her course to the southward.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE FIRST PRIZE OF THE ST. REGIS

The shot from the Parrot passed between the funnel and the mainmast of the chase, as judged by the splash of the ball in the water just beyond her. It had come near enough to the mark to wake up the captain of the highflyer. He appeared to believe that the pursuer from the northward had simply cut him off by approaching on the shorter side of the triangle, and that all he had to do was to escape to the southward, evidently satisfied that no steamer in the Federal navy could overhaul him in a fair and square race.

"Now comes the tug of war," said Mr. Baskirk, when the St. Regis had been headed for the chase.

"The game will not last all day," added Christy. "If I owned that highflyer, I should not employ her present captain to sail her for me. He is overloaded with a blind confidence, and he has made a very bad use of his opportunities. If I had been in command of that steamer I should have made her course so as to run away from all three of my pursuers as soon as I made them out. It is six o'clock now, and I should have got far enough into the darkness to give them all the slip, and gone into Wilmington on a new track."

"Her captain appears to trust entirely to his heels, and to look with contempt upon anything like manoeuvring," replied the first lieutenant.

"But we must finish him up before the darkness enables him to give us the slip. I have no doubt we could knock her all to pieces with the midship gun in the next fifteen minutes; but if she can make eighteen knots an hour, which we seem to be all agreed that she can do, she will not be a useless addition to the United States Navy, and it would be a pity to smash her up, for she is a good-looking craft. We are gaining two knots an hour on her, and Mr. Vapoor is keeping things warm in the engine and fire rooms."

"That is taking an economical view of the subject," added Mr. Baskirk, laughing at the commander's utilitarian views.

"If we continue to fire into her, we must swing to every shot we send, and that would take so much from our speed," argued Christy. "We are as sure of her as though we already had her in our clutches. There are plenty of officers in the navy who would like to command her when she is altered over into a cruiser."

"You are quite right, Captain Passford; and there are some of them on the deck of the St. Regis at this moment," said the first lieutenant, laughing.

"Heave the log, Mr. Baskirk," said the captain.

The report from the master, who attended to this duty, was soon reported to the executive officer, who transmitted it to the commander.

"Rising twenty knots, sir," said he.

"That will do," replied Christy. "That is enough to enable us to overhaul the chase within half an hour."

Within fifteen minutes it could be seen that the St. Regis was rapidly gaining on the Raven, for the latter was near enough now to enable the pursuers to read the name on her stern, and the captain of the highflyer could not help realizing that he had not the slightest chance to escape. The chaser was within the eighth of a mile of her, and the result was only a matter of minutes.

"She has stopped her screw, sir!" reported the third lieutenant in the waist, passing the word from the second lieutenant on the forecastle.

"She has stopped her screw, Captain," repeated Mr. Baskirk.

"That means mischief," replied Christy, as he directed his gaze to the Raven.

"She is getting out two boats on her port side!" shouted Mr. Makepeace from the top-gallant forecastle; and the report was repeated till it reached the commander, though he had heard it before it was officially communicated to him. "That means more mischief."

"Ready to stop and back her!" he cried through the speaking-tube to the chief engineer.

"All ready, sir," replied Paul.

"Some of these blockade-runners are desperate characters, and that captain intends either to burn or sink his ship," continued Christy, with a trifle of excitement in his manner, though he looked as dignified as a college professor in the presence of his class.

The St. Regis was still rushing with unabated speed towards her prey, and a minute or two more would decide whether or not she was to be a prize or a blazing hulk on the broad ocean.

"Lay him aboard on the port side, Mr. Baskirk!"

"The two boats are there, Captain, as you can see," replied the executive officer.

"Board on the port side, Mr. Baskirk!" repeated the commander very decidedly, and somewhat sharply; and at the same time he rang one bell on the gong to slow down the engine. "Board on the port side, Mr. Baskirk!" he repeated again. "Mr. Drake, have the steam pump and long hose ready to extinguish fire!"

Whether the captain of the Raven had ordered his men to scuttle the steamer, or to fire her in several places, Christy could not know; and he did not much care, for he was ready to meet either emergency. The St. Regis was bearing down on her victim with a reduced speed. The men forward and in the waist were all ready with the grappling irons to fasten to her, and the boarders were all prepared to leap upon her deck, though no fighting was expected.

The bow of the St. Regis was near the stem of the Raven, and Christy rang one bell to stop her, and then two to back her. Then he sprang upon the starboard rail of the ship where he could observe his men as they boarded the other steamer.

