

FICTION

Oliver Optic

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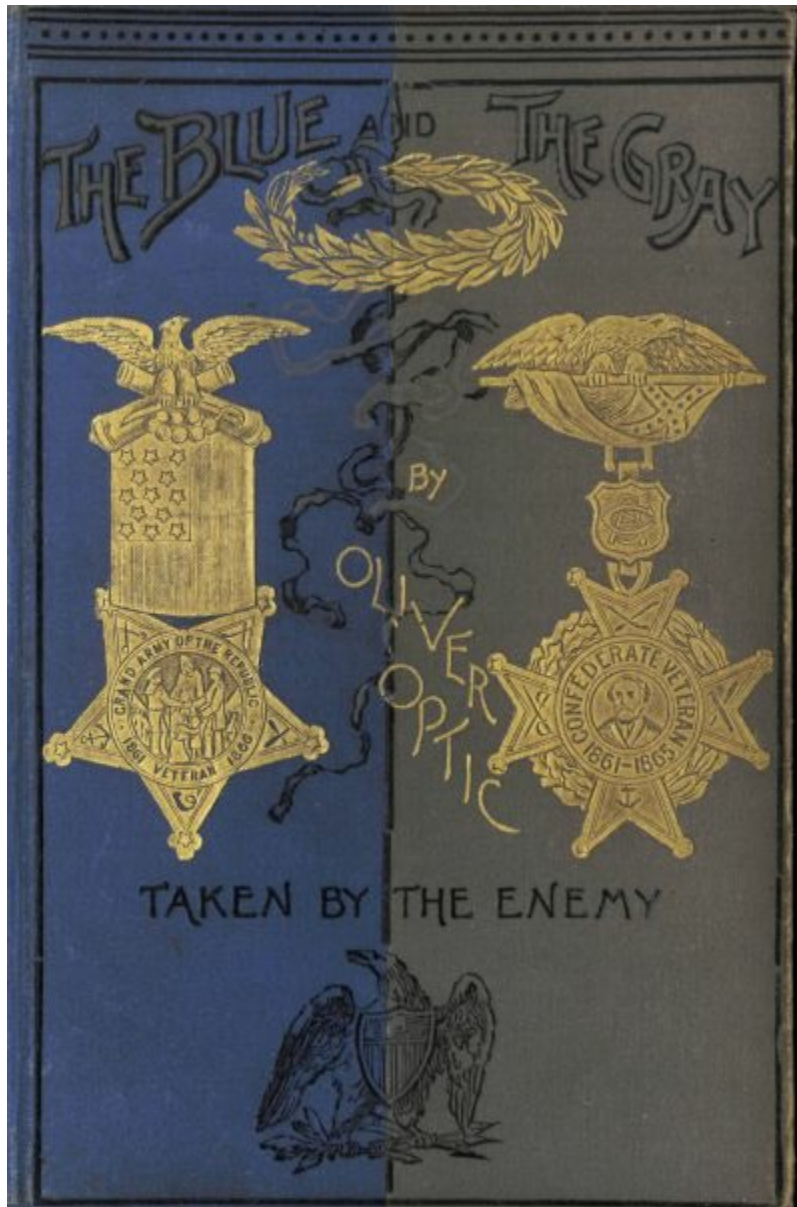
# Taken by the Enemy

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# THE BLUE AND THE GRAY SERIES



BY OLIVER OPTIC

## TAKEN BY THE ENEMY

*The Blue and the Gray Series*

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TAKEN BY THE ENEMY

BY

OLIVER OPTIC

AUTHOR OF "THE ARMY AND NAVY SERIES" "YOUNG AMERICA ABROAD"  
"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 SERIES" "THE  
BOAT-BUILDER SERIES" ETC.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS*

BOSTON  
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TAKEN BY THE ENEMY.

TO  
MYNEPHEW,  
HERBERT W. ADAMS,  
**This Book**  
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

## PREFACE

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"TAKEN BY THE ENEMY" is the first of a new series of six volumes which are to be associated under the general title of "The Blue and the Gray Series," which sufficiently indicates the character of the books. At the conclusion of the war of the Rebellion, and before the writer had completed "The Army and Navy Series," over twenty years ago, some of his friends advised him to make all possible haste to bring his war stories to a conclusion, declaring that there could be no demand for such works when the war had come to an end. But the volumes of the series mentioned are as much in demand to-day as any of his other stories, though from their nature the field of their circulation is more limited. Surprising as this may appear, it is still the fact; and certainly the author has received more commendatory letters from young people in regard to the books of this series than concerning those of any other.

Among these letters there has occasionally been one, though rarely, in which the writer objected to this series for the reason that he was "on the other side" of the great issue which shook the nation to the centre of its being for four years. Doubtless the writers of these letters, and many who wrote no letters, will be surprised and grieved at the announcement of another series by the author on war topics. The writer had little inclination to undertake this task; for he has believed for twenty years that the war is over, and he has not been disposed to keep alive old issues which had better remain buried. He has spent some time in the South, and has always found himself among friends there. He became personally acquainted with those who fought on the Confederate side, from generals to privates, and he still values their friendship. He certainly is not disposed to write any thing that would cause him to forfeit his title to the kind feeling that was extended to him.

It is not, therefore, with the desire or intention to rekindle the fires of sectional animosity, now happily subdued, that the writer begins another series relating to the war. The call upon him to use the topics of the war has been so urgent, and its ample field of stirring events has been so inviting, that he could not resist; but, while his own opinions in regard to the great question of five-and-twenty years ago remain unchanged, he hopes to do more ample justice than perhaps was done before to those "who fought on the other side."

The present volume introduces those which are to follow it, and presents many of the characters that are to figure in them. Though written from the Union standpoint, the author hopes that it will not be found unfair or unjust to those who looked from the opposite point of view.

DORCHESTER, June 12, 1888.



"THREE CHEERS FOR CAPTAIN PASSFORD" (Page 75)



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# TAKEN BY THE ENEMY

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## CHAPTER I

### ASTOUNDING NEWS FROM THE SHORE

"THIS is most astounding news!" exclaimed Captain Horatio Passford.

It was on the deck of the magnificent steam-yacht *Bellevite*, of which he was the owner; and with the newspaper, in which he had read only a few of the many head-lines, still in his hand, he rushed furiously across the deck, in a state of the most intense agitation.

It would take more than one figure to indicate the number of millions by which his vast wealth was measured, in the estimation of those who knew most about his affairs; and he was just returning from a winter cruise in his yacht.

His wife and son were on board; but his daughter had spent the winter at the South with her uncle, preferring this to a voyage at sea, being in rather delicate health, and the doctors thought a quiet residence in a genial climate was better for her.

The *Bellevite* had been among the islands of the Atlantic, visiting the Azores, Madeira, the Canary Islands, and was now coming from Bermuda. She had just taken a pilot fifty miles from Sandy Hook, and was bound to New York, for the captain's beautiful estate, *Bonnydale*, was located on the Hudson.

As usual, the pilot had brought on board with him the latest New-York papers, and one of them contained the startling news which appeared to have thrown the owner of the *Bellevite* entirely off his balance; and it was quite astounding enough to produce this effect upon any American.

"What is it, sir?" demanded Christopher Passford, his son, a remarkably bright-looking young fellow of sixteen, as he followed his father across the deck.

"What is it, Horatio?" inquired Mrs. Passford, who had been seated with a book on the deck, as she also followed her husband.

The captain was usually very cool and self-possessed, and neither the wife nor the son had ever before seen him so shaken by agitation. He seemed to be unable to speak a word for the time, and took no notice whatever of his wife and son when they addressed him.

For several minutes he continued to rush back and forth across the deck of the steamer, like a vessel which had suddenly caught a heavy flaw of wind, and had not yet come to her bearings.

"What is the matter, Horatio?" asked Mrs. Passford, when he came near her. "What in the world has happened to overcome you in this manner, for I never saw you so moved before?"

But her husband did not reply even to this earnest interrogatory, but again darted across the deck, and his lips moved as though he were muttering something to himself. He did not look at the paper in his hands again; and whatever the startling intelligence it contained, he seemed to have taken it all in at a glance.

Christy, as the remarkably good-looking young man was called by all in the family and on board of the *Bellevite*, appeared to be even more astonished than his mother at the singular conduct of his father; but he saw how intense was his agitation, and he did not follow him in his impulsive flights across the deck.

Though his father had always treated him with great consideration, and seldom if ever had occasion to exercise any of his paternal authority over him, the young man never took advantage of the familiarity existing between them. His father was certainly in a most extraordinary mood for him, and he could not venture to speak a word to him.

He stood near the companion way, not far from his mother, and he observed the movements of his father with the utmost interest, not unmingled with anxiety; and Mrs. Passford fully shared with him the solicitude of the moment.

The steamer was going at full speed in the direction of Sandy Hook. Captain Passford gave no heed to the movement of the vessel, but for several minutes planked the deck as though he were unable to realize the truth or the force of the news he had hastily gathered from the head-lines of the newspaper.

At last he halted in the waist, at some distance from the other members of his family, raised his paper, and fixed his gaze upon the staring announcement at the head of one of its columns. No one ventured to approach him; for he was the magnate of the vessel, and, whatever his humor, he was entitled to the full benefit of it.

He only glanced at the head-lines as he had done before, and then dropped the paper, as though the announcement he had read was all he desired to know.

"Beeks," said he, as a quartermaster passed near him.

The man addressed promptly halted, raised his hand to his cap, and waited the pleasure of the owner of the steamer.

"Tell Captain Breaker that I wish to see him, if you please," added Captain Passford.

The man repeated the name of the person he was to call, and hastened away to obey the order. The owner resumed his march across the deck, though it was evident to the anxious observers that he had in a great measure recovered his self-possession, for his movements were less nervous, and the usual placid calm was restored to his face.

In another minute, Captain Breaker, who was the actual commander of the vessel, appeared in the waist, and walked up to his owner. Though not more than forty-five years old, his hair and full beard were heavily tinted with gray; and an artist who wished for an ideal shipmaster, who was both a gentleman and a sailor, could not have found a better representative of this type in the merchant or naval service, or on the deck of the finest steam-yacht in the world.

"You sent for me, Captain Passford," said the commander, in respectful but not subservient tones.

"You will take the steamer to some point off Fire Island, and come to anchor there," replied the owner, as, without any explanation, he walked away from the spot.

"Off Fire Island," added Captain Breaker, simply repeating the name of the locality to which his order related, but not in a tone that required an exclamation-point to express his surprise.

Whatever the captain of the *Bellevite* thought or felt, it was an extraordinary order which he received. It was in the month of April, and the vessel had been absent about five months on her winter pleasure cruise.

In a few hours more the yacht could easily be at her moorings off Bonnydale on the Hudson; but when almost in sight of New York, the captain had been ordered to anchor, as though the owner had no intention of returning to his elegant home.

If he was surprised, as doubtless he was, he did not manifest it in the slightest degree; for he was a sailor, and it was a part of his gospel to obey the orders of his owner without asking any questions.

No doubt he thought of his wife and children as he walked forward to the pilot-house to execute his order, for he had been away from them for a long time. The three papers brought on board by the pilot had all been given to the owner, and he had no hint of the startling news they contained.

The course of the *Bellevite* was promptly changed more to the northward; and if the pilot wished to be informed in regard to this strange alteration in the immediate destination of the vessel, Captain Breaker was unable to give him any explanation.

Captain Passford was evidently himself again; and he did not rush across the deck as he had done before, but seated himself in an armchair he had occupied before the pilot came on board, and proceeded to read something more than the headlines in the paper.

He hardly moved or looked up for half an hour, so intensely was he absorbed in the narrative before him. Mrs. Passford and Christy, though even more excited by the singular conduct of the owner, and the change in the course of the steamer, did not venture to interrupt him.

The owner took the other two papers from his pocket, and had soon possessed himself of all the details of the astounding news; and it was plain enough to those who so eagerly observed his expression as he read, that he was impressed as he had never been before in his life.

Before the owner had finished the reading of the papers, the *Bellevite* had reached the anchorage chosen by the pilot, and the vessel was soon fast to the bottom in a quiet sea.

"The tide is just right for going up to the city," said the pilot, who had left his place in the pilot-house, and addressed himself to the owner in the waist.

"But we shall not go up to the city," replied Captain Passford, in a very decided tone. "But that shall make no difference in your pilot's fees.--Captain Breaker."

The captain of the steamer, who had also come out of the pilot-house, had stationed himself within call of the owner to receive the next order, which might throw some light on the reason for anchoring the steamer so near her destination on a full sea. He presented himself before the magnate of the yacht, and indicated that he was ready to take his further orders.

"You will see that the pilot is paid his full fee for taking the vessel to a wharf," continued Captain Passford.

The captain bowed, and started towards the companionway; but the owner called him back.

"I see what looks like a tug to the westward of us. You will set the signal to bring her alongside," the magnate proceeded.

This order was even more strange than that under which the vessel had come to anchor so near home after her long cruise; but the captain asked no questions, and made no sign. Calling Beeks, he went aft with the pilot, and paid him his fees.

When the American flag was displayed in the fore-rigging for the tug, Captain Passford, with his gaze fixed on the planks of the deck, walked slowly to the place where his wife was seated, and halted in front of her without speaking a word. But there was a quivering of the lip which assured the lady and her son that he was still struggling to suppress his agitation.

"What is the matter, Horatio?" asked the wife, in the tenderest of tones, while her expression assured those who saw her face that the anxiety of the husband had been communicated to the wife.

"I need hardly tell you, Julia, that I am disturbed as I never was before in all my life," replied he, maintaining his calmness only with a struggle.

"I can see that something momentous has happened in our country," she added, hardly able to contain herself, for she felt that she was in the presence of an unexplained calamity.

"Something has happened, my dear; something terrible,--something that I did not expect, though many others were sure that it would come," he continued, seating himself at the side of his wife.

"But you do not tell me what it is," said the lady, with a look which indicated that her worst fears were confirmed. "Is Florry worse? Is she"--

"So far as I know, Florry is as well as usual," interposed the husband. "But a state of war exists at the present moment between the North and the South."

## CHAPTER II

### THE BROTHER AT THE SOUTH

Even five months before, when the *Bellevite* had sailed on her cruise, the rumble of coming events had been heard in the United States; and it had been an open question whether or not war would grow out of the complications between the North and the South.

Only a few letters, and fewer newspapers, had reached the owner of the yacht; and he and his family on board had been very indifferently informed in regard to the progress of political events at home. Captain Passford was one of those who confidently believed that no very serious difficulty would result from the entanglements into which the country had been plunged by the secession of the most of the Southern States.

He would not admit even to himself that war was possible; and before his departure he had scouted the idea of a conflict with arms between the brothers of the North and the brothers of the South, as he styled them.

Captain Passford had been the master of a ship in former times, though he had accumulated his vast fortune after he abandoned the sea. His father was an Englishman, who had come to the United States as a young man, had married, raised his two sons, and died in the city of New York.

These two sons, Horatio and Homer, were respectively forty-five and forty years of age. Both of them were married, and each of them had only a son and a daughter. While Horatio had been remarkably successful in his pursuit of wealth in the metropolis, he had kept himself clean and honest, like so many of the wealthy men of the great city. When he retired from active business, he settled at Bonnydale on the Hudson.

His brother had been less successful as a business-man, and soon after his marriage to a Northern lady he had purchased a plantation in Alabama, where both of his children had been born, and where he was a man of high standing, with wealth enough to maintain his position in luxury, though his fortune was insignificant compared with that of his brother.

Between the two brothers and their families the most kindly relations had always existed; and each made occasional visits to the other, though the distance which separated them was too great to permit of very frequent exchanges personally of brotherly love and kindness.

Possibly the fraternal feeling which subsisted between the two brothers had some influence upon the opinions of Horatio, for to him hostilities meant making war upon his only brother, whom he cherished as warmly as if they had not been separated by a distance of over a thousand miles.

He measured the feelings of others by his own; and if all had felt as he felt, war would have been an impossibility, however critical and momentous the relations between the two sections.

Though his father had been born and bred in England, Horatio was more intensely American than thousands who came out of Plymouth Rock stock; and he believed in the union of the States, unable to believe that any true citizen could tolerate the idea of a separation of any kind.

The first paper which Captain Passford read on the deck of the *Bellevite* contained the details of the bombardment and capture of Fort Sumter; and the others, a record of the events which had transpired in the few succeeding days after the news of actual war reached the North.

This terrible intelligence was unexpected to the owner of the yacht, believing, as he had, in the impossibility of war; and it seemed to him just as though he and his cherished brother were already arrayed against each other on the battlefield.

The commotion between the two sections had begun before his departure from home on the yacht cruise, but his brother, perhaps because he was fully instructed in regard to the Union sentiment of Horatio, was strangely reticent, and expressed no opinions of his own.

But Captain Passford, measuring his brother according to his own standard, was fully persuaded that Homer was as sound on the great question as he was himself, though the excitement and violence around him might have caused him to maintain a neutral position.

Certainly if the Northern brother had anticipated that a terrible war was impending, he would not have permitted his daughter Florence, a beautiful young lady of seventeen, to reside during the winter in a hot-bed of secession and disunion. The papers informed him what had been done at the North and at the South to initiate the war; and the thought that Florry was now in the midst of the enemies of her country was agonizing to him.

Though he felt that his country demanded his best energies, and though he was ready and willing to give himself and his son to her in her hour of need, he felt that his first duty was to his own family, within reasonable limits; and his

earliest thoughts were directed to the safety of his daughter, and then to the welfare of his brother and his family.

"War!" exclaimed Mrs. Passford, when her husband had announced so briefly the situation which had caused such intense agitation in his soul. "What do you mean by war, Horatio?"

"I mean all that terrible word can convey of destruction and death, and, worse yet, of hate and revenge between brothers of the same household!" replied the husband impressively. "Both the North and the South are sounding the notes of preparation. Men are gathering by thousands on both sides, soon to meet on fields which must be drenched in the gore of brothers."

"But don't you think the trouble will be settled in some way, Horatio?" asked the anxious wife and mother; and her thoughts, like those of her husband, reverted to the loving daughter then in the enemy's camp.

"I do not think so; that is impossible now. I did not believe that war was possible: now I do not believe it will be over till one side or the other shall be exhausted," replied Captain Passford, wiping from his brow the perspiration which the intensity of his emotion produced. "A civil war is the most bitter and terrible of all wars."

"I cannot understand it," added the lady.

"Is it really war, sir?" asked Christy, who had been an interested listener to all that had been said.

"It is really war, my son," replied the father earnestly. "It will be a war which cannot be carried to a conclusion by hirelings; but father, son, and brother must take part in it, against father, son, and brother."

"It is terrible to think of," added Mrs. Passford with something like a shudder, though she was a strong-minded woman in the highest sense of the words.

Captain Passford then proceeded to inform his wife and son in regard to all the events which had transpired since he had received his latest papers at Bermuda. They listened with the most intense interest, and the trio were as solemn as though they had met to consider the dangerous illness of the absent member of the family.

The owner did not look upon the impending war as a sort of frolic, as did many of the people at the North and the South, and he could not regard it as a trivial conflict which would be ended in a few weeks or a few months. To him it was the most terrible reality which his imagination could picture; and more clearly than many eminent statesmen, he foresaw that it would be a long and fierce encounter.

"From what you say, Horatio, I judge that the South is already arming for the conflict," said Mrs. Passford, after she had heard her husband's account of what had occurred on shore.

"The South has been preparing for war for months, and the North began to make serious preparation for coming events as soon as Fort Sumter fell. Doubtless the South is better prepared for the event to-day than the North, though the greater population and vast resources of the latter will soon make up for lost time," replied the captain.

"And Florry is right in the midst of the gathering armies of the South," added the fond mother, wiping a tear from her eyes.

"She is; and, unless something is done at once to restore her to her home, she may have to remain in the enemy's country for months, if not for years," answered the father, with a slight trembling of the lips.

"But what can be done?" asked the mother anxiously.

"The answer to that question has agitated me more than any thing else which has come to my mind for years, for I cannot endure the thought of leaving her even a single month at any point which is as likely as any other to become a battle-field in a few days or a few weeks," continued Captain Passford, with some return of the agitation which had before shaken him so terribly.

"Of course your brother Homer will take care of her," said the terrified mother, as she gazed earnestly into the expressive face of the stout-hearted man before her.

"Certainly he will do all for Florry that he would do for his own children, but he may not long be able to save his own family from the horrors of war."

"Do you think she will be in any actual danger, Horatio?"

"I have no doubt she will be as safe at Glenfield, if the conflict were raging there, as she would be at Bonnydale under the same circumstances. From the nature of the case, the burden of the fighting, the havoc and desolation, will be within the Southern States, and few, if any, of the battle-fields will be on Northern soil, or at least as far north as our home."

"From what I have seen of the people near the residence of your brother, they are neither brutes nor savages," added the lady.

"No more than the people of the North; but war rouses the brute nature of most men, and there will be brutes and savages on both sides, from the very nature of the case."

"In his recent letters, I mean those that came before we sailed from home, Homer did not seem to take part with either

side in the political conflict; and in those which came to us at the Azores and Bermuda, he did not say a single word to indicate whether he is a secessionist, or in favor of the Union. Do you know how he stands, Horatio?"

"My means of knowing are the same as yours, and I can be no wiser than you are on this point, though I have my opinion," replied Captain Passford.

"What is your opinion?"

"That he is as truly a Union man as I am."

"I am glad that he is."

"I do not say that he is a Union man; but judging from his silence, and what I know of him, I think he is. And it is as much a part of my desire and intention to bring him and his family out of the enemy's country as it is to recover Florry."

"Then we shall have them all at Bonnydale this summer?" suggested Mrs. Passford. "Nothing could suit me better."

"Though I am fully persuaded in my own mind that Homer will be true to his country in this emergency, I may be mistaken. He has lived for many years at the South, and has been identified with the institutions of that locality, as I have been with those of the North. Though we both love the land of our fathers on the other side of the ocean, we have both been strongly American. As he always believed in the whole country as a unit, I shall expect him to be more than willing to stand by his country as it was, and as it should be."

"I hope you will find him so, but I am grievously sorry that Florry is not with us."

"Tug-boat alongside, Captain Passford," said the commander.

The owner of the Bellevite wished the tug to wait his orders.



## CHAPTER III

### DANGEROUS AND SOMEWHAT IRREGULAR

In various parts of the deck of the *Bellevite*, the officers, seamen, engineers, and coal-passers of the steamer were gathered in knots, evidently discussing the situation; for the news brought on board by the pilot had been spread through the ship.

Captain Passford hardly noticed the announcement made to him by the commander, that the tug was alongside, for he was not yet ready to make use of it. Even the wife and the son of the owner wondered what the mission of the little vessel was to be; but the husband and father had not yet disclosed his purpose in coming to anchor almost in sight of his own mansion.

"Why have you come to anchor here, Horatio?" asked Mrs. Passford, taking advantage of the momentary pause in the interesting, and even exciting, conversation, to put this leading question.

"I was about to tell you. I have already adopted my plan to recover Florry, and bring my brother and his family out of the enemy's country," replied the owner, looking with some solicitude into the face of his wife, as though he anticipated some objection to his plan.

"You have adopted it so quick?" inquired the lady. "You have not had much time to think of it."

"I have had all the time I need to enable me to reach the decision to rescue my child from peril, and save my brother and his family from privation and trouble in the enemy's country. But I have only decided what to do, and I have yet to mature the details of the scheme."

"I hope you are not going into any danger," added the wife anxiously.

"Danger!" exclaimed Captain Passford, straightening up his manly form. "War with all its perils and hardships is before us. Am I a villain, a poltroon, who will desert his country in the hour of her greatest need? I do not so understand myself."

"Of course I meant any needless exposure," added Mrs. Passford, impressed by the patriotic bearing of her husband.

"You may be assured, Julia, that I will incur no needless peril, and I think I am even more careful than the average of men. But, when I have a duty to perform, I feel that I ought to do it without regard to the danger which may surround it."

"I know you well enough to understand that, Horatio," said the lady.

"I believe there will be danger in my undertaking, though to what extent I am unable to say."

"But you do not tell me how you intend to recover Florry."

"I intend to go for her and my brother's family in the *Bellevite*."

"In the *Bellevite*!" exclaimed the lady.

"Of course; there is no other possible way to reach Glenfield," which was the name that Homer Passford had given to his plantation.

"But Fort Morgan, at the entrance of Mobile Bay, is in the hands of the Confederates, and has been for three or four months," said Christy, who had kept himself as thoroughly posted in regard to events at home as the sources of information would permit.

"I am well aware of it; and I have no doubt, that, by this time, the fort is strongly garrisoned, to say nothing of other forts which have probably been built in the vicinity," replied Captain Passford.

"It says in this paper that the ports of the South have been blockaded," said Christy, glancing at the journal in his hand.

"The President has issued a proclamation to this effect, but there has hardly been time to enforce it to any great extent yet. But of these matters I have nothing to say yet. The important point now is that I shall go in the *Bellevite* to Mobile Bay, and by force or strategy I shall bring off my daughter and the family of my brother."

"Then I suppose Christy and I are to be sent on shore in the tug alongside," suggested Mrs. Passford.

"That is precisely what I wanted the tug for," added the husband.

"I should be willing to go with you, and share whatever dangers you may incur," said the lady, who had by this time come to a full realization of what war meant.

"I should be a heathen to allow you to do so. A woman would be more of a burden than a help to us. You had better return to Bonnydale, Julia, where I am sure you can render more service to your country than you could on board of the steamer. All that I am, all that I have, shall be at the service of the Union; and I wish you to act for me according to your own good judgment."

"I shall do whatever you wish me to do, Horatio," added the lady.

"My mission will be a dangerous one at best, and the deck of the steamer will be no place for you, Julia."

"Very well; Christy and I will take the tug as soon as you are ready to have us leave you."

"Am I to go on shore, father?" demanded Christy, with a look of chagrin on his handsome face, browned by exposure to the sun on the ocean. "I want to go with you; and I am sure I can do my share of the duty, whatever it may be."

"You are rather young to engage in such an enterprise as that before me, Christy," added his father, as he gazed with pride at the face and form of his son, who had thrown back his head as though he felt the inspiration of all the manliness in his being.

"If there is to be a war for the Union, I am a Union man, or boy, as you like; and it would be as mean and cowardly for me to turn my back to the enemy as it would be for you to do so, sir," replied Christy, his chest heaving with patriotic emotion.

"I am willing you should go with me," added Captain Passford, turning from the young man to his mother.

There was a tear in the eyes of the lady as she looked upon her son. It was hard enough to have her husband leave her on such a mission: it was doubly so to have Christy go with him.

"Christy might be of great service to me," said his father. "I look upon this war as a very solemn event; and when a man's country calls upon him to render his time, his comfort, even his life, he has no moral right to put himself, his father, his brother, or his son in a safe place, and leave mere hirelings, the thoughtless, reckless adventurers, to fight his battle for him."

"I am ready to go, sir," added Christy.

"He may go with you, if you think it best," said the mother with a quivering lip. "I shall miss him, but I am sure you would miss him more."

"My first mission is hardly in the service of my country; at least, it is not directly so, though I hope to be of some use to her during my absence. As I said before, I think my first duty--a duty committed to me by the Almighty, which takes precedence over all other duties--is, within reasonable limits, to my own family. I will not spare myself or my son, but I must save Florry and my brother's family."

"I think you are right, Horatio."

"On my return I shall present the Bellevite to the Government, which is in sore need of suitable vessels at the present time, and offer my services in any capacity in which I can be useful," continued Captain Passford. "Captain Breaker," he called to the commander.

"Here, sir."

"Pipe the entire ship's company on the forecastle, and see that no one from the tug is near enough to hear what is said there."

Captain Breaker had formerly been a lieutenant in the navy, and the forms and discipline of a man-of-war prevailed on board of the steam-yacht. In a minute more the pipe of the boatswain rang through the vessel, and all hands were mustered on the forecastle. The tug was made fast on the quarter of the steamer, and no one from her had come on board.

Captain Passford and Christy walked forward, leaving the lady with her own thoughts. She was a daughter of a distinguished officer in the navy, and she had been fully schooled in the lesson of patriotism for such an emergency as the present. She was sad, and many a tear dropped from her still handsome face; but she was brave enough to feel proud that she had a husband and a son whom she was willing to give to her country.

The ship's company gathered on the forecastle; and every one of them seemed to be deeply impressed with the solemnity of the occasion, for not a light word was spoken, not a laugh played on any face. They had just learned that the country was in a state of war; and the present occasion indicated that the owner had some serious question in his mind, which was now to be presented to them.

The Bellevite was heavily manned for a yacht; but every person had been selected for his position, from the highest to the lowest, with the utmost care by Captain Breaker, assisted by the owner. Every one of them had been attached to the steamer for at least a year, and some of them for a longer period. All of them were personally known to the owner and the members of the family, who had taken the greatest pleasure in improving and assisting them and their families, if they had any.

They were all devoted to the owner and the members of his family, who had taken such a strong personal interest in

them and theirs. Many instances of the kindness of the lady in times of sickness and death, as well as in the brighter days of prosperity and happiness, could be related; and in return for all this generous and considerate treatment, there was not a man on board who would not have laid down his life for the family.

It was certainly a model ship's company; and if there had ever been another owner and captain like those of the *Bellevite*, there might also have been such another collection of officers and seamen. But every one of them had been selected for his moral character, not less than for his nautical skill and knowledge. In fact, the personal history of any one of them would have been interesting to the general reader.

These men composed the audience of Captain Passford when he took his place at the bowsprit bitts; and, if the occasion had been less solemn, they would have cheered him, as they were in the habit of doing on every suitable opportunity, and even when it was not suitable.

The owner prefaced his remarks with a statement of the events which had occurred in the country since the last dates they had received, and then proceeded to describe his mission as indicated to his wife and son. He fully stated the perils of the enterprise, with the fact that his operations would be somewhat irregular; though he intended to make an immediate tender of the vessel to the Government, with his own services in any capacity in which he might be needed.

In spite of the solemnity of the occasion, the men broke out into cheers, and not a few of the sailors shouted out their readiness to go with him wherever he might go, without regard to danger or hardship. One old sheet-anchor man declared that he was ready to die for Miss Florry; and he was so lustily cheered that it was evident this was the sentiment of all.

"I have called the tug at the quarter alongside to convey Mrs. Passford to the shore, though Christy will go with me," added the owner.

At this point he was interrupted by a volley of cheers, for Christy was a universal favorite on board, as Florry had always been; and the ship's company regarded her as a sort of mundane divinity, upon whom they could look only with the most profound reverence.

"In view of the danger and the irregularity of the enterprise, I shall not persuade or urge any person on board to accompany me; and the tug will take on shore all who prefer to leave the vessel, with my best wishes for their future. Those who prefer to go on shore will go aft to the mainmast," continued Captain Passford.

Officers and seamen looked from one to the other; but not one of them took a step from his place on the fore-castle, to which all seemed to be nailed.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FIRST MISSION OF THE BELLEVITE

Captain Passford looked over his audience with no little interest, and perhaps with considerable anxiety; for he felt that the success of his enterprise must depend, in a great measure, upon the fidelity and skill of the individual members of the ship's company.

"My remarks are addressed to every person in the ship's company, from Captain Breaker to the stewards and coal-passers; and any one has a perfect right to decline to go with me, without prejudice to his present or future interests," continued the owner.

More earnestly than before the officers and men gazed at each other; and it looked as though not one of them dared to move a single inch, lest a step should be interpreted as an impeachment of his fidelity to one who had been a Christian and a trusty friend in all his relations with him.

"I know that some of you have families, mothers, brothers, and sisters on shore; and I assure you that I shall not regard it as a disgrace or a stigma upon any man who does his duty as he understands it, without regard to me or mine," the owner proceeded.

Still not a man moved, and all seemed to be more averse than before to change their positions a particle; and possibly any one who was tempted to do so expected to be hooted by his shipmates, if he took the treacherous step.

"I sincerely hope that every man of you will be guided by his own sense of duty, without regard to what others may think of his action. I will not allow any man to suffer from any reproach or indignity on account of what he does in this matter, if by any means I can prevent it," continued Captain Passford, looking over his audience again, to discover, if he could, any evidence of faltering on the part of a single one.

Still officers and men were as immovable as a group of statuary; and not a face betrayed an expression indicating a desire to leave the vessel, or to falter in what all regarded as the allegiance they owed to the owner and his family.

"We will all go with you to the end of the world, or the end of the war!" shouted the old sheet-anchor man, who was the spokesman of the crew when they had any thing to say. "If any man offers to leave"--

"He shall go with my best wishes," interposed Captain Passford. "None of that, Boxie; you have heard what I said, and I mean every word of it. There shall be no persuasion or intimidation."

"Beg pardon, Captain Passford; but there isn't a man here that would go to the mainmast if he knew that the fore-castle would drop out from under him, and let him down into Davy Jones's locker the next minute if he staid here," responded Boxie, with a complaisant grin on his face, as if he was entirely conscious that he knew what he was talking about.

"Every man must act on his own free will," added the owner.

"That's just what we are all doing, your honor; and every one of us would rather go than have his wages doubled. If any dumper here has a free will to go to the mainmast, he'd better put his head in soak, and"--

"Avast heaving, Boxie!" interposed the owner, smiling in spite of himself at the earnestness of the old sailor.

"I hain't got a word more to say, your honor; only"--

"Only nothing, Boxie! I see that not one of you is inclined to leave the vessel, and I appreciate in the highest degree this devotion on your part to me and my family. I have some writing to do now; and, while I am engaged upon it, Mr. Watts shall take the name and residence of every man on board. I shall give this list to my wife, and charge her to see that those dependent upon you need nothing in your absence. She will visit the friends of every one of you, if she has to go five hundred miles to do so. I have nothing more to say at present."

The men cheered lustily for the owner, and then separated, as the captain went aft to draw up his papers to send on shore by Mrs. Passford. He was followed by Captain Breaker, while little groups formed in various parts of the deck to discuss the situation.

"I intended to have some talk with you, Breaker, before I said any thing to the ship's company; but, you know, it is very seldom that I ever say any thing directly to them," said Captain Passford, as the commander came up with him.

"This was an extraordinary occasion; and I am very glad that you did the business directly, instead of committing it to me," replied Captain Breaker; "and I have not the slightest objection to make. But I have a word to say in regard to myself personally. As you are aware, I was formerly an officer of the navy, with the rank of lieutenant. I wish to apply to the department to be restored to my former rank, or to any rank which will enable me to serve my country the most acceptably. I hope my purpose will not interfere with your enterprise."

"Not at all, I think, except in the matter of some delay. I shall tender the *Bellevite* as a free gift to the Government in a

letter I shall send on shore by my wife," replied Captain Passford. "But I shall offer to do this only on my return from a trip I feel obliged to make in her. I shall also offer my own services in any capacity in which I can be useful; though, as I am not a naval officer like yourself, I cannot expect a prominent position."

"Your ability fits you for almost any position; and, after a little study of merely routine matters, you will be competent for almost any command," added Captain Breaker.

"I do not expect that, and I am willing to do my duty in a humble position," said the owner. "All that I am and all that I have shall be for my country's use."

"I knew very well where we should find you if the troubles ended in a war."

"My present enterprise will be rather irregular, as I have already said; but the delay it would cause alone prevents me from giving the vessel to the Government at once."

"As a man-of-war, the Bellevite could not be used for the purpose you have in mind. The plan you have chosen is the only practicable one."

"Very well, Breaker. You had better pass the word through the ship's company that the Bellevite will sail in an hour or two,—as soon as I can finish my business; and if officer or seaman wishes to leave the vessel, let him do so," added the owner, as he moved towards the companionway.

"Not one of them will leave her under any circumstances," replied the commander, as he went forward.

The word was passed, as suggested by the owner, and the result was to set the greater part of the officers and men to writing letters for their friends, to be sent on shore by the tug; but the captain warned them not to say a word in regard to the destination of the steamer.

In another hour Captain Passford had completed his letters and papers, including letters to the Secretary of the Navy, a power of attorney to his wife which placed his entire fortune at her command, and other documents which the hurried movements of the writer rendered necessary.

The owner and his son bade adieu to the wife and mother in the cabin; and it is not necessary to penetrate the sacred privacy of such an occasion, for it was a tender, sad, and trying ordeal to all of them.

All the letters were gathered together and committed to the care of the lady as she went over the side to leave the floating home in which she had lived for several months, for the family did not often desert their palatial cabin for the poorer accommodations of a hotel on shore.

The pilot departed in the tug, and he was no wiser than when he came on board in regard to the intentions of the owner of the steam-yacht. There was an abundant supply of coal and provisions on board, for the vessel was hardly three days from Bermuda when she came up with Sandy Hook; and the commander gave the order to weigh anchor as soon as the tug cast off her fasts.

"I suppose we are bound somewhere, Captain Passford," said Captain Breaker, as soon as the vessel was fully under way. "But you have not yet indicated to me our destination."

"Bermuda. The fact is that I have been so absorbed in the tremendous news that came to us with the pilot, that I have not yet come to my bearings," replied the owner with a smile. "My first duty now will be to discuss our future movements with you; and when you have given out the course, we will attend to that matter."

Captain Breaker called Mr. Joel Dashington, the first officer, to him, and gave him the course of the ship, as indicated by the owner. He was six feet and one inch in height, and as thin as a rail; but he was a very wiry man, and it was said that he could stand more hunger, thirst, exposure, and hardship than any other living man. He was a gentleman in his manners, and had formerly been in command of a ship in the employ of Captain Passford. He was not quite fifty years old, and he had seen service in all parts of the world, and in his younger days had been a master's mate in the navy.

The second officer was superintending the crew as they put things to rights for the voyage. His person was in striking contrast with his superior officer; for he weighed over two hundred pounds, and looked as though he were better fitted for the occupancy of an alderman's chair than for a position on the deck of a sea-going vessel. He was under forty years of age, but he had also been in command of a bark in the employ of his present owner.

"Of course we cannot undertake the difficult enterprise before us, Breaker, without an armament of some sort," said Captain Passford, as they halted at the companionway.

"I should say not, and I was wondering how you intended to manage in this matter," replied the commander.

"I will tell you, for our first mission renders it necessary to give some further orders before we go below," continued the owner. "We have not a day or an hour to waste."

"The sooner we get at the main object of the expedition, the better will be our chances of success."

"You remember that English brig which was wrecked on Mills Breaker, while we were at Hamilton?"

"Very well indeed; and she was said to be loaded with a cargo of improved guns, with the ammunition for them, which

some enterprising Britisher had brought over on speculation, for the use of the Confederate army and navy,--if they ever have any navy," added Captain Breaker.

"That is precisely the cargo to which I allude. The brig had a hole in her bottom, but only a part of her was under water. The officers of the vessel were confident that the entire cargo would be saved, with not much of it in a damaged condition," added the owner.

"There has been no violent storms since we left St. George, hardly three days ago," said the commander.

"I wish to obtain as much of this cargo as will be necessary to arm the *Bellevite* properly for the expedition; and I have a double object in obtaining it, even if I have to throw half of it into the Atlantic Ocean."

"The fact that we need the guns and ammunition is reason enough for trying to obtain the cargo."

"But I have the additional inducement of keeping it out of the hands of the enemy, so that the guns shall be turned against the foes of the Union instead of its friends. We must make a quick passage, so that, if we lose this opportunity, it will not be our fault."

"I understand. Pass the word for Mr. Vápoor," added the commander to a quartermaster who was taking in the ensign at the peak.

Mr. Vápoor was the chief engineer; though he was the youngest officer on board, and really looked younger than Christy Passford.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BELLEVITE AND THOSE ON BOARD OF HER

Paul Vápoor was a genius, and that accounted for his position as chief engineer at the age of twenty-two. He was born a machinist, and his taste in that direction had made him a very hard student. His days and a large portion of his nights, while in his teens, had been spent in studying physics, chemistry, and, in fact, all the sciences which had any bearing upon the life-work which nature rather than choice had given him to do.

His father had been in easy circumstances formerly, so that there had been nothing to interfere with his studies before he was of age. Up to this period, he had spent much of his time in a large machine-shop, working for nothing as though his daily bread depended upon his exertions; and he was better qualified to run an engine than most men who had served for years at the business, for he was a natural scientist.

There was scarcely a part of an engine at which he had not worked with his own hands as a volunteer, and he was as skilful with his hands as he was deep with his head. Paul's father was an intimate friend of Captain Passford; and when a sudden reverse of fortune swept away all the former had, the latter gave the prodigy a place as assistant engineer on board of his steam-yacht, from which, at the death of the former incumbent of the position, he had been promoted to the head of the department. While his talent and ability were of the highest order, of course his rapid promotion was due to the favor of the owner of the Bellevite.

Captain Breaker, who had rather reluctantly assented to the placing in charge of the engineer department a young man of only twenty-one, had no occasion to regret that he had yielded his opinion to that of his owner. Paul Vápoor had been found equal to all the requirements of the situation, for the judgment of the young chief was almost as marvellous as his genius.

Paul was gentle in his manners, and possessed a very lovable disposition; in fact, he was almost a woman in all the tender susceptibilities of his nature; and those who knew him best knew not which to admire most, his genius or his magnetic character. Mr. Leon Bolter, the first assistant engineer, was thirty-six years old; and Mr. Fred Faggs, the second, was twenty-six. But there was neither envy, jealousy, nor other ill-feeling in the soul of either in respect to his superior; and they recognized the God-given genius of the chief more fully than others could, for their education enabled them to understand it better.

Paul Vápoor and Christy Passford were fast friends almost from the first time they met; and they had been students together in the same institution, though they were widely apart in their studies. They were cronies in the strongest sense of the word, and the chief engineer would have given up his very life for the son of his present employer. The owner favored this intimacy, for he felt that he could not find in all the world a better moral and intellectual model for his son.

Mr. Vápoor, as he was always called when on duty, even by the members of the owner's family in spite of the fact that he seemed to be only a boy, appeared on the quarter-deck of the steamer in answer to the summons of the commander. He was neatly dressed in a suit of blue, with brass buttons, though some of the oil and grime of the engine defaced his uniform. He bowed, and touched his cap to the commander, in the most respectful manner as he presented himself before him.

"For reasons which you will understand better, Mr. Vápoor, at a later period, Captain Passford is in a great hurry to reach Bermuda, where we are bound, at the earliest possible moment," the captain began. "Our ordinary rate of speed is fourteen knots when we don't hurry her."

"That is what I make her do when not otherwise instructed," replied the chief engineer.

"You assisted as a volunteer in building the engine of the Bellevite, and you were in the engine-room during the whole of the trial trip, three years ago," continued Captain Breaker with a smile on his face; and a smile seemed to be a necessity in the presence of the young man.

"That is all very true, captain; and I was more interested in this engine than I have ever been in any other, and it has fully realized my strongest hopes."

"What speed did you get out of her on the trial trip?"

"Eighteen knots; but her machinery was new then. The order of Captain Passford included the requirement that the engine of the vessel should give her the greatest speed ever produced in a sea-going steamer, and the Bellevite was built strong enough to bear such an engine. I believe the company that built it fully met the requirement."

"What do you believe to be her best speed, Mr. Vápoor?"

"I have never had the opportunity to test it, but I believe that she can make more than twenty knots, possibly twenty-

two. You remember that Captain Passford was in a desperate hurry to get from Messina to Marseilles a year ago this month, and the Bellevite logged twenty knots during nearly the whole of the trip," replied the engineer, with a gentle smile of triumph on his handsome face, for he looked upon the feat of the engine as he would upon a noble deed of his father.

"You made her shake on that trip, Mr. Vápoor."

"Not very much, sir. All the owner's family, including Miss Florry, were on board then, and, if any thing had happened, I should have charged myself with murder. I do not know what the Bellevite could do if the occasion warranted me in taking any risk."

"I do not wish you to be reckless on the present emergency; but it is of the utmost importance to save every hour we can, and the success or failure of the expedition may depend upon a single hour. I will say no more, though an accident to the engine would be a disaster to the enterprise. I leave the matter with you, Mr. Vápoor," added the commander, as he moved off.

"I understand you perfectly, Captain Breaker, and there shall be no failure in the engine department to meet your wishes," replied the chief, as he touched his cap and retired to the engine-room.

"I am waiting for you, Breaker," said Captain Passford, who was standing near the companionway with Christy.

"Excuse me for a few minutes more, for there seems to be a strong breeze coming up from the north-east, and I want to take a look at the situation," replied the commander, and he hastened forward.

It had been bright sunshine when the pilot came on board: but suddenly the wind had veered to an ugly quarter, and had just begun to pipe up into something like half a gale. Captain Breaker went to the pilot-house, looked at the barometer, and then directed Mr. Dashington to crowd on all sail, for he intended to drive the vessel to her utmost capacity.

The Bellevite was rigged as a barkantine; that is, she was square-rigged on her foremast, like a ship, while her main and mizzen masts carried only fore-and-aft sails, including gaff-topsails. The shrill pipe of the boatswain immediately sounded through the vessel, and twenty-four able seamen dashed to their stations. In a few minutes, every rag of canvas which the steamer could carry was set. But the commander did not wait for this to be done, but hastened to join the owner.

"I suppose you don't want me, sir," said Christy, as his father led the way into the cabin.

"On the contrary, I do want you, Christy," replied Captain Passford, as he halted, and the commander passed him on his way to the cabin. "I wish you to understand as well as I do myself what we are going to do."

"I shall be very glad to know more about it," added Christy, pleased with the confidence his father reposed in him in connection with the serious undertaking before him.

"In the work I have to do, you stand nearer to me than any other person on board," continued Captain Passford. "I know what you are, and you are older than your sixteen years make you. It was at your age that Charles XII. took command of the armies of Sweden, and he was more than a figure-head in his forces."

"Sometimes I feel older than I am," suggested the boy.

"I believe in keeping a boy young as long as possible, and I have never hurried you by putting you in an important place, though at one time I thought of having a third officer, and assigning you to the position, for the practice it would give you in real life; but I concluded that you had better not be driven forward."

"I think I know something about handling a steamer, father."

"I know you do; though I have never told you so, for I did not care to have you think too much of yourself. Now, in common with all the rest of us, you are hurled into the presence of mighty events; and in a single day from a boy you must become a man. You are my nearest representative on board; and if any thing should happen to me, in the midst of the perils of this expedition, a responsibility would fall upon you which you cannot understand now. I wish to prepare you for it," said Captain Passford, as he went down into the cabin.

The commander was already seated at the table, waiting for the owner; and Captain Passford and Christy took places near him. The cabin was as elegant and luxurious as money and taste could make it. In the large state-room of the owner there was every thing to make a sea-voyage comfortable and pleasant to one who had a liking for the ocean.

Leading from the main cabin were the state-rooms of Florence and Christy. One of the four others was occupied by Dr. Linscott, the surgeon of the ship, who had had abundant experience in his profession, who had been an army surgeon in the Mexican war, though his health did not permit him to practise on shore.

Another was occupied by the chief steward, who was a person of no little consequence on board; while the others were appropriated to guests when there were any, as was often the case when the Bellevite made short voyages.

The trio at the table began the discussion of the subject before them without delay; but it is not necessary to enter into its details, since, whatever plans were made, they must still be subject to whatever contingencies were presented when



the time for action came.

Forward of the main cabin was what is called in naval parlance the ward-room, and it was called by this name on board of the *Bellevite*. In this apartment the officers next in rank below the commander took their meals; and from it opened the state-rooms of the first and second officers on the starboard-side, with one for the chief engineer on the port-side, and another for his two assistants next abaft it.

The commander was an old friend of the owner, and messed with him in the main cabin, though his state-room was a large apartment between the cabin and the ward-room; the space on the opposite side of the ship being used for the pantries and the bath-room.

Before the conference in the cabin had proceeded far, the motion of the steamer, and the creaking of the timbers within her, indicated that Mr. Vapoor was doing all that could be required of him in the matter of speed, though the pressure of canvas steadied the vessel in the heavy sea which the increasing breeze had suddenly produced. Before night, the wind was blowing a full gale, and some reduction of sail became necessary.

The *Bellevite* had the wind fair, and the most that was possible was made of this accessory to her speed. At one time she actually logged the twenty-two knots which the chief engineer had suggested as her limit, and inside of two days she reached her destination. Christy had suddenly become the active agent of his father, and he was the first to be sent on shore to obtain information in regard to the guns and ammunition, for it was thought that he would excite less suspicion than any other on board.

## CHAPTER VI

### MR. PERCY PIERSON INTRODUCES HIMSELF

Christy procured the desired information on shore; and being but a boy, he obtained no credit for the head he carried on his shoulders, so that no attention was given to him when he made his investigation. At the proper time Captain Passford appeared; but, as the guns and other war material were intended for the other side in the conflict, he was obliged to resort to a little strategy to obtain them.

But they were obtained, and the *Bellevite* was as fully armed and prepared for an emergency as though she had been in the employ of the Government, as it was intended that she should be when her present mission was accomplished. During her stay at St. George, such changes as were necessary to adapt the vessel to her enterprise--such as the fitting up of a magazine--were completed, and the steamer sailed.

After a quick passage, the *Bellevite* arrived at New Providence, Nassau, where she put in to obtain some needed supplies, as it was directly on her course. Already there was not a little activity at the principal foreign ports nearest to the Southern States, created by the hurried operations of speculators anxious to profit by the war that was to come; and later these harbors were the refuge of the blockade-runners.

The arrival of the *Bellevite* at New Providence created not a little excitement among the Confederate sympathizers who had hastened there to take advantage of the maritime situation, and to procure vessels for the use of the South in the struggle. The steamer was painted black, and, as she had been built after plans suggested by her owner, she was peculiar in her construction to some extent, and her appearance baffled the curiosity of the active Confederate patriots and speculators alike; for both classes were represented there, though not yet in large numbers.

Captain Passford had instructed the commander to conceal all the facts in regard to her, and no flag or any thing else which could betray her nationality or character was allowed to be seen. The business of obtaining the needed stores required many of the officers and men to go on shore, but all of them were instructed to answer no questions. No one was allowed to come on board.

"Good-morning, my friend," said a young man to Christy, as he landed on the day after the arrival.

"Good-morning," replied the owner's son, civilly enough, as he looked over the person addressing him, who appeared to be a young man not more than eighteen years old.

"What steamer is that?" continued the stranger, pointing to the steam-yacht.

Christy looked at his interlocutor, who was a pleasant-looking young man, though there was something which did not appear to be quite natural in his expression; and he suspected that he had been placed at the landing to interrogate him or some other person from the steamer, in regard to her character and nationality. Possibly he derived this idea from the fact that he had himself been employed on a similar duty at St. George.

"Do you mean that schooner?" asked Christy carelessly, as he pointed at a vessel much nearer the shore than the *Bellevite*.

"No, not at all," replied the stranger. "I mean that steamer, off to the north-east," replied the young man, pointing out into the bay.

"North-east?" added the owner's son. "That is this way;" and he turned about, and directed his finger towards the interior of the island. "That would put the craft you mean on the shore, wouldn't it?"

"Not a bit of it! I don't mean that way. Don't you know the points of the compass?"

"I learned them when I was young, but I forget them now."

"Pray how old are you, my friend?" asked the stranger, who thought his companion was stupid enough to answer any question he might put to him.

"I was forty-two yesterday; and in a year from yesterday, I shall be forty-three, if I don't die of old age before that time," replied Christy, looking the other full in the face, and with as serious an expression as he could command.

"Forty-two! You are chaffing me. Didn't you come from that steamer over there?" demanded the young man, pointing at the *Bellevite* again.

"No, sir. I came from China, from a place they call Shensibangerwhang. Were you ever there?"

"I never was there, and I question if you were ever there."

"Do you mean to question my veracity?" demanded Christy, knitting his brow.

"Oh, no, not at all!"

"Very well; and when you go to Shensibangerwhang, I shall be glad to see you; and then I will endeavor to answer all the questions you desire to ask."

"I thought you came from that steamer over there."

"Thought made a world, but it wasn't your thought that did it."

"Of course you know the name of that steamer."

"Oh, now I think of her name! That is the Chicherwithering, and she belongs to the Chinese navy. She is sent out on a voyage of discovery to find the north pole, which she expects to reach here in the West Indies. When she finds it, I will let you know by mail, if you will give me your address," rattled Christy with abundant self-possession.

"No, no, now! You are chaffing me."

"Do you know, brother mortal of mine, that I suspect you are a Yankee; for they say they live on baked beans, and earn the money to buy the pork for them by asking questions."

"I am not a Yankee; I am a long way from that."

"Then perhaps you sympathize with the meridional section of the nation on the other side of the Gulf Stream."

"Which section?" asked the stranger, looking a little puzzled.

"The meridional section."

"Which is that? I don't know which meridian you mean."

"I mean no meridian. Perhaps the word is a little irregular; I studied French when I was in the Bangerwhangerlang College in China, and I am sometimes apt to get that language mixed up with some other. Let me see, we were speaking just now, were we not?"

"I was."

"Sometimes I can't speak any English, and I had forgotten about it. If you prefer to carry on this conversation in Hebrew or Hindostanee, I shall not object," added Christy gravely.

"I think I can do better with English."

"Have your own way about it; but 'meridional' in French means 'southern,' if you will excuse me for making the suggestion."

"Then I am meridional," replied the stranger, and he seemed to make the admission under the influence of a sudden impulse.

"Your hand on that!" promptly added Christy, extending his own.

"All right!" exclaimed the other. "My name is Percy Pierson. What is yours?"

"Percy Pierson!" exclaimed Christy, starting back with astonishment, as though his companion had fired a pistol in his face.

"What is the matter now?" demanded Percy Pierson, surprised at the demonstration of the other.

"What did you say your name was? Did I understand you aright?"

"I said my name was Percy Pierson. Is there any thing surprising about that?" asked Percy, puzzled at the demeanor of Christy.

"See here, my jolly high-flyer, who told you my name?" demanded the son of the owner of the Bellevite, with a certain amount of indignation in his manner.

"You did not, to be sure, though I asked you what it was."

"What sort of a game are you trying to play off on me? I am an innocent young fellow of sixteen, and I don't like to have others playing tricks on me. Who told you my name, if you please?"

"No one told me your name; and I don't know yet what it is, though I have asked it of you."

"Oh, get away with you! You are playing off something on me which I don't understand, and I think I had better bid you good-morning," added Christy, as he started to move off.

"Then you won't tell me your name. Stay a minute."

"You know my name as well as I do, and you are up to some trick with me," protested Christy, halting.

"Pon my honor as a Southern gentleman, I don't know your name."

"If you are a Southern gentleman, I must believe you, for I did not come from as far north as I might have come. My name is Percy Pierson," added Christy seriously; for he felt that this was actually war, and that the strategy that does not always or often speak the truth was justifiable.

"Percy Pierson!" exclaimed the real owner of the name. "Didn't I just tell you that was my name?"

"Undoubtedly you did, and that is the reason why I thought you were making game of me."

"But how can that be when my name is Percy Pierson?"

"Give it up; but I suggest that in London, where I came from, there are acres of King Streets, almost as many Queens; and, though you may not be aware of the fact, there are seven thousand two hundred and twenty-seven native and foreign born citizens of the name of John Smith. Possibly you and I are the only two Percy Piersons in the country, or in the world."

"Now you say you are from London, and a little while ago you said you were from farther north than I am. Which is it?"

"Isn't London farther north than any Southern State?"

"Enough of this," continued Percy impatiently.

"Quite enough of it," assented Christy.

"Will you tell me what steamer that is, where she is bound, and what she is here for?"

"My dear Mr. Pierson, it would take me forty-eight hours to tell you all that," replied the representative of the Bellevite, taking out his watch. "If you will meet me here to-morrow night at sundown, I will make a beginning of the yarn, and I think I can finish it in two days. But really you must excuse me now; for I have to dine with the Chinese admiral at noon, and I must go at once."

"I can put the owner of that craft in the way of making a fortune for himself, if he is willing to part with her," added Percy, as his companion began to move off.

"That is just what the owner of that steamer wants to do: he desires to part with her, and he is determined to get rid of her. I have the means of knowing that he will let her go just as soon as he can possibly get rid of her."

"Then he is the man my father wants to see; that is, if the vessel is what she appears to be, for no one is allowed to go on board of her."

"I am sorry to tear myself away from you, but positively I must go now; for the Chinese admiral will get very impatient if I am not on time, and I have some important business with him before dinner," said Christy, as he increased his pace and got away from Mr. Percy Pierson, though he was afraid he would follow him.

But he did not; instead of doing so, he began to talk with a boatman who had some kind of a craft at the landing. Christy was not in so much of a hurry as he had appeared to be, and he waited in the vicinity till he saw his Southern friend embark in a boat which headed for the Bellevite. He concluded that his communicative friend meant to go on board of her, thinking the vessel was for sale.

## CHAPTER VII

### A COMPLICATION AT GLENFIELD

The boat in which Christy had come on shore carried off to the steamer the last load of supplies, and she sailed in the middle of the afternoon. Captain Passford and Christy were standing on the quarter deck together; and, as the latter had not had time to tell his father his adventure before, he was now relating it.

The captain was amused with the story, and told his son that he had been approached by a gentleman who said his name was Pierson, and he was probably the father of the enterprising young man who had been so zealous to assist in the purchase of a suitable vessel for the service of the Confederates.

"Let me alone! Take your hands off of me!" shouted a voice that sounded rather familiar to Christy, as he and his father were still talking on the deck. "Let me alone! I am a Southern gentleman!"

"I know you are," replied Mr. Dashington, as he appeared on deck, coming up from the companionway that led to the cabin and ward-room, holding by the collar a young man who was struggling to escape from his strong grasp. "Don't make a fuss, my hearty: I want to introduce you to the captain."

"What have you got there, Mr. Dashington?" asked Captain Breaker, who was standing near the owner.

"I have got a young cub who says he is a Southern gentleman; and I suppose he is," replied the first officer. "But he is a stowaway, and was hid away under my berth in the ward-room.--Here you are, my jolly frisker: and that gentleman is the captain of the steamer."

As he spoke, the officer set his victim down rather heavily on the deck, and he sprawled out at full length on the planks. But he was sputtering with rage at the treatment he had received; and he sprang to his feet, rushing towards Mr. Dashington as though he intended to annihilate him. But, before he reached his intended victim, he stopped short, and eyed the tall and wiry first officer from head to foot.

He concluded not to execute his purpose upon him, for he could hardly have reached his chin if he resorted to violence. But he turned his back to the captain, so that the owner and his son did not get a look at his face. Captain Breaker walked up to him and began to question him.

"If you are a Southern gentleman, as I heard you say you were, don't you think it is a little irregular to be hid in the ward-room of this vessel?" was the first question the commander asked.

"I am what I said I was, and I am proud to say it; and I don't allow any man to put his hands on me," blustered the prisoner.

"But I think you did allow Mr. Dashington to put his hands on you," replied the captain.

"Of course I did not know that he was a Southern gentleman when I snaked him out from under the berth," added the first officer.

"I accept your apology," said the prisoner, coming down from his high horse with sudden energy; possibly because he felt that he had a mission on board of the steamer.

All present laughed heartily at the apology of the giant mate, and Christy changed his position so that he could see the front of the stowaway.

"Why, that is the gentleman I met on shore,--Mr. Percy Pierson!" exclaimed the owner's son, as soon as he saw the face of his late companion at the landing.

"I am glad to see you again, Mr. Percy Pierson," said the original of that name, as he extended his hand to Christy.

"I did not expect to meet you again so soon, and under such circumstances," replied he, taking the offered hand; for his father had proclaimed his own principle on board, that, though the war was not to be conducted on peace principles, it was to be carried on in an enlightened, and even gentlemanly manner, so far as he was concerned.

"I am right glad to see you, Mr. Percy Pierson, for I think you can assist me in the object I have in view," said the first officer's victim, looking now as though he was entirely satisfied with himself.

"What do you mean by calling each other by the same name?" inquired Captain Breaker, somewhat astonished at this phase of the conversation.