"What are you about, sir?" yelled a man on the quarter-deck of the Raven, who appeared to be the captain of the vessel, in a rude voice. "Don't you see that you are crushing my two boats and the men in them?"

"I did not order the boats or the men there," replied Christy calmly, and in a gentle tone, for the captain of the blockade-runner was not ten feet from him.

"I did," added the captain of the prize, for such she really was by this time.

"Then you are responsible for them," said the commander of the St. Regis.

"Do you mean to murder them?" gasped the other captain furiously.

"If they are killed you have sent them to their death!"

But the commander had no time to argue the matter with the irate captain. He had rung three bells, and the ship was backing at full speed. The momentum had not been sufficiently checked to stop her, and the two boats were crushed to splinters. The seamen who were in them saw what was coming, and they seized the ropes which had been dropped to them by the boarders on the rail at the command of the captain, who did not wish them to be sacrificed to the madness of their commander, and they climbed to the chains of the Federal ship with the aid of the boarders.

"Lay her aboard!" shouted Christy as soon as the headway of the ship had been checked, and the grappling irons had been made fast.

The willing and active seamen poured from the rails to the deck of the prize, their officers leading the way. The main hatch had been removed and a light smoke was coming up through the opening. The hose from the steam pump of the ship had been drawn on board, and the master was in charge of it. At the command of the officers the men leaped below at all the openings in the deck, and it was found that she had been fired in half a dozen places.

In most of them the combustibles had only been lighted a few moments before, and they had not become well-kindled. Except at the main hatch, the men extinguished the flames with their hands and feet, and a stream from the hose put out the one amidships. The hoseman shut off the water, and the ship's company of the St. Regis were in full possession of the prize.

"Anything more to be done, Captain Bristler?" asked the mate, as he approached the commander.

"Nothing more can be done, Mr. Victor," replied the captain, who appeared to be overwhelmed with wrath at the unexpected termination of his voyage. "It is too late to scuttle her, and that vampire of a Yankee has smashed both of our boats into kindling wood. We did not begin the end soon enough."

But the beginning had evidently ended sooner than had been expected, and the Raven was the prize of the St. Regis. Christy still stood on the rail, and saw that all his orders had been executed to the letter. Mr. Makepeace had sent the carpenter and his gang into the hold, or as far as they could get, to ascertain if the steamer had been scuttled. It could not have been done without breaking out a portion of the cargo, and this would have been a work of no little time. The carpenter reported that everything was all right below the deck of the Raven, and the commander on the rail was so informed.



"THE STREAM STRUCK THE COMMANDER WITH FORCE." Page 331.

"This is a heathenish outrage, Captain, if a young cub like you can be the commander of a ship like that!" exclaimed Captain Bristler, foaming with rage over the result of the affair; and he interlarded his speech with all the oaths in the vocabulary of a pirate.

"Captain Bristler, when you address me as one gentleman should another, I will talk with you; but not till then," replied Christy with dignity.

"A gentleman!" gasped the other captain. "You tried to murder half a dozen of my men! You are a Yankee pirate! That's what you are!"

We cannot soil this page with even a description of the oaths and curses with which he mixed his language. Christy was disgusted with him; and while he still continued his impious ravings, he sent a midshipman with an order to Mr. Makepeace who was in charge of the hose pipe on board of the Raven. While Captain Bristler was pouring forth anathemas that made the blood of the loyal officers run cold in their veins, the man who held the hose pipe directed it to him, and the water was turned on.

The stream struck the commander with force enough to knock him down. But the bath was not suspended on that account, and it was continued till it had extinguished the fire of profanity. Christy made a sign, and the steam-pump ceased to work. The mate rushed to the assistance of the captain, put him on his feet, and was conducting him towards the companion, seeking a retreat in his cabin; but he was silent, perhaps from his inability to speak.

"Stop, Mr. Victor!" called Christy to the mate. "I cannot trust that man to remain on board of the Raven"; and at the same time he directed Mr. Baskirk to have him arrested and put in irons, if he was violent.

"But this gentleman is the commander of the steamer," interposed the mate.

"I don't care what he is; if he were a gentleman, as you call him, I would treat him like one; but he is a brute, and I shall treat him as such," replied Christy, as two of his men, attended by two more, laid hands on the dripping captain. "You may send his clothes on board of this ship, Mr. Victor. Have him committed to the brig, Master-at-Arms."

There was no appeal from the decision of Commander Passford, for his authority was supreme. The refractory commander was committed to the brig of the St. Regis, and his own steward was sent to him with his clothes, with order to exchange his wet garments for dry ones.