"That is the most astonishing thing in the world, that my friend here should have the same name I have; and he even thought I was playing a game upon him when I told him what my name was," replied Percy, laughing, and apparently somewhat inflated to find a friend on board.

"Precisely so," interposed Captain Passford, before the commander had time to say any thing more about the name.

"But, as you both have the same name, it will be necessary to distinguish you in some manner, or it may make confusion while you remain on board."

"I see the point, sir, though I do not expect to remain on board for any great length of time; or possibly you may not," answered Percy.

"Then, I suggest that you be called simply Percy, for that is a noble name; and the other young man shall be addressed as Pierson. By doing this we shall not sacrifice either of you," continued the owner, who did not understand what his son had been doing.

"I have not the slightest objection. My friend Pierson gave me some information in regard to this steamer which made me very desirous to get on board of her. That must explain why I was found here under circumstances somewhat irregular, though a true gentleman can sacrifice himself to the needs of his suffering country."

"To what country do you allude, Mr. Percy?" asked Captain Passford.

"To *our* country," replied Percy with strong and significant emphasis, as though he were sure that this would cause him to be fully understood.

"Exactly so," added the owner.

"But I see that you are sailing away from Nassau as fast as you can, and I think I had better explain my business as soon as possible," continued Percy, who seemed to be as confident as though he had already accomplished his purpose as hinted at in his conversation with Christy.

"I shall have to ask you to excuse me for a few minutes, for I have a little business with the captain of the steamer and this young man," said Captain Passford. "The tall gentleman who so gracefully apologized for his seeming rudeness to you will entertain you while I am absent."

The owner presented the tall first officer by name to his late victim, and at the same time gave him a look which Mr. Dashington understood to the effect that he was to keep the young man where he was. With a signal to his son and to the captain, he went below.

"I do not understand this masquerade, Christy," said he, as he seated himself at the cabin table. "What have you been telling this young fellow?"

Christy had only informed his father that he had been approached by Percy, and that he had, as well as he could, evaded his questions, and he had fooled the young man. He then gave the substance of the conversation at the landing, which amused both the owner and the commander very much; though he could not recall the Chinese names, invented on the spot, which he had used.

"All right, Christy. This young man is evidently the son of the gentleman by the name of Pierson who approached me for the purpose of purchasing the *Bellevite*. I went so far as to tell him that the vessel was for service in Southern waters. At any rate, he inferred that she was intended for the navy of the Confederate States, and I did not think it necessary to undeceive him. With this belief, he sought no further to buy the vessel, and I had no difficulty in shaking him off. It seems that the same mission absorbs the attention of the son, and that he has come on board to purchase the steamer."



"LET ME ALONE, I AM A SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN" (Page 81)

"I told him that you wanted to get rid of her, and that you would do so soon, by which, of course, I meant that she was to go into the service of the Government," added Christy.

"I should not have taken this young man on board; but, as he is here, he may be of use to us. But it is necessary to conceal from him the real character of the *Bellevite*, and we will keep up the farce as long as we please. So far as he is concerned, Christy, you may be my nephew instead of my son."

Captain Passford led the way back to the deck, where they found the first officer evidently on the best of terms with his prisoner. But Mr. Dashington had been as discreet as a man could be, and Percy had not obtained a particle of information from him.

"Now, Mr. Percy, I am at your service," said the owner, when he reached the deck. "I think you said you had some business with me."

"I have not the pleasure of knowing who or what you are, sir; and Mr. Dashington and my friend Mr. Pierson are all I know on board by name," added Percy.

"Then you must be made better acquainted before any thing can be done," replied the owner, pointing to the captain of the steamer. "Mr. Percy, this is Captain Breaker, the commander of the steamer."

"And this," added Captain Breaker, pointing at the owner, "is Captain Passford, who is the fortunate owner of this vessel, though she is soon to pass into other hands."

"Captain Passford!" exclaimed Percy, bowing to both gentlemen as he was presented to them. "That is a familiar name to me; and upon my word, I thought it was Colonel Passford of Glenfield when I first looked at him."

"He is my brother; but I never heard him called 'colonel' before," added the owner, laughing at the odd-sounding title, as it was to him.

"Colonel Homer Passford is the name by which he is often called near his residence," Percy explained. "He is the nearest neighbor of my father, Colonel Richard Pierson."

"Indeed! then you probably know my brother," said Captain Passford, interested in spite of himself.

"As well as I know any gentleman in the State of Alabama," replied Percy. "By the great palmetto! you are Colonel Passford's brother; and I think you must know Miss Florence Passford, who has been staying all winter with her uncle."

"She is my daughter," replied the owner with some emotion, which he could not wholly conceal when he thought of his mission in the South.

"I have met her several times, though not often, for I have been away from home at school. But my brother, Major Lindley Pierson, I learn from my letters, is a frequent visitor at your brother's house: and they even say"--

But Percy did not repeat what they said, though he had gone far enough to give the father of Florry something like a shock.

"What were you about to say, Mr. Percy?" he asked.

"I think I had better not say it, for it may have been a mere idle rumor," answered Percy, who was now beginning to disclose some of his better traits of character.

"Does it relate to my daughter, sir?" asked the captain rather sternly; for, in the present condition of the country, he was more than ordinarily anxious about his daughter.

"I ought not to have said any thing, sir; but what I was about to say, but did not say, does relate to Miss Florence," replied Percy, not a little embarrassed by the situation. "But I assure you, sir, that it was nothing that reflects in the slightest degree upon her. As I have said so much, I may as well say the rest of it, or you will think more than was intended was meant."

"That is the proper view to take of it, Mr. Percy."

"It was simply said that my brother Lindley was strongly attracted to your brother's house by the presence of your daughter. That is all."

But the fond father was very anxious. Of course the major was a Confederate.



## CHAPTER VIII

### A DISCONSOLATE PURCHASER OF VESSELS

The information in regard to Florry was very meagre and very indefinite. She was a very beautiful young lady of eighteen; and it was not at all strange that a young Confederate officer should be attracted to her, though the thought of it was exceedingly disagreeable to her father, under present circumstances.

Percy evidently was not satisfied with the situation; and after he had given the information which had so disturbed the owner of the steamer, he desired to change the subject of the conversation, to which Captain Passford only assented after he realized that nothing could be ascertained from him in regard to his daughter.

"I don't think I quite understand the situation on board of this steamer," said Percy, when he had told all he knew about the visits of his brother at Glenfield.

"What further do you desire to know in regard to her?" asked Captain Passford; for the commander, when he saw that there was a family matter involved in the conversation, was disposed to be very reticent.

"I did not come on board of this vessel in the manner I did--I do not even know her name yet," continued Percy; and when he found that he was talking to a brother of Colonel Passford, he dropped all his rather magnificent airs, and became quite sensible.

"The steamer is called the *Bellevite*," replied the owner.

"The *Bellevite*. It is an odd name, but I think I can remember it. I was about to say that I did not come on board of her, as I did, without an object; for I assure you that I am high-toned enough not to do any thing in an irregular manner unless for the most weighty reasons," said Percy, with an anxious look directed towards the island, which was now almost out of sight.

"I do not ask your reasons; but, if you wish to give them, I will hear all you have to say, Mr. Percy," replied the owner.

"I talked with Mr. Pierson on shore; and though he was disposed at first to chaff me, and avoid giving me any information in regard to this steamer, he afterwards informed me that the gentleman who owned her intended to get rid of her as soon as he could."

"And you came on board for the purpose of buying her?" suggested Captain Passford.

"I did not expect to buy her myself, of course; but my father is exceedingly anxious to obtain a steamer like this one, and he asked me to do what I could to obtain any information in regard to her. That was the object which brought me on board of her in a clandestine manner."

"You were very zealous in meeting the wishes of your father."

"More than that, I was at work in a good cause; and I think I have patriotism enough to do my duty to my country in the hour of her need," added the young man, with a swell of the chest.

"After his family, a man's first duty is to his country," said the owner.

"I wanted to go into the army, for I am eighteen years old; but my father insisted that I could be of more service to the Confederacy as his assistant in obtaining vessels for its use."

"I understand your motives."

"From what I learned from Mr. Pierson,--though I do not yet know who or what he is," said Percy, bestowing a smiling glance upon Christy.

"You may look upon him as my nephew," added Captain Passford, glancing at his son, who gave a slight bow for the benefit of the guest on board.

"From what I could learn from your nephew, sir, I concluded that this steamer could be bought, if I could only obtain an interview with the owner," continued Percy, with an inquiring glance at all who were present "I understand you are the owner of the vessel, Captain Passford."

"You are quite right: she has been my yacht since she was built, and a stronger and more able vessel was never put into the water."

"Mr. Pierson gave me to understand that he was in sympathy with the Confederacy; and since I came on board, and learned that you were a brother of our nearest neighbor, I have no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that you are a devoted friend of the Southern cause."

"What I am, for the present, I do not feel at liberty to say," replied Captain Passford, who was certainly reluctant to play

a double part before the young man, though he felt that the necessities of the occasion required him to do so.

"Quite right, sir; one cannot be too cautious in these times. But it is time for me to say that I did not intend to take passage in the *Bellevite*, and I am sure my father will be very anxious in my absence."

"May I ask how you did intend to proceed?"

"I can hardly tell myself, sir; but my object was to see the owner as soon as I could discover who he was. But I have found you now, Captain Passford, and I am glad to find in you a friend of our holy cause."

The owner only bowed; and it was as true as it could be that the representative of the intended purchaser of vessels jumped at nearly all of his conclusions, giving the captain but little occasion to say any thing that was not literally true; though the deception was just as real as though it had been carried on with actual falsehood.

"May I ask you for a few minutes in private, Captain Passford?" continued Percy.

"Certainly;" and the owner retired with him to the weather-rail.

"I have seen this vessel, and I have heard what you say of her. Now I am better informed in regard to her than my father is. I am not authorized to name a price, but I am very sure that he will buy her."

"So he said to me himself, Mr. Percy," added the owner with a smile.

"He said so to you, sir!" exclaimed the young man, starting back; for he believed that he had accomplished all that had been done towards buying the vessel.

"I had an interview with him, and stated most explicitly that the *Bellevite* could not be purchased by any person at any price; and when I hinted very guardedly to him, as I do to you, in the strictest confidence, that I am bound for Mobile Bay, he did not urge the matter. He was satisfied that the steamer was to be used in a good cause; and I can give you the same assurance, Mr. Percy."

The young man looked positively humble after he had listened to the remark of the owner, for he felt that his father had "taken all the wind out of his sails." He looked in the direction of the receding island of Nassau, and realized that he had been wasting his time, to say nothing of the wasted strategy he had bestowed on his enterprise.

"You have stated that you are bound for Mobile Bay, sir," said he. "That is a long distance from New Providence, as I have learned from experience."

"But this trip will give you the satisfaction of being restored to your own home in a very short time, for there is no faster vessel afloat than the *Bellevite*," added Captain Passford.

"It will put me into the army," said Mr. Percy; but he felt at once that he had made a slip of the tongue, and he hastened to correct the effect of his involuntary speech. "Of course, I wanted to go into the army of my country, as every patriotic fellow in the South does; but my father objects simply because I can be of more service to the good cause in another field of action, and I had to yield the point."

The owner thought he had not been guilty of a very savage yielding of his own inclination, but he said nothing. He was evidently the youngest child of the family, and doubtless the pet of his parents; and it was hard for them to put him in a position to be shot, or to endure the hardships of the camp.

"I see now that my mission is a failure, though with no detriment to the good cause. I wish I was in New Providence again," continued Mr. Percy, looking very much discontented with himself.

"I am sorry you did not speak to me on shore as your father did, and that would have saved you from all annoyance."

"But I must beg you to do me the favor to put me ashore again, for my father will suffer untold agonies when he misses me to-night."

"Put you on shore!" exclaimed Captain Passford. "You are a sensible and reasonable young gentleman, and you will readily see that this is quite impossible."

"We have not been out above two hours, sir," suggested Percy.

"But we have made thirty-six miles, at least, in that time; and to return would delay me about four or five hours,—long enough, perhaps, to defeat the object of my voyage. I assure you that it is wholly impossible for us to return."

"Do you think so, sir?" asked the enterprising purchaser of vessels, looking very disconsolate indeed.

"I not only think so, but I am perfectly sure on this point. You can see for yourself that I cannot sacrifice the object of my voyage—for the vessel has a special mission at her destination—by a delay of some hours. I am not responsible for your being on board, and I am sorry that I cannot do any thing for you."

"But you can put me ashore at Key West, and I may find some vessel bound to Nassau," suggested Percy, becoming more and more disconsolate, as he realized the difficulties of his situation, for he was plainly very much averse to returning to his home.

"But, my dear Mr. Percy, the *Bellevite* will not go within fifty miles of Key West; and if she did, I should not dare to put

in there, for the port is a naval station of the United States, and my vessel might be taken from me in the absence of any regular papers to explain her character."

"I suppose you are right," added Percy gloomily.

Captain Passford was really more afraid of falling in with any naval vessel of the nation than of meeting any of the Confederate tugs or other vessels which had been hurriedly fitted out, even at this early period of the war; for he knew that his mission, however justifiable under the circumstances, was quite irregular. He had decided to keep at least fifty miles from Key West, and the usual course of vessels bound into the Gulf of Mexico.

"We may meet some vessel, and you could put me on board of her," the disconsolate young man proposed.

"My mission compels me to give every vessel a wide berth, and I can incur no risks. But it cannot be a great hardship for you to be conveyed back to your own home."

"But my father needs me with him, and he will suffer terrible anxiety when he fails to find me. He will even think I am dead."

"I know he must be anxious, but I think some way will be found to send a letter to him."

"But I shall be compelled to go into the army, and my father is utterly opposed to that."

"But you have a brother who is a major in the army, and I should say that he will be able to save you."

"My brother is the one who insists that I shall go into one of the regiments forming in the State. He called me a coward because I yielded to my father and mother."

"All that is your own family affair, and I am sorry that I can do nothing for you, Mr. Percy.--Mr. Watts," he called to the chief steward, who was planking the lee-side of the deck.

"Here, sir," replied the official.

"Give Mr. Percy the best stateroom available, and see that he is made as comfortable and happy as possible," added the owner.

The involuntary guest on board was conducted to the cabin.

## CHAPTER IX

### CHRISTY MATURES A PROMISING SCHEME

However interesting the voyage of the *Bellevite* might prove to be, the purpose of this story does not admit of its details. Mr. Vapoor was instructed to the effect that a quick run was desirable, and he governed himself accordingly. At daylight on a bright May morning, the lofty light tower of Sand Island, off the entrance to Mobile Bay, was reported by the lookout, and the captain was called.

On the passage from Nassau, the guns of the steamer had been mounted; for, as a measure of prudence, they had been put in the hold. Though the owner hoped to avoid any close scrutiny of his outfit, and had succeeded in doing so, he was not inclined to tempt fate by any carelessness. But when the first watch was called, the night before her arrival off the bay, every thing was in condition for active service.

Captain Passford had not a particle of the foam generated by the excitement of the times, and he sincerely hoped he should have no occasion to use the guns which it had cost him so much trouble to procure. Fort Morgan was on one side of the entrance to the bay, and Fort Gaines on the other side.

He had seen a paragraph in one of his papers, to the effect that one or both of these works had been garrisoned by Confederate troops, and it was not likely to be an easy matter to get into the bay. As it looked to the owner and the commander, the only way to accomplish this feat was by running the gauntlet of both forts, which were just three nautical miles apart.

A shot from either of them might go through the boiler or engine of the *Bellevite*, which would render her utterly helpless, and subject all on board to the fate of prisoners-of-war. It looked like a terrible alternative to the owner, so overburdened with anxiety for the safety of his daughter; but he was prepared to run even this risk for her sake.

The method of getting into the bay had been fully considered by the owner and the captain; and as soon as the latter came on deck, he ordered the course of the vessel to be changed to the westward, as they had decided to enter the bay by the Middle Channel. For the danger from Fort Gaines was believed to be less than that from Fort Morgan, though either of them doubtless had the means of sinking the steamer with a single shot.

The water was shoal in the Middle Channel, and it was not prudent to attempt to go into the bay at any other time than high tide; though Captain Breaker was thoroughly acquainted with the channel, having once been engaged in a survey of the shifting shoals in this locality, and he had once before taken the *Bellevite* by this passage on a trip to New Orleans.

As he could not foresee the time of the steamer's arrival off the bay, he was obliged to consult his almanac, and make his calculations in regard to the tide, which rises and falls less than three feet at this point. It would not be safe to attempt the passage before nine o'clock in the forenoon, and he headed the vessel away from the land.

Percy had tried to make the best of his situation, annoying as it was; and Christy amused him with more Chinese reminiscences. Both of them came on deck at an unusually early hour on the morning that the Sand Island light was made out; for there was more commotion than usual on board, and even in the cabin, where the owner and commander discussed the situation.

"Here we are, my Chinese friend," said Percy, as he joined Christy on deck, and made out the tall tower in the distance. "I wish I was on the Island of Nassau, instead of here."

"Why, Mr. Percy, this is your own, your native land; and in China we always used to have a warm affection for our own country," replied Christy.

"You didn't have to go into the army there," said Percy with a sigh.

"But don't you want to go into the army?"

"Certainly I do; that is the dearest wish of my heart. But my father would not let me, and what could I do?"

"If you were bent on it, like a patriot, as you must be, you could run away and enlist. I don't know but I shall do that when I get back to China."

"I don't like to do any thing to make my poor father unhappy. I am afraid my absence now, without his knowing where I am, or whether I am dead or alive, will bring on a fit of sickness."

"But I am sure he would be very proud of you if you should run away and join the army."

"Perhaps he would; but I should not feel very proud of myself if I did a thing like that. I am only afraid I shall meet my brother, Major Pierson, and that he will make me go into some regiment against the wishes of my father and mother. He is not willing to hear a word from either of them," replied Percy, disgusted with the prospect before him.

"He is very patriotic," suggested Christy.

"He is altogether too patriotic for me. But don't misunderstand me: I am really very anxious to go into the army, and fight the enemies of my country."

"I see that you are, and perhaps you and I had better run away and enlist."

"My conscience would not let me do that contrary to the wishes of my parents," replied Percy, shaking his head vigorously.

"But you may not see your brother the major; for probably he has been ordered away with his regiment before this time," said his companion in comforting tones, though he was not as sincere as he generally was.

"I am afraid I shall; and I fear, that, in the absence of my father, he would put me into the ranks in spite of all I could do."

"But your mother is at home."

"Lindley don't care a rush for what she says in this matter, for he insists that a boy of eighteen ought not to be tied to his mother's apron-strings when his country needs his services, I may see my brother before we get fairly into the bay."

"Where in the world are you going to see him before you get on shore?" asked Christy, becoming more interested in the conversation.

"I believe he is in command of the garrison at Fort Gaines, though I am not sure," replied Percy, suddenly looking more disconsolate than ever at the prospect of meeting his patriotic brother.

"What makes you think he is?" asked Christy, with the feeling that he might be on the point of obtaining some useful information.

"They talked of sending him there before father and I left for New Providence."

"I supposed your brother was a young fellow like yourself."

"I believe he is twenty-six years old; but he has been two years in a military school in North Carolina, and they say he is a good soldier, and knows all about guns and forts and such things."

"Where do you think we are likely to overhaul him?"

"I don't know much about this business; but don't a boat have to come out from the fort and see that this vessel is all right before she can go into the bay?" asked Percy.

"I don't know about that. We may run into the bay without waiting for any boat."

"Then they fire on you from the fort," suggested the disconsolate.

"We rather expect that," added Christy quietly.

"You do?"

"Of course, a shot from the fort may blow us out of the water; but we can't help that, and we must take our chances of being hit."

"But that is terribly risky business, and the whole of us may be killed before we get by the fort."

"Of course: that may be the case; but we have no papers, and we have to take things as they come."

"It isn't pleasant to take cannon-balls as they come, for they are apt to hit hard. But they won't fire at us if a boat comes off to examine the vessel."

"But in that case you will have the pleasure of meeting your brother the major."

"And whatever he may do with the steamer, he will take me to the fort with him, and put me into the ranks."

"Perhaps we can save you from such a fate in some way," suggested Christy, who was already doing some heavy thinking on his own account.

"I wish you would!" exclaimed Percy, catching at the straw held out to him.

"There is time enough, and I will see you again," added Christy, as he joined his father on the fore-castle, where he was taking a survey.

The owner's son had an idea, and he thought it was a good one. Without losing any time, he laid it before his father, explaining it in detail. He was even ready to remove objections to the scheme, and was confident that it would succeed. Captain Passford called the commander, and informed him what his son had suggested. Captain Breaker heartily approved it; for, if it failed, it would leave the steamer in no worse position than before, with all her chances of running the gauntlet successfully still open to her.

Christy was the best person on board to manage the details, for he was the most intimate with the son of the purchaser of vessels. He returned to that part of the deck where he had left his companion. He found that Percy was very anxious

to see him again, for he had founded a hope on what had been said before.

"I think we can manage it, Mr. Percy, if you will do just what you are told to do," Christy began.

"I will do all that to the letter," protested Percy; and a smile actually lighted up his face at the prospect of escaping the fate to which his father and mother objected so strongly.

"You see the trouble with the *Bellevite* is that she has no papers; not even a letter from the Confederate agent who is picking up vessels for the navy. But I think we can manage it if you will learn your part correctly."

"I will do that. Do you think you can really keep my brother from taking me to the fort?" asked Percy, his tones and manner burdened with anxiety.

"I feel almost sure of it."

"Good for you!"

"You must go into the cabin now with me. They are just starting up the steamer again, and she will soon reach the channel where she is going into the bay."

The owner and the commander were busy in instructing the ship's company in regard to what would be expected of them as soon as the *Bellevite* was in motion again. All the men spoken to smiled as they heard what was said to them, and they evidently regarded the whole affair as a decided pleasantry. But they all promised to be very discreet, and to say only what they had been told to say if they were called on for any information by Confederate officials.

In the mean time Christy was very busy with his pupil, who entered heartily into the plan which promised to save him from shouldering a musket in one of the companies of his brother's regiment. He had been quite enthusiastic from the first; and, as he was deeply interested in the result of the adventure, he was a very apt pupil.

As the *Bellevite* approached the Middle Channel, a tug-boat was discovered off Fort Gaines, which immediately began to move towards the approaching steamer. Examined with the glass, a heavy gun was seen on her fore-castle.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ATTEMPT TO PASS INTO MOBILE BAY

The tug appeared to be one of the craft which had been hastily prepared for service, and she did not look like a formidable vessel. Captain Breaker was sure he could blow her out of the water with his heavy guns, on an emergency; but this would be bad policy, and he did not propose to do any thing of this kind.

He was not as confident as Captain Passford and his son were that the plan adopted would be an entire success, with the assistance of Percy; but there could be no harm in trying it. He intended to pass as near Fort Gaines as possible, for it was not probable that the works were yet in the best condition; and two miles from Fort Morgan, which was doubtless much stronger, would afford a better chance of escaping any shots fired from it.

As the *Bellevite* approached the channel, where there could not be more than a foot of water under her keel, Christie came on deck, followed by Percy. The latter wore a sort of naval uniform, which his instructor had borrowed for him from his own stock. It fitted him well; for he was no larger than the owner's son, though he was two years older.

Percy was to be on duty, on board of the steamer, as a Confederate agent taking the vessel into the bay for service. He was not a little inflated by the position which had been assigned to him, though he had no powers whatever, except in appearance. He had been instructed to conduct himself boldly, and to insist that the vessel was in his charge, when she was boarded by officers from the tug or from the fort. His very nature inclined him to play this part to the best advantage.

The blockade had been established at some of the northern ports of the seceded States, but not yet at the cities on the Gulf of Mexico; and the only real obstacle to the passage of the *Bellevite* into the bay consisted of the two forts, for the tug-boats were not regarded as of any consequence to an armed steamer of great speed like the *Bellevite*,

"We are approaching the shoal water now," said Captain Breaker to Mr. Vápoor, as the steamer came near the southeastern end of Pelican Island. "We may take the ground, for the shoals have an ugly trick of changing their position. Let her go at about half speed."

"Half speed, sir," replied the chief engineer, as he descended to the engine-room.

"Is it fully high tide now, Breaker?" asked Captain Passford, who was watching the movements of the vessel with the most intense interest, for it seemed to him that the critical moment in his enterprise had come.

"Not quite; it will not be full sea for about half an hour," replied the commander. "If we take the ground, we shall have some small chance of getting off.--Mr. Dashington."

"On duty, sir," responded the first officer.

"Beeks has the wheel, I believe?"

"Yes; and Thayer is with him."

"They are both reliable men; but I wish you would stand by the helm, and see that the steamer is headed directly towards the eastern end of Dauphine Island. That will give us the deepest water till we get to the spit. Have a man in the port and starboard chains with directions to sound as fast as possible."

"Mr. Blowitt," called the first officer, "let a hand sound in the port and starboard chains, and look out for it yourself, if you please."

The second officer went forward and the first officer aft, each to perform the duties assigned to him by the captain. The speed of the *Bellevite* had been reduced, and she was going along at a very easy rate. The tug was some distance beyond Fort Gaines when she was first seen, and she seemed to be incapable of making more than six knots an hour.

The steamer had taken on board all the coal it was possible for her to stow away in her bunkers, and a large supply had been put into the hold; but she had used a considerable portion of it in her rapid passage, though she had still an abundant supply for her return voyage. The reduction in the quantity had made her draught somewhat less, and the owner and captain hoped she would get through the channel.

But the thought had hardly passed through their minds before the *Bellevite* came to a sudden stop, and her keel was heard grinding on the bottom. Mr. Vápoor heard the sound in the engine-room, and felt the jar; and before any bell came to him, he had stopped the machine, and reversed it so as to check the steamer's headway.

"Run her back with all the steam you can crowd on, Mr. Vápoor," said Captain Breaker, as he hastened to the door of the engine-room.

"I don't think she hit the ground very hard, captain," added the chief engineer.

"No; she will come off. The ground has shifted since I was here last," said the captain of the vessel.

But it was half an hour before she yielded to the pressure brought to bear upon her, and then only because a few inches had been added by the tide to the depth of water. She went back, and came into depth enough to give her a foot under her keel.

"It don't look very hopeful," said Captain Passford, as he joined the commander at the door of the engine-room.

"Oh, I think we shall be all right now!" replied Captain Breaker very cheerfully. "I have found where the shoal is now, and I know where to find deeper water.--Keep her going astern, Mr. Vápoor."

"A boat from the fort, sir," reported a messenger, who had been sent aft by the second officer on the forecastle.

"That looks like an inquiry into our business here," added the owner.

"Now we are all right," said the commander, who was watching the position of the vessel very carefully. "I must go to the wheel, and look out for the course myself."

Again the Bellevite went ahead; and she soon reached a point half way between the two forts, and her speed was reduced to not more than three knots. But the tug was approaching, and the worst part of the channel was still to be attempted. The two men in the chains reported the depth as rapidly as they could heave the lead, and it was soon evident that the steamer could not pass the extensive bar to the westward of the ship-channel.

"Steamer ahoy!" shouted the captain of the tug, as he stopped his screw within hailing-distance of the Bellevite.

"Reply to that hail, Mr. Percy," said the commander to the young gentleman in uniform. "You must do all the talking."

"I shall be very happy to do it, and I think I can do it to your satisfaction," replied Percy confidently.

"Jump up on the rail nearest to the tug, where you can see and hear."

"I am not much of a sailor, Captain Breaker, and I don't pretend to be one," added Percy. "What shall I say to the captain of that boat?"

"On board of the tug!" shouted the agent of his father, after the commander had instructed him in regard to his speech.

"What steamer is that?" demanded the master of the tug.

Captain Breaker instructed him in what manner to make his reply, though he did not tell him what to say. The young man was to explain the character of the vessel as he understood it; and neither the commander nor the owner was disposed to indulge in any unnecessary strategetical falsehood, though they felt that they could do so in the service of the Union.

"The Bellevite from Nassau," replied Percy.

"Is she a Federal vessel?" inquired the captain of the tug with the greatest simplicity.

"A Federal vessel!" exclaimed Percy, evidently expressing by his manner some of the indignation he felt. "Do you mean to insult me, sir?"

"No, I do not mean to insult you; but it becomes necessary for me to ascertain something more in regard to the steamer," returned the other. "Where are you from?"

"I told you the vessel was from Nassau."

"But she don't hail from Nassau. Where did she come from before that?"

"From Bermuda," answered Percy, as instructed.

"But she don't belong to Bermuda."

The volunteer agent of the Confederate cause was not able to answer any questions in this direction, and the commander did not tell him what more to say.

"Can you tell me who is in command of Fort Gaines at the present time?" demanded Percy, branching out on his own account.

"I can; but I want you to tell me something more about the steamer, before I answer any questions. Is the steamer armed?"

"She is armed; and she could blow your tug into ten thousand pieces in four minutes if she should open upon you," added Percy; and the listeners were of the opinion that he was beginning to use strong speech.

"That may be; but with a fort on each side of you, I don't think you will get into the bay in broad daylight," said the captain of the tug. "The commander of Fort Gaines is in that boat, and I suppose he is coming off to examine the steamer. As you are not disposed to answer my questions, you can wait for him; but if you try to get into the bay, you will find that a shot from both forts can reach you."

"I am an agent of the Confederate government, and my father has been sent to Nassau to obtain vessels for our navy,"



continued Percy, as he saw that the boat from the fort was still some distance from the vessel.

"Why didn't you say so before?" demanded the captain of the tug rather impatiently. "Of course you have some papers from the agent at Nassau, to show what the vessel is."

"Not a single paper; he had no time to give me any."

"Who is the agent?"

The question was evidently put as a test; for if the young agent, as the captain could see that he was, gave a known name, it would be some evidence that he told the truth.

"Colonel Richard Pierson; and he is my father."

"Your father!" exclaimed the other, evidently impressed with the fact, and his tone was more respectful.

"You can come on board and see her for yourself," suggested Percy, prompted by the commander; for there was nothing on board to betray her true character, the guns having been concealed.