"Sail, ho!" shouted the man on the cross trees, who had remained there during the scene which had just transpired, while the commander was descending from the rail.

Possibly the lookout man had been more attentive to the proceedings on the deck of the Raven than to his duty, for the sail must have been in sight some little time before he reported it. The two steamers, which had been vainly chasing the prize, were now within half a mile of the St. Regis.

CHAPTER XXX

ANOTHER SAILING CONTEST INAUGURATED

Although the Raven had not yet been disposed of, the ship's company were immediately interested in the vessel which the lookout had tardily announced; and the vigor with which he had given the hail to the deck indicated that he was conscious of the defect.

"Where away?" returned Mr. Baskirk; though it was a superfluous question, for all on the deck who cast their eyes to the westward could see the sail.

"On the starboard, sir."

Commander Passford was already examining the distant sail with his glass, as were all the officers who were not otherwise occupied. There were fog banks in that direction; and the craft might have suddenly loomed up out of them, though this did not appear to have been the case. The sail was too far off to be made out with anything like distinctness. It was a steamer headed to the east, and the quantity of smoke that trailed in the air above indicated that she had been liberal in the use of coal in her furnaces.

As the sail was diminishing her distance from the St. Regis, Christy turned his attention again to the prize alongside his ship. The two chasers that had been pursuing the Raven, neither of which appeared to be capable of making more than fourteen knots an hour, were now almost within hailing distance.

The Raven was a steamer of nearly the size of the St. Regis. She was not armed, and had a ship's company of about thirty men, including officers. Her cargo was miscellaneous in its character, consisting of such merchandise as was most needed in the Confederacy, especially in the army. A watch had been set below on board of her to extinguish fires if any more appeared; but this peril had been effectually removed. The attempt to destroy the steamer and her cargo looked like malice and revenge, and some of the officers of the ship thought it ought to be regarded and treated as an act of war.

To burn, scuttle, blow up, run ashore, or otherwise destroy a blockade-runner after her situation has become absolutely hopeless can result only to the benefit of the enemy, since it deprived the Federals of the property that would otherwise be confiscated under international law. But blockade-runners are regarded as neutrals unless proved to be Americans, in which case they are subject to the penalties of treason, and the forfeiture of the ship and cargo is the only punishment.

Christy had never been able to regard this class of persons with much respect, for they appeared to be in league with the enemy. Captain Bristler had not only attempted to break through the blockade, which he and many of his countrymen regarded as a legitimate business; but he had attempted to burn his vessel. He had got out his boats; and when she was wrapped in flames, he evidently expected the Federal victor to pick up himself and his ship's company, and treat the whole of them as though they had not been, at least constructively if not really, in the service of the enemy.

"The cold water applied to the commander of the Raven has had a good effect upon him," said the first lieutenant, as he touched his cap on the quarter-deck of the St. Regis. "He sends word that he regrets his conduct, and asks to be released from confinement."

"He has behaved himself more like a swine than a gentleman; but I have no ill-will towards him, for I regarded him as beneath my contempt," replied Captain Passford. "I can understand his condition, for of course he is suffering under a tremendous disappointment; but that does not atone for his brutality."

"Certainly not, sir. He was running away from the two blockaders that were pursuing him, and had beaten them both. He was absolutely sure of his escape till he encountered the fleet in shore when the St. Regis came upon the scene," added Mr. Baskirk.

"Her captain had no particular respect for our steamer when he saw her, and kept on his course as if in contempt of her, till we dropped a shot near him. If he had headed to the south when he first made out the St. Regis, he would have improved his chances, but he would only have given us a longer chase. Let Captain Bristler out of the brig, Mr. Baskirk; we will see if he can behave himself any better; but I will not allow any man to swear at me if I can help myself."

A little later Captain Bristler came on deck in charge of the ship's corporal. He was dressed in his best clothes, and his personal appearance had been greatly improved.

"Captain Passford," said he, raising his cap to the commander, "under the influence of my awful disappointment at the failure of the Raven to outsail you, I was rude and ungentlemanly, and some of my forecastle habits came back to me. I beg your pardon; and I shall show you that I know how to be a gentleman, if I did forget myself for a time."

"That is sufficient, and I accept your apology, Captain Bristler," replied Christy with abundant dignity.

"I did not believe there was a ship in the Federal navy that could outsail the Raven, for she was built more for speed than for cargo," continued the captain of the prize.

"The St. Regis is not the only one that can outsail the Raven. I have served in a steamer that could beat her four knots an hour in an emergency," added Christy.

"What steamer is that, Captain?" asked Captain Bristler.

"That is not important, but it was the one that outsailed and captured the St. Regis when she had another name."

"Then your ship was a blockade-runner?"

"She was, and also a Confederate man-of-war; she was the Trafalgar."

"Ah! Then I know her very well; and the company owning the Raven, of which I am a member, offered nearly double what it cost to build the Raven for her," replied Captain Bristler. "I can understand now how I happened to be so thoroughly beaten in the last chase. She was built for a yacht, and no money was spared upon her."

By this time the two steamers that had first chased the Raven had stopped their screws, and a boat was on its way from each of them. The two cutters came up to the gangway, and the officer in each ascended to the deck. Christy permitted the captain of the Raven to take care of himself, while he waited for the visitors to present themselves.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Amblen!" exclaimed Christy, as he extended his hand; for he recognized in the first officer the gentleman who had been his third lieutenant in the Bronx.

"I am delighted to see you again, Captain Passford," replied Lieutenant Amblen, for such was his present rank. "I am now the executive officer of the Muskegon. I have the pleasure of presenting to you Mr. Cartright, first lieutenant of the St. Croix."

"I am happy to meet you, Mr. Cartright."

"I have often heard of you, Captain Passford, and I am glad to see you in command of so fine and fast a steamer as the St. Regis, though I never heard of her before," added the executive officer of the St. Croix. "Of course you are aware that there is a steamer in sight to the westward of us."

"I am aware of it; and for that reason we should hasten our present business," replied Christy, as he glanced at the steamer in the distance and the trails of smoke astern of her. "I do not know who is the ranking officer here; and I have not yet reported to the admiral, for I took part in the chase from the moment of my arrival."

"You are a lieutenant"--Mr. Amblen began.

"A lieutenant-commander, if you please," interposed Christy with a smile.

"Then you are the ranking officer, Captain Passford, for both of the other commanders are lieutenants," added the executive officer of the Muskegon. "We are ready to transmit your orders to our superiors."

"My orders will depend somewhat upon the steamer astern of us; and if you will excuse me a few moments, I shall soon be ready to issue them," replied Christy, as he took his spy-glass from the brackets, and directed it to the approaching steamer from the west. "What do you make of her, Mr. Baskirk?"

The executive officer had been observing the steamer astern with his glass; and she was not more than four miles distant by this time.

"She is a large vessel, I judge, not less than a thousand tons. She has all sail set and drawing, and she seems to be making very rapid progress through the water," replied the first lieutenant. "But there are not less than three steamers pursuing her, though they are a long way astern of her."

"I make out the chasers, and I should judge that she is getting away from them," added Christy.

"The leading steamer is turning her head to the south!" exclaimed Mr. Baskirk, with no little excitement in his manner.

"I only wonder she has not done so before," added the commander, rejoining the officers of the other steamers. "I believe Captain Wright of the Muskegon outranks Captain Boyden of the St. Croix," he continued.

"He does, Captain Passford," replied Mr. Amblen.

"If you will excuse me a moment, I will write an order for him;" and Christy retired to his cabin for this purpose.

His communication directed Captain Wright to take possession of the Raven, and treat her precisely as though she were the prize of the Muskegon and her consort; and constructively she was concerned in the capture of the vessel, especially in the distribution of the prize-money. He added to the order the fact that what appeared to be a blockade-runner astern of his ship was outsailing her pursuers, and the St. Regis being a very fast steamer, his duty did not permit him to make any further delay in taking part in the chase.

With this order in the hands of Mr. Amblen, Christy took leave of the two officers and they departed in their boats. But

he was obliged to await the arrival of one or both of the blockaders before starting the screw, for he was not willing to leave any number of his crew in charge of the prize. While he was waiting, he wrote a letter to the acting admiral of the station, announcing his arrival, and copying into it the material portion of his orders from the department.

The Muskegon was the first to come alongside of the Raven, which she did on the starboard side. Captain Wright, crossing the deck of the Raven, presented himself to Captain Passford on the quarter-deck of the St. Regis; he was received with Christy's accustomed politeness, and the prize was handed over to him verbally, as it had been done before in writing.

Captain Wright began to compliment Captain Passford, with whose brilliant reputation he was already very familiar; but Christy interposed, declaring that he was in a great hurry, and could hear no more, if his orders were clearly understood. Mr. Baskirk had directed the recall of all the ship's company, with the exception of a master's mate, who was to remain on board to give any further information needed to the officers of the Muskegon, and to be a witness in New York at the prize court.