"I will not do that, as the commander of the fort will soon be here, and he may make the examination for himself. But perhaps you will be willing to give me your name?" added the captain.

"My name is Percy Pierson; and, as I told you, I am the son of Colonel Richard Pierson."

"Then you are the brother of Major Pierson, who is in command of Fort Gaines. I think it must be all right."

"Of course it is all right. Do you think I would bring a vessel into this bay if she were not all right?" inquired Percy with becoming indignation.

"I suppose you have heard there is going to be a war, and it is necessary to find out what vessels go into the bay," said the captain of the tug, when he had brought his craft quite near the steamer. "That is a very fine vessel."

"It is the fastest and strongest steamer that floats, and she will give a good account of herself when the trouble begins in earnest."

"Here comes the boat from the fort, and I see that Major Pierson is in the stern sheets. I have no doubt he will find you all right," said the captain.

The boat came alongside of the Bellevite, and the major went on board.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE MAJOR IN COMMAND OF FORT GAINES

Percy Pierson retained his position on the rail when his brother the major came up the gangway steps, which had been put over for him. As the latter went up, he could not help seeing him; and his astonishment evidently mounted to the highest degree, as manifested in his expression. The owner and the commander stood near the rail, to give the visitor a pleasant reception.

But the major took no notice of them; for his attention was plainly absorbed in his surprise at seeing his brother, dressed in uniform, on the rail of the steamer. He halted as soon as he had mounted the rail, over which he must pass to reach the deck. He looked at Percy for some time, without being able to say a word, and seemed to be not quite sure that it was he.

The younger brother was as silent as the older one; for he had had some rather exciting times with him in the matter of enlisting, and he was not very confident of his reception at the hands of the commander of Fort Gaines. He looked at him with interest, not unmingled with some painful solicitude for the future.

"Percy!" exclaimed Major Pierson at last, when he was entirely satisfied that the young man was his brother, in spite of the uniform of blue he wore, though the gray had not yet come into extensive use.

"Lindley!" added the younger, evidently desiring to go no faster than the occasion might require of him.

"I am glad to see you back again," continued the major, without offering to take his hand. "You deserted like a coward, and I have been ashamed of you ever since. A young fellow like you, eighteen years old, who will not fight for his country, ought to lose the respect of even his own brother."

"That is a pleasant greeting," replied Percy, with the suspicion of a sneer on his face.

"It is all that a coward deserves," replied Lindley severely.

"I am no coward, any more than you are," protested Percy. "You know that father did not wish me to join the army, though I wished to do so."

"I know that you wished to do so just as any other coward does,—over the left."

"What could I do when father told me not to go to the war?"

"What could you do? You could have gone! If you had not been a poltroon, you would have joined the first regiment that came in your way."

"I never was in the habit of disobeying my father," pleaded the young agent.

"You were not? You ran away to New Orleans last winter when your father told you not to go. You came home from the academy when he told you to remain there. You have spent the evening in Mobile when he told you not to go there. I could tell you instances all day in which you disobeyed him, and mother too," continued the soldier warmly.

"That was different."

"It was different; and you could obey your father in a bad cause, but not in a good one. I am heartily ashamed of you, and I don't feel willing to own you as a brother of mine."

"But my father told me that I could better serve the good cause by going with him than I could by joining the army."

"And you were willing to go with him, for then you could keep out of danger. Father is getting old, and he is not fit to serve in the army; and you have been his pet since you were born. But that is no excuse for you; and if I can get you back into the army, I mean to do so."

Percy was afraid he might succeed, and he did not feel as confident as he had been; and he lost, for the time, some of his self-possession. He was confronting the fate he had dreaded when he found the steamer was leaving Nassau.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the major, looking down upon the deck of the vessel for the first time.

"I am taking this steamer into the bay, where she is to go into the service of the Confederate States," answered Percy, plucking a little more confidence from the nature of his present occupation.

"You are taking her into the bay!" exclaimed the older brother.

"That is what I said, and that is what I mean," added Percy, glad to see that his mission had produced an impression.

"Taking this steamer into the bay!" repeated the major, evidently unable to comprehend the mission of his brother. "Do you mean to say that *you* are taking her in, Percy?"

"That is what I mean to say, and do say."

"Are you the pilot of the steamer? I should think you might have been, for she was aground just now," sneered the commander of the fort.

"I am not the pilot, and I don't pretend to be a sailor; but the steamer is in my charge," replied Percy, elevating his head to the need of the occasion.

"In charge of the steamer! I would not trust a coward like you in charge of a sick monkey," added Lindley, with his contempt fully expressed in his face.

"See here, Lindley, I don't mean to be insulted on board of this steamer by my own brother. If you can't be decent, I have nothing more to say to you!" cried Percy, his wrath breaking out quite violently.

"If you give me an impudent word, I will take you into the boat and put you into the fort," added the major, as he stepped down upon the deck.

"No, you won't. I will jump overboard before I will be carried to the fort. I have done just what my father told me to do, to say nothing of my mother; and I won't be insulted by you. It is you who are the coward and the poltroon, to do so," continued Percy, boiling over with rage.

Whatever provocation the major had had for his savage treatment of his brother, the owner of the *Bellevite* thought his conduct was unjustifiable. The young man was under age; and whether or not his father was less a patriot than his older son, the latter was certainly unkind, ungenerous, and even brutal. Without being a "milk-and-water man," Captain Passford was full of kindness, courtesy, and justice. He did not like the behavior of the major towards his brother.

It looked like a family quarrel of the two brothers on board of the steamer; for Percy was evidently "a weak chicken," after all, though he had become desperate under the stings and reproaches of the major. Under present circumstances, it did not appear that Percy could be of any service on board of the *Bellevite*, for his brother would not hear a word he said. Captain Passford directed the commander to have every thing ready for a hurried movement at once, for there was but little hope of satisfying a man as unreasonable as the commander of the fort had proved himself to be in his dealing with his brother.

The captain of the steamer went to Mr. Vapoor, who was standing near the door of the engine-room, and said something to him, which soon produced a lively effect among the coal-passers below.

"I will attend to your case in a few minutes, Percy, for I do not allow any one to be impudent to me," growled the major.

"Nor I either. If you put a finger on me, I will put a bullet through your head, if you are my brother!" yelled Percy, as he took a small revolver from his hip-pocket.

This demonstration increased the anger of Lindley; and he ran up the steps to the rail again, where he called upon two soldiers to come on deck. At the same moment, Captain Breaker, as instructed by the owner, rang the bell on the quarter, and the engine began to move again. Before the men from the boat could leave it, the steamer was moving, and it was no longer possible for them to obey the order.

"What are you about, sir?" demanded Major Pierson, rushing to the commander, not a little excited by what had been done.

"I think this thing has gone about far enough, sir," replied Captain Breaker, as calmly as though there had not been a ripple on the surface of affairs.

"But I came on board of this steamer to make an examination of the character of the vessel," protested the major, who evidently did not like the present aspect of the situation.

"I have waited for you to do so; but I do not care to lose the tide while you are quarrelling with your brother, sir," added the commander.

"But I order you to stop, sir!" continued the major.

"What am I to do, Mr. Percy?" asked Captain Breaker, addressing the young man with a revolver in his hand.

There was something on the part of the commander which indicated that he was playing a part, as were all on board, though he seemed to be a little amused to find that he was taking his orders from a boy of eighteen. At the same time he nodded his head slightly, though very significantly, to the young agent.

"Go ahead just as fast as you can make the steamer travel, Captain Breaker," said Percy, with as much energy as though he had been in command of a Confederate fleet.

"Certainly, Mr. Percy; I shall obey your order, as you have charge of the vessel," added the commander.

This passage between the authority of the steamer and his brother absolutely confounded the major, and for a couple of minutes he was unable to say any thing at all. But Captain Breaker, who was the only pilot on board, was obliged to leave the ship's guest in order to look out for the course of the steamer.

It seemed to be useless to attempt to get over the bar where he had tried to do so; and he directed the vessel towards

the main ship-channel, finding plenty of water to enable him to reach it. But he would have to run the gauntlet of Fort Morgan, and the chances of a shot were against him.

"Do you mean to say that Percy is in charge of this steamer, Captain Breaker?" demanded Major Pierson, who had by this time recovered some portion of his self-possession.

"That is what both he and I said to you," replied Captain Breaker.

"And the vessel is to be in the service of the Confederate States," added Percy, with more pluck than he had displayed before. "If my brother will not let her pass into the bay, I will go on shore at Fort Morgan, and explain the situation to the officer in command," blustered Percy; and perhaps he would have done just as much under the circumstances if he had known the vessel was on the other side in the coming conflict.

"Where are your papers, sir?" asked the major.

"We have no papers; and that is why I am come in charge of the steamer," replied the agent, who seemed to be quite able to strain a point when necessary.

"We met Colonel Richard Pierson in Nassau, and I believe he is your father and Mr. Percy's," answered Captain Breaker.

"He is; but I can hardly understand how he happened to send my brother home in charge of this fine steamer," said the major, glancing at his brother.

"Going into the army is not all the duty a man has to do for his country," said Percy warmly.

"May I ask where this vessel came from?" inquired the commander of the fort.

"From New York before she went to Bermuda and Nassau; before that, from England," replied the commander evasively.

"If you are really in charge of the steamer, Percy, I have nothing more to say," continued Major Pierson. "Now may I ask who owns her?"

"Captain Horatio Passford, who stands there?"

The officer in command of the fort started back as though he had received another surprise, greater than before.

## CHAPTER XII

### HOW THE BELLEVITE PASSED FORT MORGAN

Major Lindley Pierson was plainly very much disturbed when the owner of the *Bellevite* was pointed out to him by the commander. He had practically retreated from the position he had taken with his brother, and had apparently given up the idea of sending him to the fort to be made a soldier.

From the point which the steamer had reached, just north of Little Pelican Island, Captain Breaker had directed Mr. Dashington to head the vessel to the eastward, through Sand Island Channel; and she was now moving towards the main ship-channel, which passed under the very guns of Fort Morgan.

The tug had picked up the boat from the fort on the other side of the bay, and was following the *Bellevite*, though she had fallen a long way behind her in a very short time. It was about two miles to the more formidable fort, and the steamer was going at full speed, so that it could not be long before a shot would interrupt the harmony of her movements.

In the mean time the commander of Fort Gaines was really a prisoner on board of the *Bellevite*, for Captain Breaker had started her screw before he could get any of his force on board. But the major was not half so much disturbed by this fact as he was by the consciousness that he had behaved in a very rude, brutal, and tyrannical manner in the presence of Colonel Passford's brother, who had thus far spoken not a word to him.

"Captain Breaker, may I ask you to present me to the owner of the steamer?" said Major Pierson, after he had looked about him for a time, and perhaps considered how he should atone for his rudeness.

"Certainly, if you desire it," replied the commander, who was as polite as though he had been brought up in Paris, though he was hardly an exception to all naval officers.

"Will you excuse me if I say that you are running at great speed, sir, and a shot from Fort Morgan cannot be much longer postponed," added the major, as he glanced at the fort on the right.

"I did not willingly start the steamer, sir; but it was my duty to protect the agent in whose charge the steamer comes into port. If you say that he shall suffer no further annoyance, either on your own part or that of your people, I will stop the screw and wait your pleasure," said the commander.

"I have had some difficulty with my brother, and it looked incredible to me that he had come into Mobile Bay in charge of this fine vessel. I apologize to you and the owner for my rudeness, and assure you that I will not trouble Percy again while he remains on board," continued Major Pierson, with no little embarrassment in his manner.

"I accept the apology, and your explanation is entirely sufficient. What happens to Mr. Percy after he leaves the steamer does not concern me," answered Captain Breaker with a polite bow, as he went to the quarter and rang the bell to stop her.

When he had done this, he conducted Major Pierson to the quarter-deck, where Captain Passford and Christy were seated, and formally presented him to both of them.

"I am most happy to make your acquaintance, Captain Passford," said the commander of Fort Gaines, as he extended his hand to the owner, which was taken, though the expression of the gentleman from the North did not indicate that he was very well pleased with him.

To Christy he was as polite as to his father, and to both he was almost obsequious. It was rather difficult for father or son to realize that this was the man who had threatened to send his own brother to the fort as a soldier, to say nothing of the abusive language he had used.

"I am very glad to see you in the State of Alabama, Captain Passford, and especially at this time," the major began; and it looked as though the cordiality of his welcome was to compensate for former rudeness.

"I am not a total stranger here," added the owner rather coldly.

"It affords me a degree of pleasure I cannot express to see you come here, as events are getting big all around us, and with such a fine steamer. I am sure the Government will regard you as one of its greatest and truest benefactors," continued Major Pierson.

"It is my intention to serve the good cause with whatever measure of ability I may possess; but I do not care to say any thing at all about my purpose till I have talked with my brother. I hope I shall find my brother Homer in full sympathy with me in my views," added the owner, though it was not a pleasure to him even to deceive an enemy.

"Colonel Passford!" exclaimed the major. "Have you any doubt about him?"

"Hardly any, though I prefer to talk with him before I say much on my own account."

"Colonel Passford is not a very demonstrative man, but no one in the vicinity of Glenfield has any doubt as to how he stands on the great question."

"I think no one will have any doubt as to how I stand, as soon as I take my position."

"Certainly, sir, you will give no doubtful sound."

"I hope not."

"I came on board to examine this steamer before we permitted her to pass the forts," continued Major Pierson. "I find her in charge of my brother, in the absence of any letter from my father or other Confederate agent. I humbly apologize for the rudeness of which I was guilty, though I assure you I have had abundant provocation for it."

"That is a family affair with which we have nothing to do beyond the proper protection of the young agent in charge of the steamer."

"I wish to say that I am entirely satisfied, Captain Passford, and I am heartily delighted to learn that you are about to make your residence in this section of the country," said the major, who seemed to have assured himself on this point without much assistance from those most deeply concerned.

The owner looked at him, and tried to ascertain what was passing in his mind; and it was not a very difficult enterprise to accomplish his purpose. The hint he had received about the frequent visits of Major Pierson at Glenfield seemed to explain the present operations of his mind. Florry Passford was a beautiful young lady of eighteen, and any young man of twenty-six could easily have been excused for making his visits very often at the mansion in which she resided.

Though the fond father was not disposed to interfere unnecessarily with the choice of his daughter, even the hint that she might be entangled more than a thousand miles from her home had given him a positive shock. Now that he had seen the young man, and observed his conduct on board of the Bellevite, he most earnestly hoped that she was not in any degree committed to him. He had an additional inducement to get her away from the home of his brother, and the thought of it nerved him to increased exertion. What he had seen of the commander of Fort Gaines, though he appeared to be a faithful, patriotic, and energetic young man, as he understood his duty to his country, assuredly he was not the person he would have chosen for Florry. But his brother could tell him more about it, and how far the matter had gone, when he saw him.

By the time Captain Passford had settled his conclusions as far as he could, the tug came up to the steamer, towing the boat from the fort, Percy felt that he had won a victory over his brother, and a Bantam rooster could not have made a wider spread on the deck. He seemed to feel that he was in command of the steamer, though he did not venture to interfere with any thing on board.

"I am very sorry to have given you any annoyance, Captain Passford," said the major, as the tug came up to the gangway. "I think we should have understood each other better if your steamer had not got aground."

"We have suffered little or no inconvenience, sir."

"Whether you have or not, you shall suffer no more. The tug has come alongside, and I will see that you are not delayed a moment after I can get to Fort Morgan, which will certainly fire upon you if I do not interfere; and I will go to it in the tug," continued the major, who was still struggling to make all the atonement in his power for his former conduct.

"You are very kind, Major Pierson, and I am under obligations to you. I have not seen my daughter for nearly six months, or my brother; and the sooner I meet them, the better I shall like it," replied the owner.

"I have had the pleasure of meeting your daughter several times, as your brother's plantation is next to my father's. It is possible that, if the exigencies of the coming war permit, I may desire to address a communication to you at no distant day," said Major Pierson, with considerable embarrassment in his manner.

Captain Passford made no reply to this remark; for he thought it was entirely out of place under present circumstances, and hoped matters had not gone far enough even to think of future formalities. The major shook hands with the owner and his son, and then with the commander, and went over the side. As he did so, he requested Captain Breaker not to advance till he reached the fort, or at least not to attempt to pass it.

The tug-boat went off on its course, but it was nearly half an hour before it got near enough to the fort to allow the Bellevite to start her screw. As there was nowhere less than three fathoms of water, and Captain Breaker knew every inch of bottom, he directed Mr. Vapoor to hurry the engine, so that no one should have time to change his mind. The steamer shot by the fort as though she did not like the looks of it, and in another half an hour she was out of the reach of its guns.

The commander had piloted the steamer to her present destination before; and there was plenty of water till she nearly reached the wharf, where the planter could load small vessels with cotton. It was not within the city of Mobile, though it was not far from it; and it was a sort of low-ground paradise, which money and taste had made very beautiful.

"What am I to do now, Mr. Pierson?" asked Percy, when the steamer had come to her moorings alongside the wharf.

"That will be for you to decide, Mr. Percy: but you had better take that uniform off before you live any longer, for I am afraid some one will mistake your character if you wear it on shore," replied Christy.

"I don't know that I shall go on shore," replied the agent doubtfully. "I got by my brother very nicely, thanks to Captain Breaker; for I should have been sent to the fort if he had not started the screw."

"Do you think you are in any danger here?" asked Christy.

"I know I am. My father's house is over in that direction about half a mile. My brother can leave the fort any time he likes; and he will either do so, or send some of his men up here in the fast tug to catch me."

"Why don't you go into the army, if your brother is so anxious about it, Percy?"

"That is just what I want to do, but my father positively forbid my doing so," replied the volunteer agent. "I should like to get back to Nassau; for I know I shall be forced into the army, in spite of my father, if I stay here."

"My boy," called his father, "I am going on shore now, and I should like to have you go with me to see your uncle."

Christy was glad to do so; and he departed with the owner, leaving Percy in charge of the commander.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A DECIDED DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

If Homer Passford was not a rich man in the sense that his brother was, he was still a wealthy man, and lived in a style as elegant as that of any nabob in the South. More than this, and of vastly more consequence, he was a good and true man. He was a member of his church, and his brother believed that he was a genuine and true religious man. The same principles of justice, humanity, and fairness had been born into both of the brothers, and inherited from the same father.

This was the brother whom he from the North was about to visit on the most solemn and momentous questions which could unite or separate the only two sons of the same father. Though Horatio had reasoned himself into the belief that Homer was as strongly a Union man as he was himself, he had argued without any adequate premises; and now, when he was almost on the threshold of his door, he did not feel sure of the position of his brother, though his hope was very strong.

It was with no little trepidation on this account that he rang the bell at the front door of Glenfield. A few minutes or an hour or two would settle the momentous question, and decide whether or not all the family, as well as Florry, would take passage in the Bellevite for a more Northern clime.

"De Lo'd!" exclaimed the venerable colored man that came to the door. "De hull family done be very glad to see you, Massa 'Ratio."

"I hope you are very well, Pedro," replied Captain Passford, as he gave his hand to the old servant. "Here is Christy."

"De Lo'd bless Massa Christy!" And he shook hands with the son as he had with the father.

"Is your master at home, Pedro?" asked the visitor, in haste to see his brother.

"Yes, sar; all de folks to home; jes' gwine to lunch. I spects dey all verry glad to see Massa 'Ratio and Massa Christy. Walk in, sar; took a seat in de parlor; and I done reckon we call Massa Homer and de rest ob de folks afore you gits to sleep in yer char, that," said Pedro, as he scurried out of the room where he had shown the visitors.

It was Florry who caught the first sound of the visitors who had arrived, and she rushed into the drawing-room before the others could be called from up-stairs. She bounded into the room like a fawn, with her eyes swimming with tears, and threw herself into her father's arms. She could not speak a word, and the captain was as dumb as she was.

For a moment she remained folded in his arms, and then she gently disengaged herself, to render the same wealth of affection in its manifestation to her brother, who was standing by her father when she darted into the room. But Christy was a boy, and not as demonstrative as his father, though he discharged the duties of the affecting occasion with becoming fidelity, so that the loving girl was sure that his heart was where it had always been.

"Why, papa, I had no idea of seeing you to-day!" exclaimed Florry, when she had wiped away her abundant tears. "I did not know that I should ever see you again, for they say that all the roads to the North have been closed to travel."

"We did not come by land, either by railroad or otherwise; and the Bellevite lies at the wharf near this house," the captain explained.

"I was terribly afraid I should never see you again, and that I should have to stay here till this war is ended, papa; but they say it will soon be over," said the fair girl.

"I am afraid it will not be over for a long time, for each side is firmly united in its own cause. But I could not leave you here. Do you want to go back to Bonnydale, Florry?"

"Do I want to go back? What a funny question, papa!" exclaimed she.

"Why is it a funny question?" asked the anxious father, recalling the rather presumptuous suggestion the gallant major from Fort Gaines had made.

"Don't you think I want to see mamma? You have not told me a word about her; and it is a long time now since I have heard any thing. I do want to go home, and especially I want to see mamma."

"Then you shall see her."

"Is she here, papa?" exclaimed Florry, leaping out of the chair in which she had seated herself.

"She is not here, my child. She is at home, but it will not take many days to bear you to her," replied the devoted father, embracing her again, while she kissed him over and over again.

"Can I see her before the war is over, papa?" she asked.

"Certainly you can, if no accident interferes with my plans. You really want to go home?"



"To be sure I do. How cruel it is of you to ask me such a question!"

"Then I won't ask it again. But perhaps you will not be able to come to Glenfield again for years," added Captain Passford, looking earnestly into her face.

"What makes you look at me so, papa? What have I done? You look just as you did when I was little and pulled the kitten's tail."

"It is a long time since I have seen you, Florry and I want to look at you all I can."



"SHE WAS CLASPED IN HER FATHER'S ARMS" (Page 148)

"Then you may look at me as much as you wish; and I shall be thankful it is not that Major Pierson who comes here, for he has stared me out of countenance every time he came," replied she, blushing a little.

"Then you don't like him, do you?" asked her father, with more interest than he cared to display.

"I like him well enough, but I wish he would not stare at me all the time. He seems to think I am good for nothing but to look at," replied Florry smartly.

But the entrance of Mr. and Mrs. Passford turned aside the inquiries the captain was making before he had satisfied himself, though he had obtained enough to afford him some hope. The greeting extended to the brother and nephew was all that could be expected or desired; and if the country had not been riven into two bitterly hostile sections, the interview could not have been more brotherly and affectionate. A full hour was used in talking about the trip of the *Bellevite*, so anxious were the family, including Florry, to hear the particulars of the voyage.

"But how in the world did you get here, Horatio, when every public conveyance that leads into the South has been discontinued?" asked Homer.

"I came as I came before," replied Horatio.

"You came in the *Bellevite*!" exclaimed Homer.

"I did."

"But how did you get by the forts? Both of them have been garrisoned, and they have been ordered to allow no vessel to pass unless she give a good account of herself," continued the planter.

"In other words, it is war now," added Horatio.

"Undoubtedly it is war; and, in my judgment, it will be a terrible conflict before it is finished."

"I fully agree with you, Homer."

"But you did not tell me in what manner you passed the two forts, which are already strong enough to blow your steamer into a thousand pieces," suggested Homer.

"I did not tell you, and I think we had better understand each other a little better before I say any thing at all about the passage of the forts; though I can assure you that not a single shot was fired at the Bellevite," said Horatio, somewhat embarrassed by the situation.

"De lunch am ready, saw," said a dorky at the door at this moment; and perhaps the summons saved the owner of the Bellevite from some further annoyance.

An hour was spent at the table, for there was enough to talk about without meddling with delicate subjects. When the repast was over, Florry invited her brother to look at the flower-garden, which was in the height of its glory, and she was followed by Gerty her cousin, and by Mrs. Passford. As in the Northern family, there were only two children; but Cornelius, or Corny as he was generally called, was not at home, though nothing at all was said about him.

Horatio was invited into the library by his brother, and they seated themselves for a long talk. The owner of the Bellevite was confident that he should soon know on which side the planter belonged, though he was still confident in his former views.

"I suppose there is no other way for you to get here at the present time except in your yacht, and not many men can command so elegant and substantial a vessel as the Bellevite," said Homer, when they were seated. "But what in the world do you expect to do with her down here?"

"I intend to return to my home in her, and to take my daughter back to her mother," replied Horatio, as unmoved as though he had uttered a commonplace expression.

"Take Florry back to her mother!" exclaimed Homer, springing out of his armchair as though his five-and-forty years counted for nothing. "I hope that nothing at all is the matter with your brain, Horatio."

"Nothing at all, so far as I am aware, Homer. You seem to think it is a great undertaking to take my daughter home," added Horatio.

"But it is war in this country, and all along the coast. You will certainly be captured, and your daughter sent to a prison, at least till she can be sent home. You have not more than one chance in ten to get to New York."

"Do you think so?" asked Horatio, smiling.

"If you don't know it, I do, my dear brother, that the Southern Confederacy has sent out agents to buy up all the suitable vessels they can find, to do duty as cruisers and privateers. You are almost sure to be captured, and think what Florry would suffer in such an event."

"You seem to think that the North is going to hold still, and let you do all this, Homer," added the owner of the Bellevite.

"I don't see how the North can help itself."

"My information is rather meagre; but I am informed that the Government of the United States has proclaimed the blockade, and even that it is enforced farther north, as I am sure it will be on the south."

"That is all nonsense, Horatio, and you know it."

"I don't understand it so."

"How is it possible for the Yankee Government to station ships-of-war on the coast of the Southern States? It is simply impossible," said Homer, warming up with the argument. "The business of fitting out vessels is already begun, I read in the newspapers; and it will be pushed to the utmost."

"I am confident that every Confederate port in the United States will be invested by one or more vessels within a reasonable time."

"But your steamer will be captured before you can get home, even if you get out of Mobile Bay."

"I don't apprehend any difficulty on that account. If the Bellevite can't keep out of the way of any thing that floats, she deserves to be captured. She will belong to the Government within a few weeks," added Horatio quietly.

"The Bellevite!" exclaimed Homer.

"The Bellevite, certainly. I should be ashamed to retain her a month after I knew that the Union needs her, and the Union shall have her as a free gift," added Horatio, quite as warmly as his brother had spoken.

"You will give your steamer to the Yankee Government!" gasped Homer, rising from his chair again, and darting across

the room, as though he was both shocked and disgusted at the conduct of Horatio. "You will allow her to be used in subduing a free people? I am sorry."

Homer was very deeply grieved, and Horatio hardly less so.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

To Captain Passford the question seemed to be settled; and he could no longer doubt that his brother fully sympathized with the leaders of the rebellion, if he was not one of them himself. He was certainly the most enthusiastic person he had yet seen on that side of the question. But Homer was thoroughly sincere, for he never was any thing else on any subject.

Horatio was unable to understand how his brother could reason himself into the belief that secession was right, when the duty of saving the Union was to him paramount; and certainly Homer was equally puzzled over the political faith of Horatio. Until the darkness of evening began to gather, they argued the tremendous question; and they discussed it ably, for both of them were thinking and reasoning men.

But, when the darkness gathered, they were not one hair's-breadth nearer an agreement; and probably if they had continued to argue till morning, or even till the end of the year, they would have come no nearer together. Each had a sort of horror of the views of the other, though they had lived in peace and harmony all the days of their lives.

"Homer, you are my brother; and I am sure that an unpleasant word never passed between us," said Horatio, when the sun had gone down on the fruitless discussion.

"Certainly not, brother; and it grieves me sorely to find that you are upon one side, while I am on the other," replied Homer with a strong manifestation of feeling. "I did not expect to see you at Glenfield; but I felt sure that you would not be found, actually or constructively, in the ranks of the enemies of the South."

"And I was equally sure that you would be found on the side of your country,—the whole country, and not a miserable fraction of it," added Horatio, with quite as much warmth as his brother. "I came here in the Bellevite as much to convey you to a place of safety, as to restore Florry to her mother."

"My country is here in the South. I have no other country; and I shall stand by it to the last ditch, wherein I am ready to cast all that I have and all that I am. If you thought it possible for me to desert the cause of the South, you strangely misjudged me; and I do not feel at all complimented by the formation of your opinion of me," said Homer, with a trifle more of bitterness in his tone and manner than he had used before.

"I see how it is with you, Homer; and I realize that it is worse than folly for us to discuss this important question. Your mind is made up, and so is mine; and I fear that we might quarrel if we should continue to bandy words on the subject. We had better drop it entirely, once for all."

"Perhaps we had; but it grieves me sorely, even to think of my only brother taking part with the hirelings of the North in an attempt to subdue the free, untamed, and untamable South. It would not hurt my feelings more to know that you were a buccaneer, roving on the ocean for the plunder of all nations."

"You should also consider my feelings when I think of you in armed rebellion against the best government God ever allowed to exist; that my own brother is a rebel and a traitor, who is liable to be shot or hung for his armed treason."

This was too much for Homer, and he gave vent to his emotion in a laugh at the picture his brother had drawn. He walked the library, and chuckled as though he were actually amused at the remarks of the other; and perhaps he was.

"I am really and heartily sorry for you, Horatio. Your future, I fear, will be terribly dark. Of course, all business will cease at the North: the grass will grow in the streets of New York and other large cities. You have an immense fortune, which I do not believe you can retain a single year; for the war is not to be confined to Southern soil, but will be carried into the North, where the expenses of our men will be paid by the enemy."

"I think we had better confine our attention to the present, and let the future take care of itself," said Horatio, with a smile at the prophetic croakings of his brother.

"Be that as it may, though I feel confident that all I predict will come to pass, I desire to have one thing understood: when you have lost your fortune, or wasted it on the hireling armies of the North, or on ships for its navy, you may always be sure of a home at Glenfield for yourself and all your family."

"If you do not lose or waste all that you have on the army of the other side," added Horatio with a smile. "But I am ready to drop this subject."

"It seems to be useless to continue it; though, if there were any possible way to convert you from the error of your way of thinking, I would struggle all night with you," said Homer.

"You cannot make a traitor of me, brother. But I must tell Florry to pack her trunk at once."