Captain Bristler and his effects were sent back to the Raven, the grappling irons and the fasts were cast off, and the St. Regis backed out from her position on the port side of the prize. During all this time Christy was very busy with his glass. As Mr. Baskirk had discovered, the leading steamer had three blockaders in chase of her. She was now headed to the south, having done so as soon as she saw the four vessels lying in her course.

"Make the course south-west by south, Mr. Baskirk," said the young commander, after he had brought his trigonometry into use again.

Then it became a very exciting question to ascertain which was the faster steamer of the two.

CHAPTER XXXI

A VICTORIOUS UNION

The fog was coming and going in the distance, and at times the land could be just discerned. In spite of the number and vigilance of the blockading fleet, several hundred blockade-runners had succeeded in making their way into Cape Fear River, though several hundred also had been captured, not to mention a very considerable number that had been run ashore or burned when escape became hopeless.

It was the policy of the Confederacy to send out vessels to prey upon the commerce of the United States. Some of them began their depredations without making a port in the South, and a few of the swift steamers that succeeded in getting into Mobile, Wilmington, and other safe places, were fitted out for the work of destruction. The fog that prevailed inshore was favorable to blockade-runners; and if there was a vessel of this character in Cape Fear River, the early morning had been such as to tempt her to try to make her way through the blockaders to sea.

"She is not one of the ordinary steamers that run in and out of the river," said Mr. Baskirk, while he and the commander were still watching the progress of the chase, and Paul Vapoor was warming up the engine as he had done before.

"She is larger than the *St. Regis*, but hardly equal in size to the *Bellevite*," added Christy. "She cannot draw more than twelve or fourteen feet of water, or she could not have come out through those shallow channels at the mouth of Cape Fear River. She seems to have the speed to run away from her pursuers; but probably not one of them can make fifteen knots an hour."

The three pursuers of the blockade-runner had changed their course when the chase did so; but it was already evident that they had no chance to overhaul her. They were still three miles astern of her, while the *St. Regis*, at sunset, was not more than three. Not a shot had been fired by any one of the steamers, and it would have been a waste of ammunition to do so.

"We are gaining on her," said Christy, half an hour later. "That steamer is making sixteen knots at least."

"If she has found out that we can outsail her, very likely she will count upon the darkness to enable her to give us the slip," suggested Mr. Baskirk.

"Mr. Vapoor has come to his bearings, and in another half hour we shall be within one mile of her. But I am afraid we shall not be able to settle this affair finally to-night," replied Christy.

The darkness gathered around the two ships, and none of the steamers in the distance could any longer be seen. The officers could just make out the steamer ahead, which still kept on her course. The midship gun was now brought into use, and a round shot was sent on its mission to her; but with little chance of hitting her in the increasing gloom, for the sky was obscured with clouds, and all the signs indicated fog during the night, which would be exceedingly favorable to the chase. A flash was seen in the distance, and then came the roar of a heavy gun.

"She is not merely a blockade-runner; for it appears now that she is an armed vessel, and has some heavy metal on board," said Christy.

"But no shot has come within hearing," added Mr. Baskirk. "Perhaps she only wished to inform us that she could bite as well as bark."

The *St. Regis* kept on her course for another hour. Christy was very anxious, for the chase was plainly a Confederate man-of-war, or a privateer; and if she escaped she might begin her work of destruction the very next day. At two bells in the first watch she could not be seen; but the commander kept on his course another half-hour, and then he ran into a fog.

The log indicated that the ship was making her best speed; and if the chase continued on her former course, she must have been within sight or hearing by this time. Christy peered through the gloom of the night and the fog, and listened for any sound. He kept up a tremendous thinking all the time, and acted as though he was in doubt.

"Make the course east, Mr. Baskirk," said he, calling the executive officer.

"East, Captain Passford?" interrogated the lieutenant; and if he tried to conceal the astonishment he felt, his tones failed him.

"East, Mr. Baskirk," repeated the commander.

The course was given to the quartermaster at the wheel; and the *St. Regis* came about gradually, and stood off in the direction indicated. Christy had a theory of his own, in regard to the probable movements of the chase, and he desired to be solely responsible for the result: therefore he kept his plan to himself.

"Call all hands, Mr. Baskirk, but without any noise at all," continued the commander, while the ship was still driving

ahead at the rate of twenty knots an hour.