"Pack her trunk? Why are you in such a hurry?" demanded Homer.

"Because this is not a safe place for me and mine; and I have my two children with me."

"You ought to have left Christy at home."

"I think not. Though he is only sixteen, he has seen so much of the world, and is so bright, that he is almost a man. He will go into the navy within a few weeks, and I shall expect him to give a good account of himself."

"He is rather young. Corny is eighteen, and he has already enlisted with his mother's blessing and mine. But I think you need not be in such a hurry, Horatio, to get away from here; for it is a long time since we met."

"I have expressed my political sentiments very freely to you, Homer, and you know as well as I do, that, if they were known, I should not be safe a single day."

"Not quite so bad as that, for I think I should have sufficient influence to save you from arrest," added Homer.

"The *Bellevite* cost me over half a million dollars, and she is worth all she cost. If I were safe a single day, the steamer and ship's company on board of her would not be. I brought them down here, and I intend to take them back."

"And then you present this fine vessel to the Yankee Government, and doubtless the men on board of her will go into the service of the navy."

"I certainly expect as much as that of them."

"Then I question whether I ought to allow such a prize to pass out of the bay for such a purpose," said Homer.

"Then, with such a doubt as that in your mind, I ought not to remain here another hour," added Horatio quietly. "If you have gone far enough in treason to betray your own brother, coming here to your home for no warlike purpose, into the hands of the enemy, why, all I can do is to look out for myself."

"I did not say that I should betray you, Horatio. It is simply a question with me whether my duty to my country will allow me to let your steamer leave these waters. I have not settled the question in my own mind."

"I hope you will settle it soon. If I am to take my first step in this fratricidal war by defending myself against my own brother, let him speak, and I am ready," replied Horatio, shaken by an emotion deeper than he had ever experienced before.

"Horatio, whatever you may do, whatever I may do, each in the discharge of his duty to his country, his country as he understands it, let us have no unfraternal feeling," continued Homer, almost as much disturbed in his feelings as his brother.

"In other words, if you hand me and my vessel over to your leaders, and consequently take from me the means of bearing my daughter to a place of safety, I am to put my hand on my heart, and say that my brother has done right, for I will not use any stronger terms," said Horatio, struggling with his emotion.

"I must do my duty as I understand it," protested Homer. "The question I put to myself is this: can I justify myself, before God and my country, if I permit the finest steamer in the world, as you state it, to be transferred to the Yankee navy, to be used in killing, ravaging, and destroying within the free South? The steamer is here, and within my reach. After all you have said, she would be the lawful prize of any tug-boat in the bay that could capture her. I begin to realize that I should be guilty of treason to my country in letting her go."

"You must be your own judge in regard to that," replied Horatio bitterly, as he rose from his chair and walked towards the door.

"One word more, Horatio. I look upon the *Bellevite* as already belonging to the Southern Confederacy. Of course, being a private yacht, she is not armed?"

Homer paused and looked at his brother as though he expected an answer to this question; but the owner of the steamer made no reply.

"Do you say that the *Bellevite* is armed, Horatio?" repeated Homer.

"I do not say any thing about it. I find that I am in the presence of an enemy, though he is my own brother."

"Do not assume that tone to me, Horatio: it wounds me to the heart," said Homer, in a deprecatory tone. "If we are enemies because you choose to oppress our people, I cannot help it; but we will still be brothers."

"The attack upon Fort Sumter was made by the South; and thus far, at least to the extent that I have been informed, the South has been the assailant; and you say that I choose to oppress your people. They have taken the sword, and they will perish by the sword."

Captain Passford could not trust his feelings any longer to remain with his brother, and he left the room. In the hall he met Florry, who had been lying in wait for him for over an hour. She threw herself on his neck as she had done before; but she found her father full of energy, and he was not even willing to use his minutes to caress her.

"What is the matter, papa?" asked the fair girl, astonished at the manner of her father, for she had never before seen him so agitated.

"Do not ask me any questions, Florry, for I have not time to answer them now," said he hastily. "Go to your room and pack all your things as quick as you possibly can, and without saying a word to any one."

"Why, papa!"

"Not a word, my dear child," he added, kissing her.

"It will not take me five minutes, papa; for I have been packing my trunk this afternoon, when I had nothing else to do."

"Where is your room, Florry?"

"It is on the lower floor, next to the library."

"I will be there in a few minutes. Dress yourself, and be ready to leave at a minute's notice," continued Captain Passford. "Where is Christy?"

"He went out about an hour ago, when he saw from the window a young man I did not know," replied Florry, as she passed into her room.

Captain Passford wondered who the young man was whom his son had gone out to meet; for no one was allowed to leave the deck of the *Bellevite* who belonged to her, and he was not aware that Christy had any friend in the vicinity. He was annoyed at his absence, for he wanted him at that very moment.

Mrs. Passford and Gerty were up-stairs, where nimble fingers were busily at work for the soldiers of the Southern Confederacy, as they were also in the North for the Union. The captain looked all about the house, but he could not see or hear of his son.

## CHAPTER XV

### BROTHER AT WAR WITH BROTHER

Captain Passford was very much annoyed at the absence of Christy at that particular moment, for it seemed to be heavily laden with momentous events to him and his family; though Christy could not possibly know what had transpired in the library between the two brothers. He waited very uneasily in the hall, after his return from his search.

Homer Passford did not come out of his library, and he sat brooding over the remarkable interview which had taken place between the brothers. No doubt he would have been glad to believe that he had been wrong; for he had nothing but the kindest feelings in the world towards his brother, and had never had in all his life. He was five years older than Horatio; and, in their earlier life, he had been to some extent his guardian and protector, and he had never lost the feeling of boyhood.

But he had proved himself to be a patriot of the severest type, and proposed to rob his brother of his steamer, his only means of conveying his daughter to his home, for the benefit of the fraction of the nation which he called his country, and more to prevent her from being transferred to the navy of the Union.

While the captain was waiting in the hall, the library door opened, and Homer presented himself. He invited his brother to return to the apartment, for he had something to say to him; but Horatio positively declined to do so, fearful that they might come to an open rupture if the exciting discussion was continued.

"But you will hear me a moment or two, will you not, Horatio?" asked Homer; and his lips quivered under the influence of his active thought.

"I will as long as that," replied Horatio.

"I have been thinking of the subject of our conversation in relation to the *Bellevite*; and I have something to propose to you, which I hope will satisfy you, and at the same time will not rob our Government of what now belongs to it."

"I am listening," added Horatio, as Homer paused to note the effect of his proposal.

"You did not tell me how you got by the forts in your steamer, and perhaps you are ready to do so now."

"I am not ready now; and I am not likely to be ready at any future time to do so, Homer. You have indicated that we are enemies, and each should keep his own counsels."

"Of course you will do as you think proper. I cannot reconcile myself to the idea of permitting a fine steamer like the *Bellevite*, now virtually in possession of the Confederacy, to sail away out of the bay. I feel that I should be guilty of treason to my country to do so."

"And you propose to steal her from your own brother, if you can. You have done a large business in stealing forts, and one ought not to be surprised when you propose to steal a ship," replied Horatio mildly but sternly.

"I pass over the injustice and unkindness on your part of that remark, and I hope you will accept my offer."

"Let me hear it as soon as possible."

"In spite of your present, unfortunate position, Horatio, I believe you are still a man of truth, honor, and integrity."

"Thank you, Homer."

"I do not wish to keep Florry here when her mother desires so much to see her, and I have hit upon a plan by which you can do this without making me a traitor to my country."

"It must have been a happy thought," added Horatio, somewhat interested in what the other was saying.

"I think it was a happy thought, and I sincerely hope you will be able to accept the plan. I have some little influence in this section, and I have no doubt I can procure a pass for your steamer to go to sea," continued Homer, pausing to study the expression of his brother.

"Do I understand that you propose to do this, Homer?" asked Captain Passford, not a little astonished at the apparent change his brother had made in his position.

"On a certain condition, which you can easily meet."

"It looks as though you were becoming more reasonable. What is the condition on which you will do this? For I should certainly prefer to have no shots fired at the *Bellevite* while Florry is on board of her."

"As I have said, your word is as good as your bond; and I am willing to accept the consequences of the step I propose to take, since the Confederacy will not suffer any loss or detriment on account of it."

"It will not!" exclaimed the captain, beginning to see that he could not accept the conditions.

"It will not. I could not injure or cheat my country, even to serve my only brother, greatly as I desire to do all I can for him."

"But what is the condition, Homer?" asked Captain Passford, who had by this time lost all hope of the plan.

"You shall take Florry to some point,--Bermuda, for instance,--from which she can obtain passage to New York. Before you go, you shall give me your simple word that you will return to Mobile Bay with the *Bellevite*, and surrender her to the Confederate authorities. I am entirely willing to accept your promise to do this, without any bond or other writing."

"Is that all?" asked Horatio, hardly able to contain himself.

"That is all; what more do you desire?"

"Nothing; that is enough. I have already tendered my steamer to the Government of the United States; do you think me capable of surrendering my vessel to rebels and traitors, under any possible circumstances? I would blow her up with all on board of her, before I would do such a thing. You insult me by proposing such treachery to me. Not another word about it, if you please!"

Homer returned to his library, and closed the door after him; for the last remark of the owner of the *Bellevite* had excited him, and he could not trust himself to remain any longer in the presence of his Union brother.

"I am all ready, papa," said Florry, who had opened the door once before, and found that her father was engaged.

"I cannot find Christy, but I hope he is not far off," added Captain Passford, as he went into the room, and, to the astonishment of his daughter, bolted the door after him.

"I did not know the young man he went out to see, but I noticed that he looked something like Major Pierson," said Florry.

"Then it was the major's brother, and he came from Nassau with us on board of the steamer. I hope neither of them will get into any trouble, for all this country is in a very excited condition," said the captain, as he carefully opened the window at the side of the apartment.

This was quite as singular a movement as bolting the door; and the fair girl, who had heard some of the energetic conversation in the hall, began to think that something strange was about to transpire in the mansion. Her father spent some time in looking out the window; for it was now quite dark, and he could not make out objects outdoors very readily.

The window opened upon a lawn covered with orange, magnolia, and other ornamental trees. The house was low on the ground, and it was not more than three feet from the window-sill to the lawn. Without explaining any thing, Captain Passford took his daughter's trunk, carried it to the window, and then dropped it upon the lawn beneath.

"Now, Florry, I want you to get out at this window; and you can easily step down upon the trunk," continued the owner of the *Bellevite*.

"Get out of the window, papa?" demanded the maiden, with a look of intense astonishment at her father.

"Do just as I tell you, my child, and don't ask any questions now; for all will be explained to your satisfaction," replied he, as he assisted her to a chair, by which she mounted to the window-stool.

She dropped lightly down upon the trunk, which had been placed in a convenient position for her, and then to the ground. Her father followed her; though he stopped long enough to close the window after him, and leave every thing as it had been before.

"I think I can understand something about it, papa," said Florry, as the captain joined her. "But am I to leave this house, where I have been for six months, without saying good-by to uncle or aunt?"

"Not a word to any one, my child. I am sorry it must be so; but this is a time of war, and I have no time to stand on ceremonies," replied her father, as he picked up the trunk, and tossed it on his shoulder as though he had done that kind of work before.

He walked off with a firm step, in spite of his burden, taking the nearest way to the wharf where he had left the *Bellevite*. The distance was considerable, and the millionaire was obliged to stop and rest two or three times; and, though Florry insisted upon helping him, he would not allow her to do so. It was nearly ten o'clock at night when the wanderers reached their destination, and were hailed by the vigilant watch on the deck.

"Florence!" called the owner of the steamer when he was challenged, and gave the word that had been agreed upon.

"Pass, Florence," replied the sentinel.

All the officers were still upon board, and Florry received a very respectful greeting from all of them. Her trunk was carried to her stateroom; and she soon followed it, for the excitement of the afternoon and evening was rather too much for her.



"Is Percy still on board, Breaker?" asked the owner.

"He is not: he lounged about the deck till nearly night, and then he said he would go up and see his mother, to which I had not the least objection," replied the commander.

"I have no objection to his going where he pleases now, but the worst of it is that Christy appears to have gone with him. They must have been gone three hours, and I begin to be worried about my son. But no matter for that now: we are ready to sail, and it is necessary to get out into the bay, at least without any loss of time, Breaker. The tide is right now."

Captain Breaker had not expected to leave so soon, and thought it probable that the vessel would remain where she was for several days or a week. But he had caused the fires to be banked, so as to be ready for any emergency, though he did not anticipate any; for he reasoned that the powerful influence of the owner's brother would be enough to protect the steamer from interference.

The commander called all hands, and the owner requested that the work be done with as little noise as possible. In less than an hour the *Bellevite* was floating in the deep waters of the bay. But the owner was far from easy; though, in spite of all his brother had said, he felt that the steamer was safe for the present: he was not a little alarmed at the continued absence of Christy.

Captain Passford had formed a very decided opinion in regard to Major Pierson, and he did not believe that Percy had seen the end of his troubles in the matter of joining the army. It was not over a three hours' run in a reasonably fast steamer from the forts to the city, and at least ten hours had elapsed since the *Bellevite* came up. Possibly the major might wonder whether or not the coming of Captain Passford would disturb the residence of Miss Florence at the mansion of her uncle. It was not improbable that he had, or might, come up to look out for his interests.

If he came across his brother Percy after he left the steamer, he was likely to make a soldier of him; and it was unfortunate that Christy had been his companion when last seen.

## CHAPTER XVI

### CHRISTY FINDS HIMSELF A PRISONER

Christy Passford had not gone out of his uncle's house for any particular purpose; though he saw Percy, and joined him as he left the mansion. He had visited Glenfield before, and he had some curiosity to see familiar objects again. It was nearly dark, and he wondered where the major's brother was going at that hour.

"Where are you going now, Mr. Percy," he asked, as he approached the agent.

"I thought I would go up to the house and see my mother," replied Percy. "Won't you go over with me? It is only a short distance."

"No, I think not: I don't care to go a great way from the house."

"It isn't above half a mile, and I am coming directly back again."

"I will not go as far as you are going, but I will take a little stroll as far as the gate. Where is your brother now?"

"I suppose he is at the fort. If I thought he were about here, I should not leave the steamer. He has got it into his head that I must join the army, and he will never be satisfied till I am there."

"He is certainly very much in earnest, judging by his conduct on board of the *Bellevite*," added Christy.

"He pretends to believe that my not joining the army will be a disgrace to the family; but, if my father don't think so, Lindley need not worry his head about the matter."

"Your brother seems to have a very strong will of his own," suggested Christy.

"He will send me into the army in spite of my father and mother; and, for that reason, I don't mean to go where he can put his finger on me. Of course, the *Bellevite* is going into the Confederate navy."

Percy looked his companion in the face, as though he had been thinking of something which would benefit his own case.

"You will have to ask my uncle about that," replied Christy, not willing to say any more than was necessary on this subject.

"There can be no doubt of it, and I would rather be in the navy than in the army. I hope your uncle will be able to do something for me."

"I don't know whether he can or not. For aught I know, the steamer may be sent to England, or to some other country," replied Christy, as they approached the gate, which was to be the end in that direction of his walk.

"At any rate, I mean to stay on board of the *Bellevite*; and I shall take my chances of getting a position of some kind on board of her."

"What kind of a position do you desire?"

"I am willing to be one of the lieutenants, or something of that kind," replied Percy with becoming condescension.

"One of the lieutenants!" exclaimed Christy. "Of course you know all about handling a ship or a steamer."

"I can't say I do. In fact, I never went on the sea till I went to Nassau with my father," replied Percy candidly. "But I can soon learn all about it."

"A nice lieutenant you will make! Why don't you apply for the position of commander of her?"

"I am willing to take a subordinate position till I learn something about the business."

"That's right! Be humble at first, and you will be great afterwards."

"I should have been willing to go into the army as a captain, or even as a lieutenant; but I couldn't quite stand it to go in as a common soldier, while my brother made a beginning as a major."

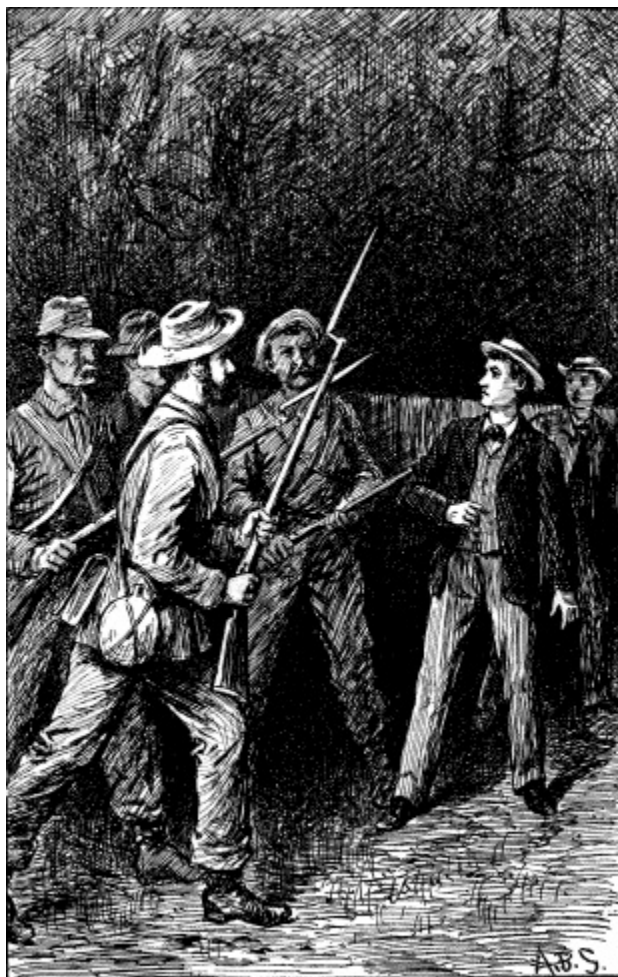
"I think I will not go any farther, Mr. Percy," said Christy, as he halted near the gate.

"Oh, don't leave me now, Mr. Pierson! We are half way to my father's house," Percy objected.

"I can't go any farther, for I may be wanted."

"You will be safe enough, Mr. Pierson, My mother is at home, and she will be glad to see you."

"I think I will not see your mother to-night," added Christy, as he turned, and began to retrace his steps towards the mansion of his uncle.



FOUR MEN SPRANG IN FRONT OF HIM (Page 183)

They had halted in the road near the gate, and on both sides of it was a thick undergrowth of small trees and bushes; and in the shade of this foliage it had become quite dark. Christy had not taken three steps before four men sprang out of the thicket in front of him, all of them armed with muskets, and wearing a uniform of gray. Two placed themselves in front of Christy; while the other two rushed after Percy, who took to his heels as soon as he saw them.

The gate was an impediment to the latter; and before he could get over or through it, the two soldiers had laid violent hands on him. He could offer no effectual resistance, and it was evident that he was frightened out of his wits; for he looked and acted like the ghost of despair itself. The two men immediately tied his hands behind him; and, though they did not use any undue harshness, they did their work thoroughly.

Christy was even more astonished than his companion at this sharp discipline. He did not regard himself as a fit subject for such treatment, and he could not understand why he had been subjected to it. He was not liable to do military duty, and Major Pierson could hardly think of pressing him into the service of the Confederacy. His two captors were as prompt in their action as the two who had taken Percy, and his hands were also tied behind him.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," said Christy, as soon as the soldiers had bound him, and then stood in front to take a look at him. "Don't it strike you that you are indulging in rather sharp practice?"

"We haven't any thing to do with the practice: all we have to do is to obey orders," replied one of the men.

"But I think you have mistaken your orders," suggested the prisoner.

"I think not: if we have, we will set things to rights at once," replied the man, who appeared to be the sergeant in command of the party. "But our business is not so much with you as with the other young fellow."

Upon this, Christy was conducted to the gate, where Percy had not yet recovered any of his self-possession. For his own part, he felt that a mistake had been made, which must soon be corrected. He knew nothing of the wide difference of opinion which had suddenly become apparent between his father and his uncle, and he was sure that the latter could soon effect his release.

"This is an outrage!" exclaimed Percy, who perhaps felt that it was necessary for him to say something, now that Christy had come within hearing distance.

"Perhaps it is, Mr. Pierson," replied the sergeant. "But that isn't any of my business."

"You will be held responsible for it, sir!" protested Percy.

"Perhaps I shall; but I shall obey my orders," replied the soldier doggedly.

"Who gave you your orders?" demanded Percy imperatively.

"Well, I don't belong to the class in catechism, and I don't answer all the questions that are put to me."

"My father will have something to say about this business."

"He can say all he likes, but he need not say it to me; for I only obey my orders, and I have nothing to do with giving them."

"What are you going to do with me?" asked Percy, when he found he could make nothing of the sergeant.

"I don't know what they will do with you; but I reckon they won't shoot you, as they might a fellow whose father was not a man of some consequence," replied the sergeant, as he ordered one of his men to open the gate.

"Shoot me!" exclaimed Percy, evidently appalled at the bare possibility of such an event.

"I reckon they won't do that," added the soldier.

"This is my father's plantation, and my mother is in the house," continued Percy.

"She can stay there: we shall not meddle with her."

"But you are going to take me away from her."

"You look like a stout young fellow, and you ought to be able to get along for a while without your mother," chuckled the sergeant. "You belong in the army; and I reckon you will have to go back to it, in spite of your mother."

"I don't belong to the army," protested Percy.

"Well, they call you a deserter, anyhow."

Percy seemed to be overcome by this statement, and Christy thought there was something more of his story than he had told on board of the *Bellevite*. It was possible, after all, that Major Pierson was not as much of a brute as he had appeared to be. But, if his companion was a deserter, he certainly did not come under that head himself, and he could not understand why he had been arrested.

"I suppose you don't claim me as a deserter, do you?" asked Christy good-naturedly.

"I don't think they do," replied the sergeant, as pleasantly as he had spoken himself.

"Then, why do you arrest me?"

"My orders were to arrest any person with Mr. Pierson; and that is all I know about your case, and I am very sorry to give you any annoyance. Things are a little mixed, and I hope they will soon get them levelled down. If you don't object, we will march."

"I suppose you will march all the same, if I do object," added Christy. "I was not aware that it was a crime here to be in the company of that young man."

"I reckon I was ordered to arrest you as a matter of precaution; and I dare say they will let you return as soon as we report to the major," said the sergeant, leading his prisoner through the gateway.

The other men took Percy by the arm; and, after they had closed the gate, they followed the road for a considerable distance, and then struck across the fields. Not far ahead, Christy saw many lights; and he concluded that this must be the location of the mansion of Colonel Pierson, the father of Percy, and for some reason best known to himself, the sergeant desired to avoid going very near it.

A march of a short distance farther across the field brought them to a road, which they followed till they came to a wagon drawn by two horses. The animals were hitched at the side of the road, and no one seemed to be in charge of the team. But the sergeant halted his party at this point; and, leaving the prisoners in charge of his men, he went to the wagon.

"Major Pierson," said he; but no answer came to his question, and he repeated it with no better success.

Then he mounted the seat in front of the wagon, and looked over into the body of it. Then he reached over; and a moment later the form of a man was seen to rise from a quantity of hay which filled the body.

"Is that you, Spottswood?" demanded the rising form.

"Yes, sir, I am here; and I have two prisoners. One of them is your brother, and I don't know who the other is," replied the sergeant.

"Are you sure that one of them is my brother?" asked the major.

"I am as sure as I can be, for I heard the other fellow call him Percy two or three times before I stepped in front of them."

"Don't you know who the other one is?"

"I haven't the least idea. I arrested him as you told me, but I did not question him."

The major ordered him to put his prisoners into the wagon.

## CHAPTER XVII

### MAJOR PIERSON IS PUZZLED

Two of the soldiers were placed at the rear of the wagon, one took his place on the hay with Percy, while the major and the sergeant seated themselves on the cushion in front. Spottswood took the reins; and the officer told him to drive on, without saying a word to the prisoners.

It was quite dark; and Christy had not the least idea where he was, or where he was going. He could see that Major Pierson had sent this party to arrest his brother, as Percy seemed to fear that he would do, and had remained and slept away the time in the wagon himself. He had been introduced to the major, and had been treated with "distinguished consideration" by him. In view of the possible relations between him and Florry, he did not feel much concerned about his own safety, though he was sorry to have his father and sister worry over his absence.

"Then, it seems you have been in the army, after all," said he to his fellow-prisoner, after they had gone some distance.

"I never belonged to the army," he replied decidedly.

"Did you put your name down?"

"Yes, I did; but I supposed I was to be a captain, or something of that sort. When I found I must go as a common soldier, mixed up with all sorts of people, I couldn't stand it. I applied for my discharge; but they would not give it to me, and I went home without it."

"That looks very much like desertion," added Christy, and the major went up somewhat in his estimation.

"But it was not desertion; for I applied for my discharge, and all they had to do was to give it to me. They understood it so, for they did not come to the house after me," argued Percy. "Then, when my father went to Nassau, he took me with him. But the surgeon said I was not fit for the army, for I had indications of varicose veins. My father sent the certificate to the authorities, and applied for my discharge."

"Was it ever granted?"

"I suppose it was, but I don't know."

"If it had been, your brother would know about it."

"Will your uncle make you join the army, Mr. Pierson?"

"No: my uncle has no authority over me, and he cannot make me join the army," replied Christy.

"Where is your father?"

"He was at my uncle's plantation. I think we have kept up this farce long enough, Percy," said Christy, laughing. "My father is the owner of the Bellevite."

"What did you tell me your name was Percy Pierson for?" demanded the other prisoner.

"For the same reason that I told you the steamer belonged to the Chinese government, and a dozen other things of the same sort."

"What is your name, then?"

"Christopher Passford; but I am commonly called Christy."

"Then, you have been fooling me?"

"You knew very well that I had been fooling you."

"Then, you are the son of the owner of the Bellevite."

"I am."

"Then, you can get me a place on board of her."

"Perhaps I can. We will see about that."

Christy doubted if their political opinions would permit them to serve on the deck of the same vessel, but he did not suggest any thing of this kind. He had been introduced to Major Pierson under his real name, and he was certain to be identified by him as soon as the light permitted him to see his face; and he had made the best of it by telling Percy the truth before he found it out himself.

"You haven't told me who the other prisoner is, Spottswood," said the major, when they had ridden some distance in silence.

"I don't know who he is," replied the sergeant. "I never saw him before in my life, so far as I know."

"Didn't he tell you who he was?"

"He did not, and I did not ask him any questions."

That was all that was said about it; and the major relapsed into silence, and Christy concluded that he had gone to sleep again. The wagon continued on the journey, though at a very slow pace, for the road could hardly have been any worse. At the end of about two hours more, the vehicle halted near a sheet of water which looked as though it might be a river, or an arm of Mobile Bay.

The road appeared to end at a rude sort of wharf; but there was no person in the vicinity, no house, and no craft of any kind in the water, so far as Christy could see when he was helped out of the wagon. Percy was assisted to the ground also; and the two soldiers at the rear of the wagon, who had gone to sleep, were waked, and ordered to get out.

"We shall not want the wagon any more," said the major. "You can send Boyce back to the house with it."

"It is five miles from here, and he will not get back till nearly morning."

"We can wait for him. The Leopard will not be here for some time."

"I think we ought to send two men, major," suggested the sergeant.

"Why two?"

"For company: one of them may get asleep, and two will get back sooner than one."

"They might as well all of them go, for they can do nothing here," added the major with a terrific yawn.

Two men were sent away with the wagon. The most of the hay in it was taken out; and with it the superior officer made a bed for himself, and was soon asleep again. The sergeant and the remaining soldier took their knapsacks from a tree where they had put them before, and it was decided that one of them might sleep while the other kept guard over the prisoners. Spottswood was the first to take his turn, and his companion stretched himself on the planks of the wharf.

The sergeant brought out the knapsacks of the two absent soldiers, and gave the blankets to Christy and Percy, both of whom were sleepy enough to follow the example of the others. Spottswood assisted them very kindly, spreading out the blankets for them, and covering them afterwards; for, as their hands were tied behind them, they were almost helpless.

The two prisoners soon dropped asleep; and they knew nothing more till after daylight, when Christy was waked by the hissing of steam at the rude wharf. The two soldiers who had been sent away with the wagon were asleep on the planks, though neither had a blanket. The major had not been disturbed by the noise, for he was farther from it than the others.

With some difficulty Christy got upon his feet, and looked about him. A tug-boat lay at the wharf, with the steam escaping from her pipe. There was nothing else to be seen in the vicinity. The sheet of water, which was apparently half a mile wide, had a bend some distance from the wharf, so that he could not see any farther; but he had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that the water was an arm of the bay.

On board of the Leopard, for the name was on the front of the pilot-house, he could see only two men, one of whom came out of the engine-room; and he judged that they were the pilot and engineer. Doubtless the former was also the captain of the craft.

While one of the two men seated himself on the rail, the other came on shore. He was a man of very small stature, and looked as though his health was very poor. Indeed, his step was quite feeble, and he seemed to have hardly strength enough to handle his frame. As the tug had just come in, doubtless he had been on duty the whole or a portion of the night, which may have explained his exhausted condition.

"Good-morning, Captain Pecklar," said the sentinel on duty at the wharf.

"Good morning, Tubbs. Where is Major Pierson?" asked the captain of the Leopard, in a very faint voice.

"He is still asleep, and he has his bed at the foot of that tree yonder," replied the sentinel, pointing at it. "How do you find yourself this morning? Any better?"

"About the same; I am about used up for this world," replied Captain Pecklar, continuing his painful walk towards the tree indicated.

"Is that the captain of the Leopard?" asked Christy.

"Yes, poor fellow! He came down here two years ago from somewhere North, almost gone in consumption. He got a little better; but he is worse again, and I don't believe he will last much longer," replied the sentry.

"Has he been out all night on the steamer?" inquired Christy, who felt that it was his duty to obtain all the information he could in regard to this steamer, as it was in the service of the commander of Fort Gaines.

"I don't know where he has been; but I suppose he has been on duty all night, and that don't agree with him at all. We

came up here yesterday afternoon--Well, never mind what we have been about. I forgot that you were a prisoner; and you may be a Yankee, for aught I know."

Before Christy had time to make any reply, the sentinel walked away, and the major was seen coming from his bed with Captain Pecklar. They went to the wharf together, where they seated themselves on a box which lay there. The prisoner turned away from them; and the major took no notice of him, and did not appear to see him, or he would certainly have identified him.

Christy's bed was just behind them, when they had seated themselves; and he dropped down on his blanket, rolled it about him as well as he could, and then pretended to be asleep, as Percy was still, in spite of the noise of the escaping steam on board of the boat.

"What have you done with your men, Captain Pecklar?" asked the major.

"I have just told you that the steamer had changed her position," replied the captain.

"I did not understand you," returned the major. "Do you mean that she has left the wharf?"

"I do: she was out at least two miles from the shore," added Captain Pecklar.

"Two miles from the shore!" exclaimed Major Pierson. "What does that mean?"

"I don't know, sir. Lieutenant Dallberg did not know what to make of it; and he decided to take his two men to the shore, and investigate the matter. He directed me to report this to you."

"But when did the Bellevite leave the wharf?" asked the major, evidently very much puzzled at what he regarded as the singular conduct of the owner of the steamer.

"I don't know, sir. It was after ten o'clock in the evening when we first saw her out in the bay."

"Was she at anchor?"

"I think not. I was ordered not to go very near her, and I could not tell."

"Do you know whether or not Captain Passford is on board of her?"

"Of course I do not. In fact, I know nothing at all about her, except that she has left the wharf and come out into the bay. I think I heard her screw in motion, though I am not sure; and that makes me think that she is not at anchor. Mr. Dallberg thought he ought to go on shore, visit Colonel Passford, and obtain further information if he could."

The major ordered the captain to embark the party at once.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE MORNING TRIP OF THE LEOPARD

If Major Pierson had had any curiosity at all in regard to the person captured by the soldiers with his brother, he appeared to have forgotten all about him. He took no notice of him after he left his bed of hay, but then he was evidently very much disturbed by the fact that the *Bellevite* had left the wharf.

Christy Passford was quite as much astonished as the major when he learned that the steamer had left her berth at the wharf, and he was utterly unable to account for the change of position. The movement had been made since he left his uncle's mansion; for at that time the two brothers were still in the library, and he had no knowledge whatever of what was passing between them.

The major ordered all his men on board the *Leopard*, and directed the sergeant to conduct the prisoners to the deck of the tug. Percy was waked when he was wanted, and he had slept soundly till that time. With their hands still tied behind them, they were conducted to the after-deck of the tug, where there was a small space from which opened the stateroom of the captain.

"I might as well jump overboard first as last," said Percy bitterly, as he seated himself in the place assigned to him by Spottswood.

"It is hardly worth your while to do that, Percy. I don't think your brother is likely to do you any harm," replied Christy.

"I would rather he drowned in deep water than be sent into the army as a common soldier," said the victim, as he went to the rail and looked over into the water.

But his companion was perfectly confident that he would not jump overboard while his hands were tied behind him; for the chances were all against him, though he might be willing to punish his brother by making a demonstration in the direction indicated.

"The water is too cold at this time in the morning, Percy," said Christy with a smile. "I think you ought to give your brother the credit of having the reputation of your family at heart. If I had a brother, I had about as lief have him drown himself as desert from the army."

"I don't call it deserting," replied Percy rather warmly.

"You can call it what you like, but that is what it was."

"It is no use to talk with you about it. Where are we going now?" demanded Percy impatiently.

"We are going to look out for the *Bellevite*, and perhaps you can get on board her again," suggested Christy.

"Do you think I can?" asked the deserter with renewed interest.

"I am afraid your brother will look out too sharply for you. He has you now, and he will hold on this time."

Christy had little sympathy for his companion. He was an able-bodied young man of eighteen, with influence enough behind him to give him a good show in the ranks if he did his duty. But he was the youngest child of his father and mother; and he had evidently been spoiled by indulgence, so that he was not fit for the stern duties of the present emergency.

The steamer seemed to be very short handed, and doubtless part of the work on board was done by the soldiers, for the tug seemed to be in the employ of the fort. There was no crew, so far as Christy could judge, except the captain and engineer; and both of these seemed to be invalids, for the latter was so lame he could hardly go. The soldiers hauled in the fusts, and seemed to be at home with this sort of work.

The *Leopard* backed out from the wharf, came about, and headed down the inlet, or whatever it was. She had hardly left the pier before Major Pierson appeared on the quarter-deck, which had been assigned for the use of the prisoners. His gaze was first fixed on Percy; for the other prisoner was looking astern, in order to obtain some idea of where he was, if he could, for he thought such information might be of some use to him in the future.

"Well, Percy, how goes it now?" asked the major.

Christy heard the voice, which was the first he knew of the presence of a third person, and he turned about. The major started back as though he had seen his father with his hands tied behind him by his order.

"Good Heaven! Mr. Passford!" exclaimed the major; and Christy was satisfied that his astonishment was sincere.

"That is certainly my name: I haven't forgotten it, if I am a prisoner with my hands tied behind me," replied Christy, as good-naturedly as though he had had no grievance.

"This is all a mistake!" ejaculated Major Pierson, evidently greatly disturbed by the discovery he had just made, as he rushed upon the prisoner, turned him around, and proceeded to untie the line which bound him.

"I thought it must be a mistake," added Christy.

"You must have been with this brother of mine. I told Spottswood to arrest Percy, for he has disgraced himself and his family; and I told him to capture whoever might be with him, for I did not care to leave behind an informant of what had been done, for it would only have made my mother feel badly. That is really the whole of it. I am very sorry indeed that you were subjected to this annoyance, Mr. Passford; and I assure you I will do all in my power to atone for my offence."

"I am satisfied, Major Pierson; and the only thing that disturbs me is the fact that my father and sister will worry about my absence," replied Christy.

"You are no longer a prisoner, Mr. Passford, and you are at liberty to go where you please."

"But my limits are rather circumscribed on board this tug."

"But I will soon put you on board your father's steamer."

"Thank you, sir; that is all I can desire."

"Can't you do as much as that for me, Lindy?" asked Percy, when he saw that his brother was about to leave him.

"If you say that you will return to your place in your regiment, I will release you at once," replied the brother.

"I won't do that," answered Percy without any hesitation. "But I want to go into the navy. I am better fitted for a sailor than I am for a soldier."

"The first thing is to wipe out the disgrace you have cast upon yourself and your family," added the major warmly. "I induced your officers to look upon it as a freak of a boy, and by returning to your duty you can soon wipe out the stigma."

"I shall not become a common soldier if I can help it. My father and mother will stand by me, if the rest of you do not," said Percy.

"That's enough; and you will go back to the army, whether or not you are willing," added the major, as he turned on his heel.

Christy followed him to the fore-castle of the tug, where a rather heavy gun was mounted, which took up most of the space.

"Take a seat, Mr. Passford," said the major, giving him a stool, while he took another himself. "It looks as though your father changed his plans rather suddenly last evening."

"I was not aware of it," replied Christy.

"The *Bellevite* was taken from the wharf where you landed some time in the evening, and came out into the bay, where she seems to be waiting for something, I don't know what. As I understand the matter, your father has sold the steamer to the Confederacy."

"Where did you learn that, Major Pierson?" asked Christy, who had not heard any such story.

"You certainly came from Nassau?"

"We did."

"And you met my father there?"

"I did not meet him, but my father did."

"I understood that my father bought this steamer, or that he bargained for her in some manner, for the use of the Confederacy."

"I was not present at the interview between your father and mine, and I do not know just what passed between them."

"And I understood that he sent Percy to act as a sort of agent for the delivery of the vessel; though it still puzzles me to comprehend how my father should do such a thing, especially when he knew that the boy would be arrested as a deserter if he showed his face anywhere near Mobile."

Christy felt that his tongue might be a dangerous member, and he was not disposed to talk about the matter at all. All the information which the major had derived from Captain Passford and others had been accepted from inference; for the owner of the *Bellevite* certainly had not said that the steamer was for the use of the Confederacy, and he would have blown her up rather than admit any thing of the sort.

"It looked to me as though every thing was all right about the steamer, or I would not have let her pass the fort; and the commander at Fort Morgan was as well satisfied as I was, after I had explained the situation to him."

Major Pierson looked at Christy as though he expected him to talk on the subject before them; but the latter would not

say any thing, for he saw that he was in an extremely delicate position. He made some sort of answers, but they amounted to nothing.

"I cannot understand why Captain Passford has moved the Bellevite from the wharf," continued the major.

"I am as much in the dark as you are, sir. I spent the afternoon with my sister, and my uncle Homer and my father were in the library together all this time," replied Christy. "I have no idea what they were talking about. Just at dark, I saw Percy pass the window; and I went out for a little walk. I was arrested by your men soon after. Not a word had been said in my hearing about moving the steamer. That is all I know about the matter, and I am as much surprised as you can be at the change which has been made."

"I have no doubt that every thing connected with the steamer is all right. I know that your father is a Northern man, but I am confident that he will be on the right side in this conflict," added the major.

"He will certainly be on the right side," said Christy; but he had gone far enough to know that there were two right sides to the question, and one seemed to him to be as honest, earnest, and resolute as the other.

"We shall soon know something more about it," added the major, evidently disappointed at not being able to obtain any information from the owner's son.

The tug went out into the bay, and then changed her course to the eastward. One of the soldiers went to the galley, and breakfast was served to the major and his guest in the captain's room; and Percy was released long enough to take the meal with them. But he was sullen, and even morose, in view of the fate that awaited him.

"Boat just come round that point," said the captain from the pilot-house, when the party had returned to the fore-castle.

Captain Pecklar seemed to be hardly able to speak; he was so exhausted by his night watch, and by constant fits of coughing, that he could hardly make himself heard.

"What boat is it, Pecklar?" asked the major, straining his eyes to discover it. "I don't see it."

"Take my glass, and you can see it," added the captain, more faintly than before. "I don't think I can stand it any longer, Major Pierson."

"But we can't get along without you, Pecklar. We haven't another hand that knows how to steer," replied the major, as he hastened up to the pilot-house, followed by Christy.

Captain Pecklar had fainted and fallen from the wheel.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE REPORT OF THE SCOUT FROM THE SHORE

Captain Pecklar had held out as long as it was possible for him to stand it, and he had only given up when his senses deserted him. Major Pierson raised him from his position on the floor of the pilot-house, and, with Christy's assistance, bore him out into the air.

The wheel had gone over when the sick man could no longer hold it, and the tug was beginning to whirl about in an erratic manner, when the major rang the bell to stop the engine. The captain was carried down to his room, and put into his berth, where one of the soldiers was detailed to act as his nurse.

"I haven't a man on board that knows the first thing about handling a steamboat; and I am not a bit wiser myself," said the major, when the sick man had been disposed of. "Every man that is fit to be made into a soldier is sent to the army; and we have nothing but the lame, and the halt, and the blind to handle these boats."

"It does not look like good policy," added Christy.

"Dallberg and his two men are soldiers, and they know no more about a steamboat than the rest of us," continued Major Pierson. "It looks as though we should have to stay here till some other boat comes along; and that may be in three days or a week, for steamers have no occasion to come up here now."

"Perhaps you may find a pilot among the men in that boat," suggested Christy, as he looked about the pilot-house, where the conversation took place.

The captain's glass was lying on a shelf in front of the wheel, and he took a look through it in order to find the boat. After searching in every direction, he discovered the boat, which was pulled by two men, with a third in the stern-sheets. He indicated the position of it to the major, and gave him the glass.

"That's Dallberg, without any doubt; but he must be five miles off. He can't reach the steamer for a long time," said the major, when he had examined the boat. "But we shall be no better off than we are now when she gets here, for not one of those in it is a sailor."

Christy was not a little interested in the situation; for he thought his father must have gone on board of the *Bellevite*, or she would not have changed her position. It was all a mystery to him as well as to the commandant of Fort Gaines, and the boat in the distance had been to the shore for the purpose of investigating it.

He had an idea in his head, and he continued to examine the interior of the pilot-house till he found a number of paper rolls in a drawer, which looked very much like local charts of the bay. He examined several of them, and found one which covered the portion of the waters around him. He had noted the direction taken by the *Bellevite* the day before, and he had no difficulty in placing the inlet where she had moored at the wharf.

"What have you got there, Mr. Passford?" asked the major, who had been looking on the floor, thinking what he should do in his present dilemma.



"YOU A SAILOR?" (Page 215)

"It is a chart of these waters, which appears to have been considerably improved with a pen and ink," replied Christy, still examining it.

"That is the work of Captain Pecklar. They call him the best pilot for Mobile Bay there is about here, though he has been here but two years."

"Here is the inlet, or river, where we passed the night; and the captain has marked the wharf on it."

"What good is the chart without a man that knows how to steer a steamer?" asked the major, who was becoming very impatient in the presence of the delay that confronted him; for the illness of Captain Pecklar deprived him of the ability to do any thing, even to return to the fort.

"You forget that I am a sailor, Major Pierson," said Christy.

"You a sailor? I thought you were the son of a millionaire, who could not possibly know any thing except how to eat and sleep," replied the soldier, laughing.

"I have steered the *Bellevite* for a great many hundred miles, and my father says I am competent to do duty as a quartermaster."

"You astonish me; and, as we are both engaged in the same good cause, I am heartily delighted to find that you are a sailor."

"Probably I shall astonish you still more before we have got through. With this chart before me, I have no doubt I can find my way about here in the *Leopard*," said Christy.

"Then I give you the command of the steamer in the absence of Captain Pecklar," continued the major. "This boat and another are in the service of the forts; and if you don't want to join the army with Percy, perhaps I can obtain the appointment for you, especially as you are hardly old enough to go into the ranks. We will see about that."

"We will leave all that open for future action, if you please, Major Pierson," replied Christy, as he rang the bell for the steamer to go ahead.

The major watched him with the most intense interest, as though he feared that the young man would prove to be a

failure as a steamboat captain. But the steamer went ahead at the sound of the bell, and in a minute or two Christy had her on her course in the direction of the approaching boat. He examined the chart very carefully, and satisfied himself that there was water enough for the tug anywhere outside the headlands which projected into the bay.

The Leopard held her course as steadily as though the sick captain were still at the wheel; and the major was entirely satisfied with the qualifications of the new master, after he had watched him for a while.

"Spottswood, how is the captain?" called the major from the pilot-house.

"Just the same: he don't seem to be any better," replied the sergeant.

"He ought to have a doctor; for the poor fellow may die here, away from any proper attendance," said the major, with more feeling than the new captain supposed he possessed.

"There is a very skilful surgeon on board of the Bellevite," suggested Christy. "Dr. Linscott served in the army in Mexico, and had a large practice in New York."

"Then he shall see Pecklar. Dr. Linscott is just the sort of a surgeon we want in our army; and I suppose he would not be on board of the Bellevite if he was not of our way of thinking," added the major.

Christy knew he was nothing but a Union man, and not of the way of thinking which the soldier suggested: so he said nothing. The Leopard was a faster tug than the one which had come off from Fort Gaines, and she came up with the boat which contained Lieutenant Dallberg and his two men, the latter of whom were nearly exhausted with the long pull they had taken; for, as they were not sailors, they did not row to the best advantage.

The new captain rang the bell to stop her, as soon as the boat came near, and the party came on board. The two men seated themselves on the rail as though they never intended to do another stroke of work, for they had been using the oars most of the time since the evening before.

"Come up here, Dallberg," called the major from the pilot-house.

The lieutenant looked as though he had just been through one war; for he had slept none the night before, and had been on duty without intermission. He came to the hurricane-deck, and entered the pilot-house, where he dropped on the sofa abaft the wheel as though he were not in much better condition than the captain when he fell at his post.

"You have made a night of it, Dallberg," the major began, seating himself by the side of the lieutenant.

"I am about used up, major. I believe I walked ten miles on shore; and I am not as strong as I wish I was," replied Mr. Dallberg. "But I found out all I wanted to know, and I expected the Leopard would be somewhere near the creek."

"I beg your pardon, Major Pierson," said Christy, who was standing at the wheel. "What am I to do now?"

"I will tell you in a moment.--Can you tell me, Dallberg, where the Bellevite is at the present time?" asked the major, turning to the lieutenant.

"She seems to be running up and down across the head of the bay. She is beyond that point now, and you will see her when you go within a mile of the land," replied the lieutenant.

"Have you been near her?"

"Not within a mile of her, I should say."

"All right, you may head her within a mile of that point, Captain Passford," added the major; and Christy rang to go ahead.

When the major applied this high-sounding title to the new captain, the lieutenant opened his eyes a little; but he asked no questions, for he had learned as he came on board that Captain Pecklar had fainted at his post.

"Well, what have you been about, Dallberg?" asked the major rather impatiently, as soon as the boat was under way again.

"Walking, talking, and rowing most of the time. As the poet says, 'Things are not what they seem,'" replied the scout; for such appeared to be the duty in which he had been engaged.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Major Pierson, opening his eyes very wide.

"We discovered that the steamer had left the wharf last night, and you sent me to investigate when you started off in that wagon."

"That's so; and Pecklar reported to me early this morning that the steamer had left the wharf, and was standing off and on in the bay."

"I went ashore in the evening, leaving Pecklar to watch the steamer. I don't know any thing about his movements."

"He reported to me this morning about daylight. It is all right as far as he is concerned. What have you done?"

"I landed at the wharf where the Bellevite had been moored, about eleven o'clock, I should say, for I could not see my watch. I went up to Colonel Passford's house, and found it all in commotion."

"What was the matter?"

"Colonel Passford was not there: he had gone off to procure assistance."

"Assistance for what?" demanded the major. "You are sleepy, Dallberg, and you are mixing your story."

"I am sleepy and exhausted, but I will try to do better. I saw Mrs. Passford. She told me that her brother-in-law, Captain Horatio Passford, had come to the house that day, with his son; and you are aware, I believe, that his daughter, Miss Florence, has been there all winter."

"I know all about that. Go ahead, Dallberg."

"The two brothers had been shut up in the library all the afternoon, engaged in an earnest discussion; though the colonel's wife did not know what it was about. Captain Horatio left Colonel Homer in the library some time in the evening, and the colonel remained there till after ten. Then it was found that the captain had left the house secretly, with his daughter and his son; though some of the servants had seen the young man going up the road with Percy Pierson."

"Exactly so; never mind the young man now. The captain had left the house, and his daughter went with him?" repeated the major, beginning to be a good deal excited.

"The house was searched, but they could not be found; and the young lady's trunk had been removed from her room. Then the colonel went down to the wharf, and found that the *Bellevite* had left."

Major Pierson sprang to his feet, hardly able to contain himself.

## CHAPTER XX

### A REBELLION IN THE PILOT-HOUSE

Captain Passford had obtained the idea, from the fact that Florry did not like to have the major gaze at her all the time, that she was not very deeply interested in him; and the conclusion afforded him a great deal of satisfaction. She did not like to leave her uncle and aunt and her two cousins without saying good-by to them; but she had not said a word about the military gentleman who was supposed to have made frequent visits at the mansion on her account.

When Lieutenant Dallberg informed Major Pierson that Miss Florry had left the house, and that her trunk had been removed, indicating that she did not intend to return, the effect upon him was very decided. However it may have been with the young lady, it was plain enough that he was stirred to the very centre of his being.

"Then Captain Passford has left the mansion?" said the Major, after he had strode several times across the little pilot-house, as he halted in front of the lieutenant.

"No doubt of that; the family and the servants hunted the house all over in search of him and his daughter," replied Mr. Dallberg with a yawn.

"Well, what did Colonel Passford say about him?" demanded the major.

"He was not at the house when I got there. As I said, he had gone for assistance. I could do nothing till I had seen him. I sent my men on ahead to look for him, and then I went myself. We did not find him till one o'clock in the morning. He had given up all his horses for the service, and we had to go on foot," continued the lieutenant.

"But you saw Colonel Passford?"

"I did; but he had been unable to find the persons of whom he had been in search, and he could procure no such assistance as he wished. I walked back to his mansion with him. At first he was not inclined to say any thing to me; but when I told him that you were over here in the Leopard to look out for the steamer, he had more confidence in me."

"Well, what did he say?" asked the major impatiently.

"He would not say any thing till I had told him all I knew, including the manner in which the steamer had passed the forts. By this time we had reached his house, and we seated ourselves in the library."

"You need not stop to describe the chairs or the sofa," interposed the excited commandant of the fort.

"I will not; but, if I omit any thing, it will not be my fault," said the younger officer with a long gape. "He told me he and his brother had been discussing the great question, as he called it, for over six hours; and they understood each other perfectly in the end."

"Six hours! It is a wonder they did not talk each other to death!" exclaimed the major.

"At any rate, they talked enough to enable them to come to a perfect understanding. Colonel Passford is as true to the Confederacy as we all know him to be, but Captain Passford is a Yankee to the marrow of his bones; and the two brothers could not agree at all on the political question, though they profess still to be friends."

"Then the owner of the Bellevite is on the other side?"

"No doubt of that; and the steamer did not come down here to go into the service of the Confederacy," added the lieutenant.

"But she will go into it, all the same," said the major, glancing at the new captain of the Leopard.

Christy was quite as much excited over the conversation to which he could not help being a listener, even if he had wished not to be so. It was clear enough to him that the whole object of the voyage to Mobile Bay had come out, and the major needed no further information to enable him to act with promptness and decision. The fact that Miss Florry must be on board of the Bellevite was doubtless an additional incentive to make him do his entire duty to the Confederacy.

"I think I have told you the whole story, Major Pierson," said Lieutenant Dallberg with another prodigious yawn.

"Then Captain Passford and his daughter are now on board of the steamer," added the major; though he seemed to be musing on the fact, rather than saying it to his companion.

"There can be no doubt of that," replied the other.

"As Captain Passford is a Yankee at heart, of course he don't intend to remain in these waters much longer," continued the major, giving utterance to his reflections.

"There is something more than that, which I forgot to tell you; for you hurried me so that I could not keep my thoughts



about me," interposed the lieutenant.

"What more is there? You said you had told me the whole," said the major, with a sneer on his lips.

"The Bellevite is intended for the Yankee navy, and she has already been tendered to the Government for that purpose. More yet, Captain Passford and the commander of the steamer have offered their services. The owner is sure that all hands will be volunteers for the service as soon as she returns from this trip," continued Dallberg, who had suddenly roused his energies to the requirements of the situation.

"I had no doubt that Captain Passford would be with his brother in this war," mused the major.

"He could not be any farther from him. He came down here after his daughter, and his brother says he expected to remove him and his family to the North at the same time."

"His mission will be a failure in every sense," added Major Pierson, as though he regarded it as a matter of course.

"The colonel said his duty to his country and her cause would not allow him to suffer his brother to take the steamer back to the North to be handed over to the Yankee navy."

"That is where he was quite right."

"But the colonel does not like to do any thing to injure his brother and his two children who are with him; and he wished to find Colonel Dalheath, who could manage the business without loss to the Confederacy, while he could favor the captain's escape. But he was satisfied that you would feel an interest to prevent the departure of the steamer; while you would not be willing to do her owner or his family any injury in their persons, however it might be in their property."

"I think I understand the situation perfectly now," said the major, as he went to the front windows of the pilot-house. "Spottswood!" he called to the sergeant.

"Here, sir."

"How is Captain Pecklar?"

"He has come to himself, but he is no better. I am afraid he is going to die." replied Spottswood, coming near the bulkhead, and speaking in a low tone.

"That's bad," added the major, shaking his head.

"There's the steamer, sir!" called one of the soldiers.

The Leopard had just passed a point of land beyond which the Bellevite was discovered, apparently going at full speed, and headed to the south-west. Christy brought his glass to bear upon her, but he could see nothing which afforded him any information in regard to her movements or intentions.

"I suppose it is not difficult to determine what your father's steamer is waiting in the bay for, Mr. Passford," said Major Pierson, as he looked into the face of his pilot.

"I am sure I don't know what he is waiting for," replied Christy.

"Don't you, indeed?" added the major, laughing.

"I am sure I do not."

"Then, it has not occurred to you that he misses you, and don't like to leave without you?" chuckled the major. "I did not intend to have you captured by my men, and I gave them no definite orders to that effect; but, as things look just now, it is rather fortunate that I have you on board of the Leopard, not only for the sake of your father's waiting for you, but you are a good pilot, and are of great service to me."

Christy rang the bell with a sudden impulse, which made it look as though he had not fully taken in the situation before. The engineer, though he was one of the army of the disabled in whole or in part, obeyed the summons of the bell, and the propeller ceased to revolve.

"What's that for, Captain Passford?" asked the major good-naturedly.

"With your permission, Major Pierson, I will resign my office as captain of the Leopard," replied Christy, as he stepped back from the wheel.

"But I cannot give you my permission," laughed the major.

"I am sorry to disoblige you, Major Pierson; but then I am compelled to resign the position without your permission," replied Christy without an instant's hesitation; for he clearly understood what he was doing now, and neither really nor constructively was he willing to do any thing in the service of the enemies of the Union.

"But you can't resign in the face of the enemy, Captain Passford; and you accepted the position which I assigned to you," said the major, beginning to look a little more serious.

"In the face of the enemy!" exclaimed Christy, glancing at the Bellevite, as she dashed furiously over the waves at a

distance of not more than a mile from the tug. "May I ask what you mean by the enemy, Major Pierson?"

"You must have heard all the information which was brought to me by Lieutenant Dallberg; and by this time you are aware that the steamer yonder is an enemy of the Confederate States," continued the major.

"She did not come into these waters as an enemy, or with any warlike intentions, sir. She came on a peaceful mission; and now it appears that my uncle is guilty of treachery towards my father," replied Christy with deep emotion.

"Do you think it would be right or proper for your uncle to allow that fine steamer, which I am told is one of the strongest and fastest ever built, to be handed over to the Yankee navy?" demanded the major, with energy enough to assure his auditor that he meant all he said.

"I happen to know that my father had several hundred dollars about him in gold; and my uncle would have done no worse to rob him of that, than to have his steamer taken from him when it was not engaged in acts of war. In either case, Homer Passford is a thief and a robber!"

"That's plain speech, young man," said the major, biting his lips.

"I meant it should be plain, sir," said Christy, gasping for breath in his deep emotion. "I am ashamed of my uncle, and I know that my father would not be guilty of such treachery."

"I see that it is useless to reason with you, Passford."

"You have come to a correct conclusion. When you call my father's steamer an enemy, you define my duty for me; and I have nothing further to do on board of this tug," replied Christy. "I am in your power, and of course you can do with me as you please."

Major Pierson was certainly very much embarrassed. The events of the night, and the information obtained on shore, to say nothing of the specific request from Colonel Passford to "manage the business," imposed upon him the duty of capturing the *Bellevite*; and he was all ready to do it. But the *Leopard* might as well have been without an engine as without a pilot; for all the men on board were from the interior of the country, and not one of them, not even the officers, knew how to steer the boat.

The marks and figures on the chart of the bay, which Christy had put on the shelf in front of the wheel, were all Greek to them. Possibly they might get the tug to the shore, or aground on the way to it; but the steamer was practically disabled.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE SICK CAPTAIN OF THE LEOPARD

Christy Passford now realized, for the first time, that he had been taken by the enemy. War had actually been declared against the *Bellevite*, and Major Pierson would undertake to perform the duty assigned to him by Colonel Passford. The young man was determined to be true to his colors under all possible circumstances; and therefore he could do nothing, directly or indirectly, to assist in the capture of the steamer.

Captain Passford, while he recognized the irregularity of his mission, had come into the waters of Mobile Bay with no intention of committing any depredations on the persons, property, or vessels of the Confederacy. The *Bellevite* had not fired a shot, or landed a force, in the enemy's country.

Indeed, the owner of the steamer had taken especial pains to conceal any appearance of using force on coming into the bay; and all the guns on the deck of the vessel, that could not be easily lowered into the hold, had been covered up and concealed. Though Major Pierson had spent some time on board of the *Bellevite*, he did not know whether or not she was armed. He was no wiser than the owner's brother.

The major went to the lower deck of the *Leopard*, where Christy saw him questioning the soldiers there, though he could not hear any thing that was said. Of course he was inquiring for some hand who had steered a steamer; but he soon returned alone, and it looked as though he had not found the person he sought.

"It looks like bad weather, Mr. Passford, since you decline to be called captain any longer," said the major, as he came into the pilot-house, and looked at the sky in all directions.

Christy had noticed the weather signs before; and the wind was beginning to pipe up a rather fresh blast, though the sun had been out for an hour or more earlier in the morning. It came from the southward, and it was already knocking up a considerable sea, as it had the range of the whole length of the bay.

"I was thinking that we should have a storm before long when I looked at the signs this morning," replied Christy rather indifferently.

"How many men does your father have on board of his steamer, Mr. Passford?" asked the major, in a careless sort of way.

"Not as many, I should say, as you have in Fort Gaines. By the way, how many have you under your command there?" returned Christy with a twinkle of the eye.

"We have two thousand four hundred and twenty-six, including myself," replied the major.

"That is quite a force; my father has only seven hundred and forty-two, without counting me."

"Where do you put them all?"

"We stow them away in the hold, after the manner of packing sardines in a box. We only let them out one at a time, when we feed them with salt fish and baked beans."

"That makes a good many men to a gun," suggested the major.

"Lots of them," answered Christy.

"How many guns does the steamer carry?"

"Only two hundred; of course I mean heavy guns,--sixty and eighty-four pounders. I think there must be small arms enough to supply all your men in the fort."

"I was on board of the *Bellevite* for half an hour or more, and I really did not see a single heavy gun," added the major, biting his lip.

"Didn't you notice the one hundred and twenty pounder in the waist? It is big enough for you to have seen it."

It was plain enough to the young Unionist that the major really desired to know something about the force and metal of the *Bellevite*, and that he was disappointed when he found that the son of the owner was on his guard. No information was to be obtained from him.

"I think you said there was a doctor on board of the steamer," continued Major Pierson, changing the subject of the conversation.