The ship's company silently took their stations, and no one on the deck spoke a loud word, though no order to this effect had been given. All the white cotton cloth that could be found on board was brought to the waist, where it was torn into strips about three inches wide, and two feet in length. These two pieces were distributed among the ship's company, with the order to tie them around the left arm, above the elbow.

The fog was deep and dense; and the lookouts, who were stationed on the top-gallant forecastle and aloft, could not see a ship's length ahead. Christy had gone forward, and made his way out on the bowsprit, in order to get as far as possible from the noise of the engine. He listened there for a full half-hour, and while the ship had made ten miles.

"Starboard a little, Mr. Baskirk," he called to the executive officer, who had followed him forward.

"Starboard, sir," repeated the officer, as he sent the order aft.

"Port! Port!" exclaimed the commander with more energy.

The orders were passed rapidly through the line of officers till they reached the quartermaster conning the wheel. The captain continued to listen for another quarter of an hour.

"Steady!" he shouted aloud, and left his position on the bowsprit to take another on the top-gallant forecastle. "We are close aboard of her, Mr. Baskirk! Have your grappling irons ready! Lay her aboard as we come alongside!"

By this time all hands forward could see the dark hull of the enemy. The *St. Regis* was rapidly running alongside of her, for the chase did not seem to be going at her former speed; and no doubt her commander was busy working out some manoeuvre he had devised to escape from his pursuers. The boarders threw their grappling-irons, and fastened to the side of the enemy.

The drum was heard on board of her, beating to quarters; but it was too late, for the boarders were springing over her rail. Christy heard one bell on the gong of the other ship, and instantly made the same signal on his own. It was evidently a surprise to the enemy, but the ship's company were promptly rallied. The enemy was overwhelmed in a few minutes, though not till several had fallen on both sides. The captain seemed to have been too busy with his manoeuvre to escape to attend to present conditions.

While the commander of the *St. Regis* remained on the deck, or even on the top-gallant forecastle, the clang of his own engine prevented him from hearing any other sounds; and the enemy appeared not to have seen the ship till she emerged from the fog. The crew of the prize, as she was by this time, were all driven below, and the victory was complete.

"Do you surrender?" demanded Mr. Baskirk of the officer who appeared to be the captain.

"There appears to be no alternative," replied the commander very gloomily: and he did not attempt to explain how his misfortune had come upon him. He had counted upon the fog to insure his salvation; but it appeared to have been the primary cause of his capture, though he certainly had not been as vigilant as a commander should be. Christy came on board, and Mr. Baskirk introduced him.

"I am glad to see you, Captain Passford," said the commander as a matter of form. "I was absolutely sure that you would chase me to the westward, sir; and I had not the slightest expectation of encountering you on this course."

"I took my chances of finding you in this direction rather than in the opposite one," replied Christy. "It appears that I correctly interpreted your strategy, though I dared not even mention my plan to my executive officer."

"I have fallen into my own trap, and being captured as I was, is disgraceful to me," added Captain Winnlock, as his name proved to be; and the steamer was the *Watauga*.

Christy's opinion of the capture did not differ from that of the commander of the prize, but he made no remark upon it. The *Watauga* was loaded with cotton, which was to be sent to England from Nassau, while the steamer was to go on a cruise in search of defenceless merchantmen of the United States.

"I have a passenger on board, Captain Passford, who bears the same name that you do, and possibly he may be one of your relatives, though he is by no means a Federalist," said Captain Winnlock.

"Indeed! May I ask his name?" replied Christy very much surprised.

"Colonel Homer Passford, sir."

"My uncle again!"

Mr. French, the master, had already been appointed prize-master; and while Mr. Baskirk was making the arrangements for her departure for New York, Christy accompanied the captain to the cabin. Colonel Passford had learned the fate of the *Watauga*; and he sat at a table, his face covered with both hands.

"I have brought down to see you, Colonel Passford, your nephew," said the commander; and his uncle sprang to his feet, and gazed at his brother's son as though he had been a spectre.

"Christy!" he exclaimed; but he could say no more, and groaned in his anguish.

"He is a lieutenant-commander now, and captain of the steamer St. Regis, formerly the Tallahatchie. The Watauga is now unfortunately the prize of his ship," added Captain Winnlock, as he retired from the cabin.

"Captured again by my nephew," groaned the unhappy colonel. "I believe you are the emissary of the Evil One, sent to torment me."

"I am sent by the opposite Power, Uncle Homer," replied Christy very gently. "But I am more astonished to see you here than you ought to be to see me, for I go wherever the fortunes of war carry me."