"Yes, sir; and a very skilful surgeon he is,--Dr. Linscott," replied Christy.

"I went in to see Captain Pecklar when I was below, and I found him in a very bad condition. I am afraid he will die before we can get him to the shore; and he is suffering terribly," added the major, looking earnestly into the face of the

young man.

"I am sorry for him," replied Christy; and his pity and sympathy were apparent in his face.

He had noticed the captain of the tug in the morning, and one of the soldiers had told him he was a Northern man who had come to this region for his health. He appeared to have no scruples at doing the duty assigned to him, though he had been only two years at the South. But he seemed to be of no use to either side in the contest, for he was too sick to work any longer.

Christy was filled with pity for the sufferings of the captain of the tug, and he thought the major's questions suggested that something was to be required of him in connection with the sick man. He was willing to do any thing he could for the aid of the captain, if he could do it without sacrificing his principles.

"It was a part of my purpose to obtain assistance from the surgeon of the steamer for poor Pecklar," continued the major. "But you have moored us all here by refusing to steer the boat, and the captain will die without our being able to do a single thing for him. There is not even a drop of brandy on board of this boat to restore him."

"What do you propose to do, Major Pierson?" asked Christy.

"Just now, all I desire is to procure assistance for poor Pecklar," replied the major. "But we are as helpless as though we were all babies, for we can't handle the steamer, and cannot run down to the Bellevite. I hope you will not have the death of this poor fellow on your conscience."

"I will not. I will take the Leopard alongside of the Bellevite, if you like," replied Christy; and he regarded this as a mission of humanity which he had no right to decline.

"The steamer has turned about!" shouted one of the soldiers on the fore-castle.

Christy had noticed that the Bellevite was coming about before the announcement came from below, for his nautical eye enabled him to see her first movement. He did not feel that the service he was about to render would benefit the enemy, on the one hand; and he hoped that his father or some other person on board of the Bellevite would see him in the pilot-house, on the other hand. If he could only let his father know where he was, he felt that he should remove a heavy burden from his mind and that of his sister.

What else might come from getting near to the steamer, he did not venture to consider. But he could not help figuring up the number of soldiers on board of the tug; the force which had captured him and Percy consisted of four men, and two men were with the lieutenant. Two officers and six men was the available force of the enemy on board of the little steamer, for neither the captain nor the engineer was fit for duty.

"I accept your offer, Captain Passford; and we have no time to spare, or the sick man may die," said the major.

Christy made no reply, but went to the wheel, and rang the bell to go ahead. Heading the Leopard for the Bellevite, he gave himself up to a consideration of the situation. Major Pierson immediately left the pilot-house, and did not return. No stipulations of any kind had been made, and no terms had been imposed upon Christy. All that he desired was that his father should see him, and know where he was.

No one but himself on board could handle the steamer; and he could not be sent out of the pilot-house, or concealed so that he should not be seen. On the other hand, it did not seem to him that the officer could do any thing towards capturing the Bellevite. The major desired to ascertain what force she had, and had asked some questions calculated to throw light on the subject.

If the steamer had come into the bay on a peaceful errand, as Christy insisted that she had, the major might easily believe that she was not armed, and that she had only men enough to man her. But Christy could not tell what his captor was thinking about, and he could not yet enlarge his plans for the future; but he was very certain in his own mind, that he should not let pass any opportunity to escape, even at great risk, from his present situation.

As the Leopard went off on her course, considerably shaken by the fresh breeze which had stirred up a smart sea, the acting captain of the tug saw that all the men who had been on the fore-castle had disappeared, with a single exception. The major was not to be seen, and doubtless he was taking care of the sick captain, or arranging his plan for the interview with the people of the Bellevite. In a few minutes more, this last man disappeared, and Percy Pierson took his place on the fore-castle.

"So you are a Yank, are you, Mr. Pierson?" said he of that name, looking up to the window at which Christy stood.

"Whatever I am, I am in command of a Confederate steamer," replied Christy, laughing. "What is your brother doing, Mr. Percy?"

"I am sure I don't know: he is only talking to the men," answered the young man, who had evidently been put there to act as a lookout.

At that moment a voice was heard from farther aft, and Percy went towards the stern of the boat. A few minutes later he ascended to the pilot-house. On the sofa abaft the wheel was Lieutenant Dallberg, where he had dropped asleep as he finished his report of what he had learned on shore.

"Mr. Dallberg!" shouted Percy; but the lieutenant did not show any signs of life till the messenger had shaken him smartly. "Major Pierson wants you down below."

The officer rubbed his eyes for a moment, and then rose from the sofa, and left the apartment. The summons for the lieutenant made it look to Christy as though something was in progress below. There was only one thing which the major could think of doing; and that was to capture the Bellevite, either by force or by strategy. He would have given a good deal to know what the plan was, but it seemed to him to be quite impossible to leave the wheel.

"How is the sick man, Percy?" asked Christy, when he found that the messenger was not disposed to leave the pilot-house.

"He is a good deal better: they have just given him another glass of brandy," replied Percy.

This statement did not agree with that of the major, who had told him the captain was likely to die, and that there was not a drop of brandy on board of the boat. The commandant of the fort had evidently been acting in the pilot-house with a purpose.

"Didn't your brother order you to stay on the fore-castle, Mr. Percy?" asked Christy, when his companion came to the wheel on the opposite side from the helmsman.

"No: he said if I would help him, he would do what he could for me; and he told me to keep a lookout at this end of the tug. I can see ahead better here than I can down below," replied Percy, as he tried to turn the wheel. "I believe I could steer this thing."

"I know you could, Percy. Do you see the Bellevite?"

"Of course I do: I'm not blind."

"She has stopped her screw, and is not going ahead now," added Christy, as he let go the spokes of the wheel, and proceeded to instruct his pupil.

A few minutes later, Christy left the pilot-house to take a look below.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE PROCEEDINGS ON THE LOWER DECK

Christy Passford did not consider Percy Pierson a competent helmsman, for he had spent but a few minutes in instructing him in handling the wheel; in fact, only long enough to induce him to "steer small." For the moment, Percy was interested in the occupation, and gave his whole mind to it; and Christy intended to remain where he could reach the wheel in a moment if occasion should require. His companion in the pilot-house did not seem to care what he did.

The Bellevite, as the new captain had observed before, had stopped her screw: and she appeared to be waiting for the tug to come up, as it was headed towards her. Christy had examined her with the glass, but he could see nothing which gave him any idea of what was going on upon her decks. As Florry was now on board of her, he was satisfied that his father could only be waiting for him; and he intended to do his best to report on board some time during the day.

Major Pierson and his little force were gathered under the hurricane-deck, in the space from which opened the door of the captain's little cabin. Christy could not see a single one of them from the upper deck; but he had gone but a few steps aft before he heard the voice of the major who seemed to be "laying down the law" in a forcible manner to his men.

"Do you understand me, Spikeley?" demanded the major slowly and loudly, as though he were talking to a deaf man.

Christy had not heard the name of Spikeley before; but he concluded that he must be one of the soldiers, probably one of the two who had come on board with Lieutenant Dallberg.

"I don't think I do," replied the man addressed, in a tone quite as loud as that of the military officer.

"You are not to start the engine under any circumstances," continued the major, in a louder tone than before, as if the man had failed to hear him.

The man addressed as Spikeley must be the engineer then, and not a soldier, Christy realized at once.

"Don't I mind the bells, Major Pierson?" asked the engineer, whose tones indicated that he was not a little astonished at the positive order he had received.

"You will not mind the bells. You will take no notice of them after this present moment. When I tell you to stop the engine, you will stop it, not without, no matter how many times the bells ring," said the major with emphasis.

"I hear you, and I understand now what I am to do," replied Spikeley.

"All right, so far; but do you understand what you are not to do?" demanded the officer sharply, as though he fully comprehended the obtuseness of the engineer.

"I reckon I do: I am not to start the engine till you tell me to start it," answered the dull engineer.

"Not if you don't start it for a month!" added the major sternly.

"But you are going off, Major Pierson," suggested Spikeley. "If that steamer over yonder looks like she was going to run over the Leopard, I am not to start the engine to keep her from being sent to the bottom of the bay?"

"No!" exclaimed the officer.

"All right, major; then you may find me on the bottom when you come back."

"You will not be lost as long as I know where you are," added the major with a chuckle.

"Are you coining back to-day, major?"

"I don't know when I shall return. All you have to do is to obey orders, and leave all the rest to me."

"Shall I be all alone on board?"

"That young fellow at the wheel will remain on board; but you are not to mind what he says to you. Do you understand that?"

"I reckon I do," replied Spikeley.

"My brother, who was down here a little while ago, will also remain on board; and Captain Pecklar will be in his room, for he cannot leave it. That is all that will be on board. But no one will bother you, unless it should be the fellow now at the wheel; and he can't do any harm as long as you don't start the engine for him."

"I reckon I won't start the engine for him, or anybody else but you, major. You can bet your commission on that," added the engineer, with more vim in his speech than he had used before.

"All right, Spikeley; and I will see that you don't lose any thing, if you are faithful to your duty. You must keep a sharp

lookout for Passford: that's the young fellow at the wheel. He is the only one that can do any mischief, and I would not have him go near that steamer for a thousand dollars."

Christy thought he understood what was in progress; at any rate, he dared not remain any longer away from the wheel, and he returned to the pilot-house. Percy was still interested in his occupation. He was steering the tug very well for a beginner, and his brother was too busy organizing his expedition to notice that the steering was a little wild; for the waves caused the boat to yaw somewhat in the absence of a skilled hand at the helm.

The Leopard was now within about half a mile of the Bellevite. The latter turned her screw a few times once in a while to keep from drifting, and Christy saw from his chart that the water was too shallow for her in the direction in which the tug was approaching her. Of course his father was aware that, by this time, his own and his daughter's departure from his uncle's mansion was known. His own absence, therefore, must be the only thing that detained her in these waters.

"I think I can steer this thing pretty well, Mr. Pierson," said Percy, when the new captain joined him.

"You do it very well indeed for a beginner, Percy; but you need not call me 'Mr. Pierson' any longer, for it takes too long to say it. Everybody calls me Christy, and you had better follow the fashion," replied the captain.

"All right, Christy, and I will do so; for there are more Piersons on board of this boat now than I wish there were," added Percy, glancing at the face of his companion.

"What is your brother going to do, Percy? He seems to be arranging something on the lower deck," continued Christy.

"I don't know: he didn't tell me any thing at all about it. He wanted to use me: so he soaped me."

"If he knew you could steer this steamer, he would have something more for you to do."

"Then I won't tell him. All I want is to get away from him. He will make a common soldier of me, and I shall never get out of the ranks."

"But you will fight like a brave fellow, and you will be promoted," suggested Christy.

"If I get a bullet through my carcass, they will make a corporal of me. Then if I had half my head shot off, they might make a sergeant of me. I am not thirsting for any such glory as that, and I expected to stay with my father at Nassau."

"Did your brother ask you any thing about the Bellevite, Percy?"

"Not a thing: he would hardly speak to me, for he says I have disgraced the family. But, Christy, now I think of it, you are not on the South side of this question."

"How do you know I am not?" asked Christy, laughing.

"I heard my brother say so; and that he did not wish to have you, on any account, go near that other steamer."

"I think we won't talk about that just now," added Christy cautiously, for he was not inclined to have Percy know too much about his affairs at present.

"Why not? After all my brother has done, and is trying to do, to me, I don't think I am exactly on the South side of the question any more than you are," said Percy, looking with interest into the face of his companion. "If your father is a Union man, as Lindley says he is, he don't mean to have the Bellevite go into the service of the Confederacy."

"That is not bad logic, with the premises on which you base it."

"Just talk English, if you please, Christy."

"The English of it is, that if my father is a Union man, as your brother says he is, the Bellevite is not going into the Southern navy," replied Christy, willing to encourage the major's brother.

"I can understand that, Christy. Now, you are going on board of your father's steamer if you can get there."

"I certainly don't want to stay on board of this little tub any longer than I am obliged to do so, for you can see that I am really a prisoner."

"So am I; and that is just where we ought to be friends, and stand by each other," said Percy with a good deal of enthusiasm. "I can see through a brick wall, when there is a hole in it."

"Good eyes you have, Percy, and you don't have to wear glasses."

"I don't know much about logic; but if the Bellevite is not going into the Confederate navy, as I supposed when we came into Mobile Bay, I can figure it out that she is not going to stay in these parts at all."

"That's your logic, Percy, not mine; but I don't think I care to argue the question on the other side," said Christy, making very light of the whole matter, though he was vastly more interested than he was willing to acknowledge.

"She is going to get out of Mobile Bay, and she is going to do it just as soon as she can. Now, the question is, where is she going then?"

"You will have to put that question to my father, Percy," said Christy. "He can tell you what he is going to do a great deal better than I can."

"He is not within ear-shot of me just now: if he were, I would ask him without stopping to soap my tongue."

"You may see him before long. I don't know what your brother is about just now; and, for aught I know, he may intend to capture the Bellevite."

"I reckon he will have a good time doing it, if your father and Captain Breaker haven't a mind to let him do it."

"They will not wish to fight, even for their steamer, here in Mobile Bay. I know that my father intended to keep the peace. Besides, your brother may think there are few men on board of the vessel."

"I want to get on board of the Bellevite anyhow!" exclaimed Percy, bluntly coming to the point at which he had been aiming for some time.

"I shall not do any thing to prevent you from doing so," added Christy.

"I don't say that I want to go into the Yankee navy, or that I will lift a finger against my country, mind you."

He seemed to be equally unwilling to lift a finger for it.

"I don't ask you to do any thing against your conscience, Percy."

"If the Bellevite gets out of the bay with you and me on board, I believe I can find some way to get back to Nassau. That is what I am driving at."

"I can't say that the steamer will not go there," added Christy, who did not mean to commit himself.

Suddenly, without any bell from the pilot-house, the engine of the Leopard stopped; but Christy was not at all surprised at the failure of the power, though Percy began to make himself very indignant over the stoppage of the engine.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE EXPEDITION FROM THE LEOPARD

"What is the matter now?" demanded Percy Pierson, when the tug ceased to shake under the pressure of the engine, and began to roll rather smartly in the sea, though it was not heavy enough to be at all dangerous.

"It appears that the engine has stopped," replied Christy quietly.

"What has it stopped for?" asked the other.

"You will have to put that conundrum to your brother; but doubtless the needs of the Confederate States require that it should stop."

"Which is the bell, Christy?" inquired Percy, looking at the pulls on the frame of the wheel.

"The large one is the gong bell, the other is the speed bell, and the latter is a jingler."

"Well, which one do you ring to start her?"

"One pull at the gong bell to stop or to start her," replied Christy, who was rather anxious to have his companion learn the secrets of the pilot-house.

"One bell to stop or start her," repeated Percy.

"Two bells to back her," added the acting captain.

"Two bells to back her. I can remember all that without writing it down. But what is the other pull for. There don't seem to be any need of any more bells."

"I think there is; at least, it saves striking too many strokes on the gong when there is an emergency. The other is the speed bell."

"What is that for, to make her go faster?"

"Yes, or slower. If you start the engine, the engineer will run it slowly at first, and continue to do so till he gets the speed bell, or jingler, which he can never mistake for the gong."

"I see; and that is a good scheme."

"If you are approaching a wharf or another vessel, or if a fog come up, you ring the jingler, if the boat is going at full speed, and the engineer slows her down. If there is any danger, and you wish to stop her as quick as you can, you ring one bell on the gong, which stops the engine, and then two bells on the same, which reverses the engine. Now let me see if you know all about it; for your brother may want you to steer the Leopard, and become her captain, after he has tied my hands behind me again."

"If he does that, I will cut you loose, Christy."

"Thank you, Percy. I don't know what he will do, but it seems to me that he is going to do something;" and Christy proceeded to examine his pupil in the use of the bell-pulls.

Percy made some mistakes, which were carefully corrected; and, as he did so, the captain wrote down the directions in full, placing the paper on the shelf with the chart.

The student of bell-pulls signalized the completion of his examination by giving one pull at the gong; but it produced no effect at all upon the engine or the engineer, and the Leopard, having fallen off into the trough of the sea, had begun to roll more violently than at first.

"What is the matter with that engineer?" pouted Percy, who did not feel flattered that his first experience with the bell-pulls produced no effect, though he had distinctly heard the sound of the gong.

"They haven't sent any word up to the pilot house that the engine is disabled, and we shall have to apply to Major Pierson for further information."

"That engineer must have gone to sleep!" exclaimed Percy, whose vexation was in proportion to his zeal.

He rang the gong again; but Christy understood why the screw did not turn, though he deemed it wise to keep his own counsel for the present. Percy was rousing himself to a passion at the neglect of the engineer to heed his bell.

"Keep cool, Percy," interposed Christy. "Don't say a word to your brother that you have learned to steer a steamer; and you may have a chance to surprise him, and show that you are a good deal more of a fellow than he takes you to be."

"I don't believe he will get such a chance if he don't have it now. I wonder what he is up to," added Percy, restraining his impatience.

"We can only wait till his plans come out," added Christy. "But I will go to the side of the hurricane deck, and tell him that the engine does not respond to the bells."

"I should think he might see that for himself," said Percy.

"Don't you say a word, and don't you show yourself to any one. Sit down on that stool, and keep quiet."

"I will do just what you tell me, Christy, for I believe you will be able to get me out of this scrape," replied Percy, as he seated himself, and began to read over the instructions relating to the bells.

In fact, he was so interested in the new occupation he had taken up, that he soon forgot all about his brother, and the trouble that lay in his path. He read the paper, and applied his fingers to the pulls in a great many different ways, supposing all the various situations of the boat which Christy had suggested.

Christy went to the side of the upper deck, and saw that the soldiers had hauled in the boat that had been used by the lieutenant and his two men. It was a large and clumsy affair, big enough to hold a dozen men, and provided with four oars. But the Leopard was in the trough of the sea, and it was not an easy matter for the soldiers to handle it; and just then the major declared that the boat would be smashed against the side of the tug.

"Major Pierson, this steamer has stopped without any bell from the pilot-house, and I have been unable to start her again," said Christy, hailing the commander of the fort.

"All right, Mr. Passford: I told the engineer to stop her," replied the major, who appeared to be in a hurry, though he could not make the long-boat work as he desired. "Oblige me by remaining in the pilot-house for the present, and keep a sharp lookout for the Bellevite."

"Certainly, Major Pierson, if you desire it; but permit me to suggest that you will not be able to do any thing with that boat while the tug remains in the trough of the sea," replied Christy, who was more afraid that the major would not carry out his plan than that he would do so.

"I don't see that it can be helped, though I am no sailor," replied the commandant, looking up with interest to the acting captain. "For reasons of my own, which I cannot stop to explain, I don't wish to take this tug any nearer to the Bellevite; and I am going off in the boat after Dr. Linscott. But it looks now as though the boat would be smashed in pieces."

"I should say that it would be," added Christy. "If you will start the engine again, I think I can help you out of this difficulty."

"How do you expect to do it?" asked the major, who seemed to be incredulous on the point.

"If you will let me get the tug out of the trough of the sea, you can easily haul the boat up on the lee side of her," Christy explained. "The steamer will shelter the water on that side of her."

"Spikeley!" called the major, in a loud voice; and the engineer came out of his den. "Start her up now."

"Run her at about half speed, major," and the commandant repeated his direction to the engineer.

Christy retreated to the pilot-house, and threw over the wheel of the boat; so that, when the screw began to turn, the bow of the tug soon headed to the southward, which gave her the wind ahead. Then he brought her so that the water was comparatively smooth on her port quarter, where the long-boat was.

Without the loss of a moment, the major drove all his men into the boat, and they shoved off. The men were soldiers, and they had had but little practice in rowing, having taken it up at the fort. They made rather bad work of it; but, more by luck than skill, the boat cleared the tug without being stove.

"Spikeley!" shouted the major.

"Here, sir," replied the engineer, hobbling out of his room.

"Stop the engine, and remember what I told you," added the commandant.

"All right, sir: I will do just as you ordered me."

"What does he want to stop the engine for?" asked Percy. "She don't roll so badly when the engine is going."

"That is very true; but your brother knows what he is about," replied Christy, his eyes beginning to light up with an unwonted fire.

"Well, what is he about?"

"He is going to capture the Bellevite."

"He will have a nice time of it!" exclaimed Percy. "That steamer can blow him out of the water a dozen times before he gets near her."

"I don't believe your brother has any idea that the Bellevite is heavily armed," added Christy.

"But he has been on board of her."

"That is very true; but the two heavy guns were covered up, and the others were sent down into the hold. All the soldiers in the boat with your brother have their muskets; and he would not have taken the lieutenant and six men with him if he were simply going for the doctor for Captain Pecklar, as he told me he was."

"I believe Lindley is a fool to think of such a thing as capturing the *Bellevite* with eight men," added Percy.

"I don't know what else he can intend to do, but I do know why he don't take the tug any nearer to the steamer. He don't want my father to know what has become of me."

"Can't you make some sort of a signal to him, Christy?"

"I can do something better than that."

"What's that?"

"I can show myself to him. But, before I do that, I must know how you stand, Percy."

"How I stand? You know as much about me as I know about myself. I want to get on board of the *Bellevite*, and I am not a bit anxious to fight my brother's battle for him. I know what he is after, now I think of it."

"Well, what is he after?"

"He is after the *Bellevite*; and if he can take her, he is sure of a colonel's commission."

"I should say that he could not do any thing better for the Confederacy than to present it with the finest steamer in the world. But you are not with him, you say, Percy."

"I am not. I belong to the Confederacy the same as he does; but I want to get aboard of the *Bellevite*, and then I shall have a good chance to reach Nassau," replied Percy.

Christy had a good deal better opinion of Major Pierson than he had of his brother in the pilot-house with him; but just then the latter was able to be more useful to him than the commandant of the fort.

"I can now almost promise that you shall be put on board of the *Bellevite*, if I succeed in reaching her myself," said Christy.

"That is all I can expect of you; and I will do whatever you tell me, if it be to sink the *Leopard*. But we can't do a thing. The engineer will not start the engine for us; and I don't see but what we must stay here till my brother comes back from his errand, whatever it may be."

"I don't feel quite so helpless as that," added Christy, as he took a revolver from his hip-pocket, where he had carried it all the time since the steamer left Nassau, and while she was there.

"What are you going to do with that, Christy?" asked Percy, impressed with the sight of the weapon.

"I am going to start this tug with it, if necessary. Now hear me."

Percy was all attention.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE ENGINEER GOES INTO THE FORECASTLE

The wind from the southward seemed to be increasing in force, though it was not yet what old salts would call any thing more than half a gale, and hardly that; but the long-boat from the Leopard made bad weather of it, and rolled wildly in the trough of the sea. The soldiers pulled badly, for they had had no training in the use of the oars, and very little experience.

The boat had made very little progress towards the Bellevite, and Christy was in no hurry to put his plan in operation. He showed his revolver to Percy, and then restored it to his hip-pocket. But he watched the expression of his companion in the pilot-house very closely; for, as the case then stood, one of them belonged to the blue, while the other was of the gray. But Percy's patriotism was hardly skin deep, and he had already spoken freely enough to make himself understood.

"I don't see how you are going to start the tug with that pistol if the fellow at the engine don't look at it in that light," said Percy, as his companion restored the weapon to his pocket.

"I don't intend to use it if it can be avoided," replied Christy. "I shall not ask Spikeley to start the engine, and if he don't interfere with me, I shall not harm him; for he seems to be a cripple, and it would hurt my feelings to have to lay hands on him, or even to point a revolver at his head."

"If Spikeley don't start the engine, I reckon it will not start itself," suggested Percy.

"I don't believe it will."

"What are you going to do, then?"

"I am going to start it myself."

"Start it yourself! You will blow the whole thing up!" exclaimed Percy, who did not see how the same young fellow of sixteen could know how to steer, and run the engine.

"I have been on board the Bellevite a great deal of the time for the last three years, and my mother says I was born a sailor, as my father was before me. I always took a deep interest in every thing connected with the steamer."

"I should think you might, on board of such a fine vessel as the Bellevite."

"I have stood my trick at the wheel for weeks together; and the quartermasters taught me all they knew about steering, the compass, the log, the lead, and the signals."

"Those things have nothing to do with the engine," suggested Percy.

"That is very true; but, when I had learned enough in the pilot-house, I went down into the engine and fire rooms. Mr. Vápoor, the chief engineer, and I were in the same school together; and, though he is six years older than I am, we have been cronies for four years."

"And he told you about the engine?"

"I made a regular study of the engine, in connection with physics, and Paul"--

"Paul? That's another fellow?"

"No: it's the same fellow,--Paul Vápoor. Everybody that knows him says he is a genius. He was my teacher. But he told me that all the theory in the world would not make me an engineer: I must have the experience; and for weeks together I took the place of one of the assistant engineers. That's how I happen to know something about an engine; and I have been on board of all sorts of steamers with Paul, for the purpose of studying the engines, from a launch up to the biggest ocean-steamers."

"Did you take any lessons of the cook on board of the Bellevite, Christy?" asked Percy, laughing.

"I used to ask questions of him; but I have served as cook on board of a small yacht, and I know how to get up a chowder or bake a pot of beans."

"All right; then I will take it for granted that you can start the engine of the Leopard," continued Percy, coming back to the topic which interested him most. "What are you going to do after you have started the engine?"

"I am going to get on board of the Bellevite, and get you on board of her."

"That will suit me first rate," replied Percy. "But I don't want you to think I am a Yankee, for I am not."

"But I want you to think I am a Yankee, as you call it; and I am one," added Christy.

"After we get on board of the Bellevite, what do you suppose she will do?"

"That is more than I can tell you; but I have no doubt my father will try to get out of the bay, and then he will go to New York. It is about time to make a beginning, for the boat will not trouble us now," replied Christy, as he took a look all around the tug.

"What am I to do?"

"I haven't told you all I know about steering the boat for nothing, Percy, and you will remain at the wheel. But I wonder what that is over in the north-west," added Christy, as he took the glass from the shelf, and pointed it out the after window of the pilot-house.

"I think I can steer her all right now. What do you see over there?"

"I believe there is a steamer coming down from that direction," replied Christy anxiously, as he brought the glass to bear on the object in sight.

"A steamer!" exclaimed Percy. "That will mix things with us."

"Perhaps it will. It is a steamer, but it looks like a river boat, at any rate, it is not a tug. She is headed this way."

Christy was a good deal disturbed by the discovery he made; and giving no further attention to his companion, he continued to study the approaching craft, at the same time endeavoring to account for her appearance. His uncle Homer had gone to find some one who was to render assistance in preventing the Bellevite from leaving the bay, and becoming a part of the navy of the Union.

He had not succeeded in finding the person he sought, but he had had abundance of time to go to Mobile; and Christy feared that this steamer coming down from the north-west might be intended for the capture of the Bellevite, in which case she must be armed and provided with an ample force for the purpose.

"That is not a tug-boat: she is a river or a bay steamer, and I am afraid she is faster than this thing," said Christy, when he had obtained all the information he could at the present time. "At any rate, we have no time to spare. Do you think you can steer the Leopard, Percy?"

"I know I can," replied he confidently.

"The boat with the major in it is losing a good deal by lee-way, for he seems to be making no allowance for it."

"What does that mean?" asked Percy, puzzled by the statement.

"She has the wind on her beam, and she drifts to the north almost as much as she goes ahead. He ought to head her for some point to the southward of the Bellevite; but the more mistakes he makes, the better it will be for us."

"I see that he don't seem to be headed anywhere in particular."

"Now, Percy, I am going below to have it out with Spikeley," continued Christy, taking the revolver from his pocket, while he drew a box of cartridges from another. "The Bellevite drifts as well as the boat; but they don't let her go far to the north where the shoal water is, and they turn the screw enough to keep her pretty nearly in the same position."

"I am to steer for her, of course," added Percy.

"No: there is something that looks like buildings on the shore, at least five miles beyond the steamer. Do you see them?"

"I do."

"Run for them; and this course will carry you a considerable distance to the southward of the boat. I shall be near you all the time; and if you get bothered, sing out for me, and I will help you out."

"Don't you think I had better go below with you, so as to make a sure thing with the engineer?"

"I can handle him alone; or, if I find that I cannot, I will call for you. Now, look out very closely for your steering, and don't let her wobble any more than you can help."

Christy left the pilot-house, after he had put six cartridges into his revolver, and restored the weapon to his pocket. He had already made up his mind as to the manner in which he proposed to dispose of the engineer. He descended the ladder to the fore-castle of the tug; but before he proceeded to the important task before him, he made a careful survey of the accommodations of the steamer, though she did not appear to be different from a score of similar vessels he had visited in making his studies.

Under the pilot-house was the galley, which was also the mess-room of the crew when she had any. Forward of this, and under the forward deck, was the fore-castle, to which the inquirer descended. It was fitted up with bunks, and there was only one entrance to it, by a ladder from a scuttle in the deck.

The scuttle was the interesting point with him; and he saw that it was provided with a hasp and staple, so that the entrance could be secured by a padlock, though that was missing. Getting a piece of wood from the deck, he made a toggle that would fit the staple, and put the scuttle in a convenient place. Leaving the forward deck, he went aft, taking

another look at the steamer in the north-west; but he could hardly see her with the naked eye, and he thought she must be at least five miles off.

"Where is your bunk, Mr. Spikeley?" asked Christy, as he went to the door of the engine-room.

"What's that to you, youngster?" demanded the engineer; and possibly it did not comport with his dignity to be bossed by a boy.

"It is rather important for me to know just now," replied Christy, looking as savage as it was possible for a good-natured boy to look.

"What do you want to know for?" asked Spikeley.

"I happen to be in command of this tug for the present moment, and I want an answer without stopping all day to talk about it."

"Well, youngster, I don't reckon I'll tell you any thing about it. I get my orders from Major Pierson," replied the engineer sourly.

"The Leopard is in my charge, and I must ask you to show me where your bunk is; and after you have done that, I shall ask you to get into it, and stay there," said Christy, with decision enough for the needs of the occasion.

At the same time he took the revolver from his pocket, and pointed it towards the head of the engineer.