"I was still trying to serve my country in her misfortunes. I raised another cargo of cotton among my friends, and it is now on board of this vessel. It has fallen into your hands, where most of my cotton has gone."

The victorious commander inquired for his aunt and cousins in the South, and informed him that his mother and sister were very well. He added that he should be obliged to send him to New York in the prize, and insured him a brotherly welcome at Bonnydale. He parted with his uncle pitying him very much; but he had chosen for himself which side he would take in the great conflict.

The Watauga had a crew of sixty men, who were to be re-enforced at Nassau, and a large prize-crew had to be sent with her; but French returned with his force in three weeks, and the St. Regis was again fully manned. Christy received a letter from the flag-officer, who commended him very highly for the service he had rendered; and the St. Regis was continued on her present station through the remainder of the summer, and during the winter on the outer limit of the blockaders.

She made several captures, though all of them without any fighting, for no more Confederate men-of-war, actually or intended as such, came out of Wilmington, or attempted to enter the Cape Fear; but he sent a large number of blockade-runners, loaded with cotton coming out, or with supplies for the Confederate armies going in, to New York.

One day in August a large steamer was reported to the commander of the St. Regis as coming from the South. Christy was all ready for a battle if she proved to be a Confederate cruiser; but to his great joy she turned out to be the Bellevite. The ocean was as smooth as glass, and she came alongside the St. Regis. The young commander hastened on board of her, followed by his chief engineer.

Captain Breaker actually hugged him amid the repeated cheers and applause of the ship's company, and Paul Vápoor was received with hardly less enthusiasm. Christy had to shake hands for the next half-hour.

"But how do you and the Bellevite happen to be in this latitude, Captain Breaker?" asked the young commander when he had an opportunity to speak.

"Haven't you heard the news, Captain Passford?" demanded the captain of the Bellevite.

"What news? We don't get the news so far off shore," replied Christy.

"There was no farther use for my ship in the Gulf, and I am sent here to report to the flag-officer. Admiral Farragut turned his attention to Mobile Bay with his fleet; and I gave him the information you procured for me. The Bellevite took part in the battle, and it was the hottest action in which I was ever engaged. My ship was badly cut up in her upper works, but she came out all right."

"This is glorious news, Captain Breaker!" exclaimed Christy, waving his hat, whereupon the tars in the waist broke out in a volley of cheers.

"The carpenters have been busy since the action, and the Bellevite is as good as new," added her commander, as he proceeded to tell the story of the great battle, to which Christy and Paul listened with breathless interest. "Fort Morgan and Fort Gaines surrendered, and the bay is open to our ships."

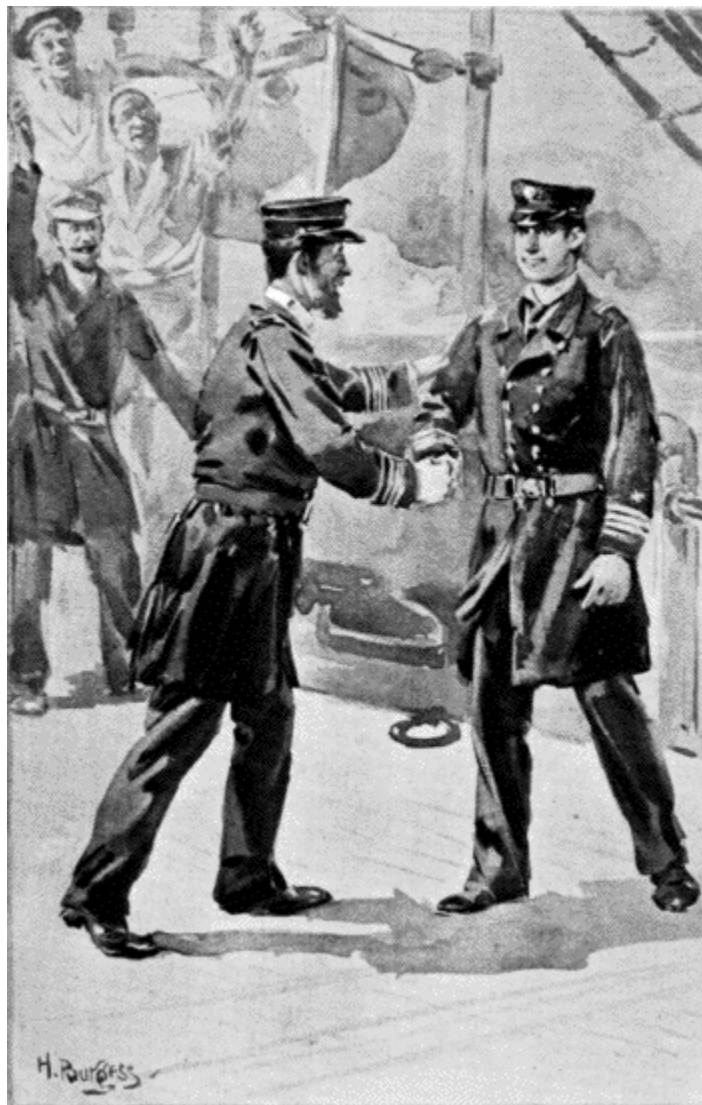
The narrative has gone into history, and it is not necessary to repeat it. The Bellevite reported to the flag officer; and as her great speed fitted her for duty like that in which the St. Regis was engaged, she was employed as a cruiser till the end of the war, though she and Christy's ship took part in the bombardment and capture of Fort Fisher in January. The end was rapidly approaching. The Bellevite continued to cruise until the end of the war, announced to the world by the surrender of General Lee.

Among the steamers ordered up the James River were the Bellevite and the St. Regis, and the sailors of both were among those who put out the fire which threatened to consume the city of Richmond. Christy saw the President there, and was presented to him, which he will remember as long as he lives. In due time the St. Regis was ordered to the navy yard at New York. As early as possible he hastened to Bonnydale, where all the family and Bertha Pembroke were waiting for him. It was a sort of united embrace which welcomed him; and all the day and half the night were given to the narrative of the young commander's adventures. They were all supremely happy.

Peace had come, and the whole North was ringing with the rejoicings of the people. Thousands upon thousands had laid down their lives in the army and the navy in their devotion to their country, and were laid in graves far from home and kindred, or committed to the silent depths of the ocean.

They had won Peace and A Victorious Union.

It was far otherwise in the South, though Peace spread her mantle over the whole united nation. Her people had fought valiantly, and made sacrifices which no one beyond their borders can understand or appreciate. If the devotion and self-sacrifice of the South, the bravery and determination with which her sons fought, and the heroism with which they suffered and died, were the only considerations, they deserved success. But thirty years of peace have made the South more prosperous than ever before, and her people enjoy the benefits of the Victorious Union.



"AMID THE CHEERS AND APPLAUSE OF THE SHIP'S COMPANY." Page 356.

Homer Passford, like thousands of others in the South, was a ruined man at the close of the war. He had lost his plantation, and he and his family had nowhere to lay their heads. But he was a true Southerner, and he did not regret or repent of what he had done for what he called his country. His brother chartered a steamer to bring the family to Bonnydale, but only for a friendly visit. The reunion was a happy one; and neither brother was disposed to talk politics, and those of the North did not indulge in a single "I told you so!" in the presence of their defeated relatives. They were the same as they had been before the war; and it is needless to say that Horatio generously helped out Homer financially; and now he is as wealthy and prosperous as ever before.

When it came to disposing of the vessels that were no longer needed for the navy, Christy bought the *St. Regis*, for in a moderate way compared with his father he was a rich man. On the day he was twenty-one years old, Bertha Pembroke became his wife; and Paul Vapoor became the husband of Florry Passford on the same occasion. Over a year had elapsed since the war, and the *St. Regis* had been entirely reconstructed in her interior, and furnished in the most elegant manner.

Her first mission was a voyage to Mobile to bring the family of Uncle Homer to the wedding. It was the grandest occasion that had ever been known in the region of Bonnydale. The young couple were to spend the summer on their bridal trip on board of the elegant steam-yacht, visiting various ports of Europe.

In the multitude who came to Bonnydale to assist at the marriage of the young hero was Monsieur Giffleur, who was received with distinguished consideration by all the family, including the bride elect; and it can be safely asserted that

he was one of the happiest of the guests who rejoiced in the felicity of the ex-lieutenant-commander, for he had resigned his commission at the close of the war. This was not the first time they had met since their memorable campaigns in Bermuda and Nassau; for the detective had spent a fortnight at Bonnydale with his young friend, during which they had told the stories of their experience in secret service. They are fast friends for life.

Captain Passford, senior, presented to his son an elegant house, built and magnificently furnished while Christy and his wife were voyaging in European waters. It is on the Bonnydale estate: and the grandfather of two boys and a girl does not have to go far to visit the family, for he is nearly eighty years old. Christy is somewhat grizzled with iron gray hair and whiskers; but he is still the same as when he was a young officer, and still as devoted as ever to the country he helped to make A Victorious Union.

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