"You can take your choice, Mr. Spikeley: you can get into your bunk, or have your carcass thrown into the bay; and you haven't got a great while to think of it."

The engineer seemed to be properly impressed by the sight of the weapon, and he could see that the chambers contained cartridges. He rose from his seat, and moved towards the door of the engine-room.

"I heard some of the men say you was a Yank, and I reckon you be," said Spikeley. "What are you go'n to do?"

"I am going to get you into your bunk, where you will be more comfortable than you are here. Move on!"

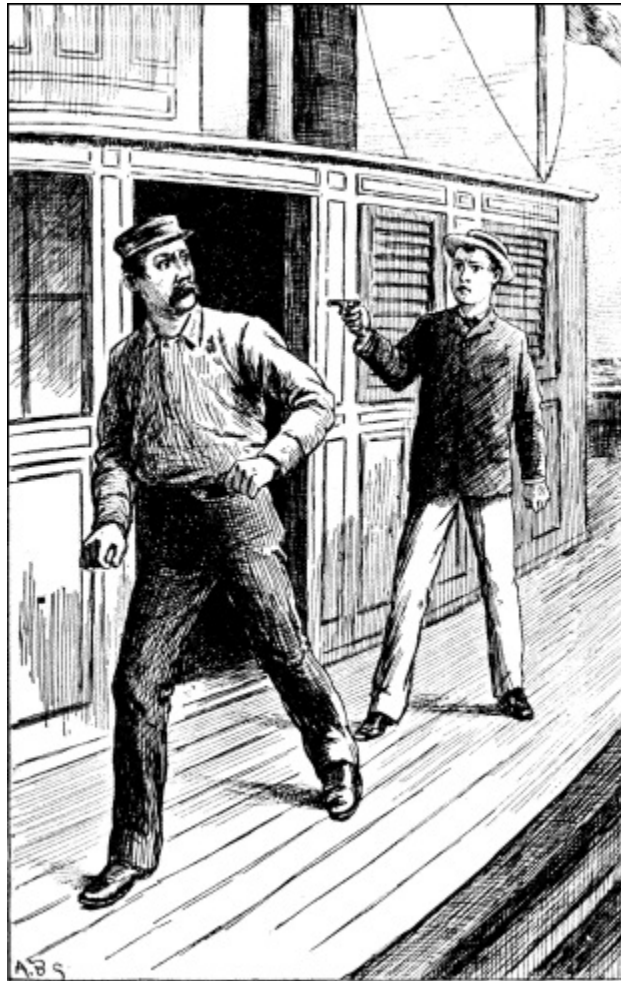
The man obeyed; for he was unarmed, and he did not like the looks of the revolver. Without another word, he moved forward, and descended to the forecabin. As soon as he was below the deck, Christy closed the scuttle, and secured it with the toggle.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE FIRST LESSON FOR A SAILOR

As the engineer was a cripple, Christy Passford had not expected to have any difficulty in bringing him to terms; and the result justified his calculations. The Leopard was now practically in his possession, for Captain Pecklar was the only person on board, except Percy, who could give him any trouble; and he was too feeble to do any thing.

Percy seemed to be very busy in the pilot-house, going through imaginary evolutions at the wheel, and supposing all sorts of orders, and all kinds of positions in which the tug might be placed. He did not seem even to observe what his companion was doing, though the engineer had been driven into the fore-castle in plain sight from the window of the pilot-house.



"THE ENGINEER OBEYED" (Page 277)

The long-boat was still struggling through the waves on her way to the Bellevite, and could hardly have made any worse weather of such a comparatively mild sea. But she had made some considerable progress, for the boat was now making a proper allowance for leeway, and the soldiers were improving in their rowing, possibly under the direction of the major, who could not help seeing how badly they had been doing.

Christy decided to ascertain more definitely the condition of Captain Pecklar, for reports in in regard to him were conflicting. He went to his state-room, and found him in his berth. He certainly looked like a very sick man, though he appeared to be in no immediate danger, so far as the new captain of the Leopard was able to judge from his appearance.

"How do you find yourself, Captain Pecklar?" asked Christy in sympathetic tones; for he really pitied the poor man, far away from his friends, and apparently on the very brink of the grave.

"I am a great deal better," replied the invalid, looking earnestly into the face of the young man in front of him.

"I am glad to hear it. Major Pierson has gone in the boat to the Bellevite for Dr. Linscott, and I am sure he will be able to

do something for you when he comes," added Christy.

"When he comes," repeated Captain Pecklar, with a smile on his thin and blue lips. "I don't expect to see him at present."

"But the major has gone for him; at least, he told me he should."

"I have no doubt he told you so; but he has not gone for the doctor, though I may see the surgeon of the steamer in the course of the day," replied the captain, turning his gaze upon the floor of his room, as though his mind troubled him as much as his body.

"If the major has not gone for the doctor, what has he gone for?" asked Christy.

"I know what he has gone for; and, as you belong on board of that steamer, I should think you might easily imagine."

"Perhaps I can," added Christy rather vaguely.

"Was it necessary for a major and a lieutenant, with six soldiers, to go for the doctor, when five at the most could have done it better? But have they gone?" asked the captain anxiously.

"They have; they started some time ago. They are making bad weather of it, for they don't know how to handle the boat in a sea," replied Christy.

"They have gone!" exclaimed Captain Pecklar, getting out of his bunk. "Then I need not stay in my berth any longer."

Christy looked at him with astonishment when he saw him get out of his berth without any apparent difficulty; for he certainly looked like a very sick man, though his appearance had somewhat improved since he left the pilot-house.

"Do you feel able to get up, captain?" asked he, as the sufferer put on his coat.

"I was exhausted and worn out by being on duty all night, and I had a faint turn; but I am subject to them. If you are the son of the man that owns that steamer, you will be able to understand me," replied the captain; and his feeble condition seemed to make him somewhat timid.

"I am the son of Captain Passford, who owns the Bellevite," added Christy.

"I should not have been down here now, if I could have got away; but they seem to hold on to me, for the reason that I am a pilot of these waters. I was brought up in the pilot-house of a steamer; and they say I know the bottom of this bay better than any other man, though I have been here but two years."

"Then you are not in sympathy with the secession movement?"

"In sympathy with it? I hate the very sound of the word! I will tell you about it."

"Don't be long about it, for I have an affair on my hands," interposed Christy, though he was not sorry to have the advice of one who knew something about the situation in the vicinity.

"Only a minute. Major Pierson sent a glass of brandy to me, and I was fit to take my place in the pilot-house then, for I felt a great deal better; in fact, I was as well as usual, and I am now. But I had an idea what the major was about, and I did not want to take any part in getting your father's steamer into trouble. That's the whole of it; all I want is to get on board of her, and get out of this country."

"All right, Captain Pecklar!" exclaimed Christy, delighted at the frankness of his companion. "The steamer, I mean the tug, is already in my possession."

"In your possession! What do you mean by that?" asked the captain with a look of astonishment.

"I have driven the engineer into the fore-castle, and fastened him down. The major's brother is in the pilot-house, and he has learned something about handling the wheel. I am going to start the boat now; and if I can do nothing more, I can show myself to my father on board of the Bellevite."

"I am glad to hear it. I intended to do something, though I hardly knew what, as soon as I was sure that the major and his men had gone," added Captain Pecklar. "I can take the wheel now."

"Percy Pierson takes a great deal of interest in his new occupation, and I think it will be best to let him occupy his mind in that way. He steered the tug for some time, while I was ascertaining what was going on in this part of the boat."

"Just as you think best, Mr. Passford."

"Call me Christy, for that will sound more natural to me."

"As you please, Christy. I am competent to run an engine, and did it once for a couple of years, though the business does not agree with me."

"Very well, Captain Pecklar; then you shall run the engine, and I will keep the run of what is going on around us," said Christy, as he walked towards the stern of the tug. "There is a new danger off in the north-west."

"What's that?" asked the captain.



"There is another steamer coming in this direction, and I suppose she hails from Mobile. There she is."

Christy was somewhat disturbed to find that the approaching steamer was overhauling the tug very rapidly. It looked as though she would prove to be a more important factor in the immediate future than he had supposed. If he could only get on board of the *Bellevite*, he was sure that she could run away from any thing that floated. But there was not another moment to be lost, and he hastened on deck to have the *Leopard* started. He found Percy still engaged with his problems in steering, going through all the forms as though the boat were actually under way.

"Now you may do it in earnest, Percy," said he. "We are all ready to go ahead. Strike your gong."

"It will be no use to strike it while you are up here," replied the pilot, looking at Christy with interest.

"We have not a second to spare; strike your gong, and we will talk about it afterwards," continued Christy impatiently.

"But I am not a fool, Christy, and I don't"--

"But I do!" interposed the acting captain sharply, as he reached over and pulled the bell.

"I don't like to have a fellow fool with me when I am in earnest. What good will it do to ring the bell while you are in the pilot-house, Christy?"

But before the captain could answer the question, if he intended to do so, the boat began to shake under the pressure of the engine, and the tug moved ahead at half speed. Percy was so much astonished that he could hardly throw over the wheel, and Christy took hold of it himself.

"I don't understand it," said he, as he took hold of the spokes, and looked ahead to get the course of the boat.

"You will never make a sailor till you mend your ways," added Christy.

"There must be some one in the engine-room," said Percy.

"Of course there is."

"Why didn't you say so, then? I did not suppose the boat could go ahead while you were up here."

"I told you to ring the gong, didn't I?"

"What was the use of ringing it when you were in the pilot-house?"

"What was the use of ringing it when I did?" demanded Christy, who had but little patience with this kind of a sailor.

"You knew there was some one in the engine-room."

"But the engine would have started just the same if you had rung the gong."

"Well, I didn't know it; and if you had only said you had an engineer, I should have understood it."

"You will never make a sailor, as I said before," added Christy.

"What is the reason I won't?"

"Because you don't obey orders, and that is the first and only business of a sailor."

"If you had only told me, it would have been all right."

"If the captain, in an emergency, should tell you to port the helm, you could not obey the order till he had explained why it was given; and by that time the ship might go to the bottom. I can't trust you with the wheel if you don't do better than you have; for I have no time to explain what I am about, and I should not do it if I had."

"It would not have taken over half an hour to tell me there was an engineer in the engine-room," growled Percy.

"That is not the way to do things on board of a vessel, and I object to the method. I don't know what there is before us, and I don't mean to give an order which is not likely to be obeyed till I have explained its meaning."

"I will do as you say, Christy," said Percy rather doggedly. "Did Spikeley agree to run the engine?"

"No, he did not; he is locked up in the fore-castle. Captain Pecklar is at the engine; but he is all ready to take the wheel when I say the word."

"I can keep the wheel, for I think I understand it very well now."

"I did not wish to take you away from the wheel, for I saw that you liked the work; and I said so to Captain Pecklar. If you have learned the first lesson a sailor has to get through his head, all right; if not, Captain Pecklar will take the wheel."

"I understand the case better now, and I will do just what you tell me," protested Percy.

"And without asking any questions?"

"I won't ask a question if the whole thing drops from under me."

Percy steered very well, and Christy had enough to do to watch the steamer astern and the boat ahead.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE POST OF DUTY AND OF DANGER

The long-boat, with the increased experience of its crew, was doing very well, and it would soon be within hailing-distance of the *Bellevite*. But Major Pierson could hardly help discovering that the *Leopard* was under way, though he seemed to give his whole attention to the boat and the steamer ahead of him.

Christy went aft to ascertain the situation of the steamer from the north-west, and with the glass he satisfied himself that she was not exactly a river steamer, such as he had seen on the *Alabama*; or, if she was, she had been altered to fit her for duty on the bay.

He could see that she had brass guns on her forward deck, and a considerable force of soldiers or sailors. But she was a nondescript craft, and he was unable to make her out accurately, though by this time she was not more than half a mile distant. No immediate danger was to be apprehended from her, unless she opened fire with the field-pieces on her deck. As the *Leopard* was in the service of the forts, she was not likely to do this till she knew more of the present situation on board of her.

Christy had made up a new course for the tug when he saw the change in the working of the long-boat, and the approaching steamer had an influence in his calculations. He had directed the new pilot to head her directly for the *Bellevite*, only taking care to give the long-boat a sufficiently wide berth to prevent the soldiers from boarding her, and with steam it would be an easy thing to keep out of its way.

Christy went below to the engine-room to ascertain the condition of Captain Pecklar. He found him eating his breakfast, which he took from a basket he had evidently brought with him from the shore the day before. He seemed to have an appetite; and, from the food he consumed, the acting captain did not believe he could be in a desperate situation.

"How do you get on, Captain Pecklar?" asked Christy, as he glanced at the engine, and judged that it was moving more rapidly than at any time before.

"I am a good deal better, Christy: in fact, the thought of getting out of this country is almost enough to cure me; for I have come to the conclusion that I had rather die at home than live here," replied the captain, as he put an enormous piece of beef into his mouth, which his companion thought would be almost enough for his breakfast.

"I am glad you are better. How does the engine work?" asked Christy.

"I have been stirring it up, and I just filled up the furnaces. I think she is doing her best, though that is not saying a great deal. But, Christy, have you tried to get a look over beyond the *Bellevite*?"

"No, I haven't seen any thing in that direction," replied Christy, a little startled by the question.

"I believe there is another steamer over there; and, if there is, it must be the *Dauphine*."

"What of her?" asked Christy anxiously.

"She is a steam-yacht of four hundred tons, and the fastest steamer in these waters. They have been fitting her up for the war, though I don't know whether she is to be a man-of-war or a blockade-runner."

"What makes you think it is she?"

"Because she has been over to the town you may have seen in that direction. She is behind the *Bellevite*, so that you can hardly see her."

"I am inclined to think the *Bellevite* can take care of herself," replied Christy.

"Why, the *Bellevite* cannot do any thing but run away; and Major Pierson says she will never do that till you have been taken on board of her. I heard him and Lieutenant Dallberg talk it all over near the door of my room."

"Perhaps the *Bellevite* can do something more than run away," added Christy with a smile.

"What do you mean, my friend?" asked the captain, suspending the operation of his jaws, he was so interested in the answer to his question. "The major said distinctly that she was a gentleman's pleasure-yacht, and that she was not armed."

"The major has a right to his opinion, and I shall not argue the point against him. My father came into the bay on a peaceful errand, and he had no intention to be aggressive."

"All right, Christy; I can see through plain glass even when there isn't a hole in it," said Captain Pecklar, laughing; for he seemed to be entirely satisfied with the situation, in spite of the fact that two hostile steamers appeared to menace the *Bellevite*, which he hoped would bear him to his home.

"Now, what do you know of the steamer astern of us?" asked Christy.

"That must be the Belle. She is no match for an armed steamer, but she may do a great deal of mischief. She used to run down the bay in the summer."

"I will go up to the pilot-house, and see if I can make out the Dauphine. If she is a sea-going yacht, she is the one we have to fear," said Christy, as he left the engine-room.

"See here, Christy; there is another steamer over beyond the Bellevite, and she is pretty near her, too," said Percy, as he entered the pilot-house.

The acting captain brought his glass to bear over the Bellevite, and he was satisfied that the approaching vessel was the yacht described by Captain Pecklar. But he had hardly got his eye on the Dauphine, before he saw that the Bellevite had started her screw. It looked as though she deemed it advisable to change her position in view of the approach of the steamers on each side of her.

"Where is she going, Christy?" asked Percy.

"I am sure I cannot tell you. You can see all that I can see," replied Christy, who was very anxious about the situation.

"We are not a great way from the long-boat," suggested Percy, who was more afraid of that than he was of all the steamers in sight. "What am I to steer for now? Shall I make her follow the Bellevite?"

"Head her off to the north-east," replied Christy, opening the binnacle.

But he might as well have opened the book of the black art to Percy, for he could not steer by compass. Christy got the Leopard on her new course, by which she would come somewhere near intercepting the Bellevite; and then he found an object on the shore, many miles distant, for the guidance of the pilot.

But the long-boat was now almost within hailing-distance of the Leopard. Major Pierson was certainly aware that the tug was under way, and he made the most energetic demonstrations for her to stop her screw. Suddenly the Bellevite changed her course again, and run directly towards the tug.

This movement was apparently noticed by the major; for his men doubled their efforts at the oars, pulling for the Leopard. The boat was then out of the trough of the sea, and its progress was much better. Then the Bellevite changed her course again; and it was impossible to determine what she intended to do, though possibly she was following a crooked channel.

"Leopard, ahoy!" shouted Major Pierson; and he was near enough now to be distinctly heard.

"In the boat!" returned Christy, though he knew the parley could amount to nothing.

"Stop her!" yelled the major.

"Not yet!" replied the acting captain.

"Stop, or I will fire into you!"

"I'm not going to stand here and be shot down!" exclaimed Percy. "My brother don't know that I am at the wheel, and I shall be the first one to get hit."

Christy could not blame Percy for not wishing to be shot by the party under his brother's command; and he had no more relish for being shot himself, quite in sight of his father's steamer. But to abandon the helm was to abandon the control of the tug, and the major could recover possession of her and of his prisoner within a few minutes.

"Go below, Percy, and put yourself in the fire-room, for you will be safe there," said Christy.

At that moment the crack of a musket was heard, and a bullet crashed through the pine boards of the pilot-house. It was the first evidence of actual war which Christy had seen, and it impressed him strongly.

"It isn't safe for me to show myself," said Percy, as his companion took the wheel from him.

"You must be your own judge of that," replied Christy, as he dropped down on the floor, with the compass in his hand.

"What are you going to do down there?" asked Percy.

"I have no wish to be shot any more than you have. I am going to keep out of sight, and steer the steamer by compass," replied Christy.

"I will steer her if I can keep out of sight," added Percy.

"You can't steer by compass; but you can do something if you are willing," suggested the pilot.

"I am willing to do all I can; but I don't want my brother to shoot me, as much for his sake as my own. What shall I do?" asked Percy.

"Crawl out of the pilot-house on the port-side, where they can't see you from the boat, and then keep watch of all the other steamers. Report to me just where they all are, and what they are doing."

"All right; I will do that," replied Percy, as he obeyed the order.

The boat continued to fire at the pilot-house of the Leopard, and though a shot came uncomfortably near Christy, he stuck to his post; for to leave it was to give up the battle.

"The Bellevite is headed directly towards us," called Percy, outside of the pilot-house. "The other steamers are just as they were."

"All right; keep your eye on them all the time."

"The Bellevite is headed directly towards us," said Captain Pecklar, coming to the top of the ladder on the port-side.

"So Percy has just reported to me."

"But you will get killed if you stay here," said the captain, with genuine solicitude in his looks and manner.

"But I must stay here, all the same," replied Christy, who felt too proud to desert the post of duty because it happened to be the post of danger at the same time.

"But let me take your place, Christy," continued Captain Pecklar, finishing the ascent of the ladder.

"No, no, captain! Don't expose yourself," protested Christy. "It is as safe for me as it will be for you."

"But I have got about to the end of my chapter of life; and there is not more than a year, if there is as much as that, left for me. You are a young fellow, and the pride of your father, I have no doubt; at any rate, you ought to be. Give me that place, and you will be safer in the engine-room."

Captain Pecklar insisted for some time, but Christy obstinately refused to leave his post.

"Men pulling in the boat with all their might!" shouted Percy.

"I think I can bring their labors in that way to an end," added the captain. "But do you understand what the Bellevite is doing, Christy?"

"She is coming this way; that is all I know."

"She is coming this way because the major has been fool enough to fire on the Leopard. The shooting assures your father that this tug is an enemy."

The captain went below again, leaving Christy to consider his last remark. But he had not been gone five minutes before the report of a cannon shook the hull of the Leopard, and the pilot saw that it was on the forecastle of the tug.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### A CANNON-BALL THROUGH THE LEOPARD

The gun on the fore-castle of the Leopard was placed as far aft as possible, so that Christy could not see it without putting his head out at the front windows of the pilot-house, and for this reason he had not seen what Captain Pecklar was about. But the piece must have been loaded before, for he could not have charged it without being seen.

The captain had remarked that he could bring the labors of those in the long-boat to an end, for Major Pierson was urging his men to their utmost with their oars in order to reach the tug. The smoke prevented Christy from seeing to what extent he had succeeded, though the fact that he had fired the gun at the boat was all he needed to satisfy him of the fidelity of the acting engineer to the cause he had just espoused.

Christy had not deemed it advisable to change the course of the Leopard; for the long-boat was approaching her at right angles, and he thought she would get out of its way, for those in charge of it made no calculation of the distance the tug would run while the boat was approaching her.

The smoke blew aside in a moment, and Christy discovered that the long-boat had not been struck by the shot; or, if it had, it had received no material damage. The major was still urging his men to increase their efforts, and he seemed to be not at all disconcerted by the shot which had been fired at him. But Christy saw that he was losing the game, as he probably would not have done if he had been a sailor, for his calculations would have been better made.

When the pilot of the Leopard realized that the major was too much occupied in increasing the speed of the long-boat to continue the firing at the tug, he had resumed his place at the window; but he kept his eye on the enemy. He looked out at the window; but he could not see Captain Pecklar, though he heard him shovelling coal a minute later. The engine still appeared to be doing its best, and the tug was in a fair way to pass clear of the long-boat.

"Look out, up there, Christy!" shouted the engineer, a little later.

The pilot turned his attention to the boat again, and saw that the major and the lieutenant were loading their muskets again, and the two men not at the oars were doing the same. The commandant evidently began to feel that he was to miss his prey if he depended upon the oars of the soldiers, and he was about to turn his attention again to the business of disabling the pilot of the tug. Christy dropped down on the floor again, and steered by the compass, which was still where he had placed it before.

He could hear a rumbling sound on the forward deck, and he was curious to know what the captain was doing; but it was not prudent to look out at the window. After a great deal of hard kicking and prying, he succeeded in removing a narrow board from the front of the pilot-house near the floor; and through this aperture he could see that the acting engineer had just finished reloading the gun, and was changing its position so as to bring it to bear on the long-boat.

The enemy were now a little forward of the beam of the tug, and not more than fifty yards from her; but Christy was satisfied that the Leopard would go clear of the long-boat if his craft was not disabled. The major and his companions could not help seeing that Captain Pecklar had deserted their cause, and that, with the gun on the deck, he was a dangerous enemy.

The report of a musket in the direction of the boat caused Christy to look very anxiously to the forward deck; but to his great satisfaction he saw that the captain had not been hit. But he immediately retired under the pilot-house, so that he could not see him. He was brave enough to stand up and be shot at, but he was also prudent enough not to expose himself unnecessarily.

Three other shots followed the first, one of the balls passing through the boards of the pilot-house, above the helmsman's head; and he saw a splinter fly from a stanchion forward. Captain Pecklar waited for the fourth shot,--and he had evidently noticed how many men had muskets in their hands,--then he sprang out from his hiding-place, sighted the gun, and pulled the lock-string.

Through the aperture he had made, Christy looked with intense interest to ascertain the effect of this shot. As soon as the smoke blew away, he saw that the shot had passed obliquely into the boat, striking the stern-board just behind Major Pierson, and splitting off the plank near the water-line.

There was a commotion in the ranks of the enemy, and it was plain enough that the water was flowing into the craft. The soldiers stopped rowing, and the lieutenant and one of the extra men were sent into the bow. This change settled the bow of the boat down into the water, and lifted the stern. The major appeared to be equal to the emergency; he gave his orders in a loud voice, and the rowing was renewed with the delay of not more than a couple of minutes. But that was enough to defeat his present purpose, though he still urged his men to exert themselves to the utmost.

The long-boat went astern of the tug, and Christy came out from his place on the floor to the windows. Captain Pecklar was loading the gun, as he had done before, by swinging it around so that the muzzle was under the pilot-house.

"I think you will have no further use for that gun," said Christy, when he saw what the captain was doing.

"Perhaps not; but it is best to have it ready for the next time we want it. The major kept it loaded all the time, and I shall follow his example," replied the captain.

"Have you been hit, Percy?" asked Christy, looking out at the side under which the late pilot had bestowed himself for safe-keeping.

"I have not been hit; they could not see me where I am. Have you been hit, Christy?" replied Percy.

"Not at all; I took good care not to be seen while they were firing. But your brother has dropped astern of the Leopard in his boat, and there is no danger here now: so you can come in and take the helm, if you like."

Percy was glad to have something to do, for he was very nervous; and he came into the pilot-house. He was not half as airy as he had been before, and the sound of the muskets and the twelve-pounder on the forward deck had undoubtedly made an impression upon him. But he was as glad to take the wheel as Christy was to have him, for he desired to study the situation after all the changes which had been made in the position of the several vessels.

"You have had an awful time of it, Christy," said Percy, as he took the wheel. "I wonder that you have not been killed."

"Not a very awful time of it, and I took good care not to be killed," replied Christy. "A fellow isn't good for much after he has been killed, and it is always best to look out and not get killed; though I suppose one cannot always help it."

"Did you fire the field-piece on the deck below?"

"No, I did not; that was done by Captain Pecklar."

"My brother will have him hanged when he gets hold of him," added Percy, shaking his head.

"Very likely he will if he gets hold of him, but we don't intend to let him get hold of him."

Christy left the pilot-house, and went out on the hurricane deck, where he could better see all that was to be seen, and be alone with his own thoughts. His first care was to ascertain the position of his most active enemy, the long-boat. He could see it a short distance astern of the tug. It had changed its course, and was following the Leopard, which was now gaining rapidly upon it.

Directly ahead of the tug was the Bellevite, not more than a quarter of a mile distant; but while she was going off to the north-west, the Dauphine had kept more to the southward and was now nearer than the steamer of Captain Passford.

The remark which Captain Pecklar had made when he came partly upon the hurricane deck, that the Bellevite had changed her course because Major Pierson had been fool enough to fire at the tug, came up in Christy's mind again. He had thought of it at the time it was uttered, and several times since; but he had not had the time to weigh its meaning.

The owner's son knew very well that every incident connected with the tug, and with the other vessels in sight, had been carefully observed and weighed by his father and Captain Breaker. They had seen the boat leave the Leopard. It looked like a stupid movement to do such a thing, when the approach to the Bellevite could be made so much more rapidly and safely in the tug.

There must be a motive for such a singular step. Of course the passage of the boat had been closely observed, and the starting up of the screw of the Leopard had been duly noted. As the tug came near the long-boat, the latter had fired upon it. This must have been seen; and the question naturally would come up as to why those in the boat fired upon their own people in the Leopard.

It was not likely that they could answer the question in a satisfactory manner on board of the Bellevite; but the firing indicated that an enemy was in possession of the tug. This was enough, in the opinion of Christy, as it had been in that of Captain Pecklar, to produce the change in her course.

The firing from both craft since the first demonstration must have deepened the impression. Those on board of the Leopard must be on the side of the Union, or the party in the boat would not repeatedly fire upon them. Christy was satisfied that his father would know what all the indications meant before he abandoned the investigation.

But the Bellevite did not seem to be making her best speed by a great deal. With his glass he could see that there was a hand in the fore-chains heaving the lead; and probably Captain Breaker feared that the bottom "might be too near the top of the water" for the draught of his vessel, and he was proceeding with caution.

Christy descended the ladder to the main-deck. He found Captain Pecklar in the fire-room, shovelling coal into the furnace. He seemed to be again nearly exhausted by the efforts he had made during the morning; and Christy took the shovel from him, and did the work himself.

"You must not kill yourself, Captain Pecklar. This is too hard work for you," said Christy.

"If I can only get out of this scrape, it will not make much difference what becomes of me," replied the invalid faintly.

"I will do this work myself. Don't you touch that shovel again."

"But things are looking very badly indeed for us, Christy," said the captain, bracing himself up as if for a renewed

effort. "The Belle is almost up with the boat, and she will take Major Pierson and his party on board; and she is nearer to us than the Bellevite."

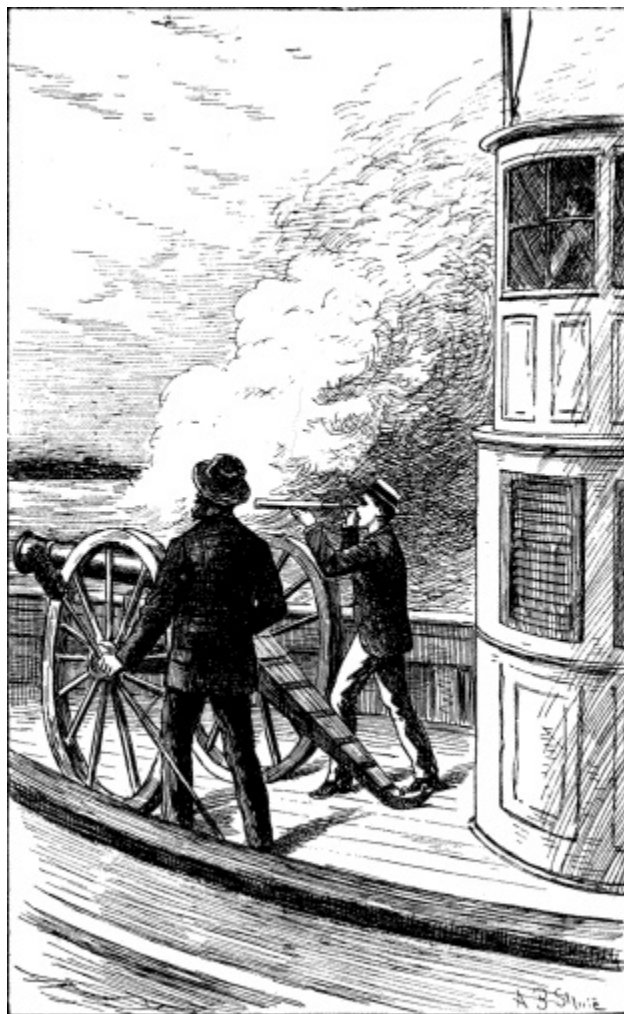
"Is that so? I have not looked astern for some time," replied Christy, rather startled by the information.

"The Bellevite is not sailing as fast as she has some of the time, and both the Belle and the Dauphine are nearer to us than she is," added Captain Pecklar. "I have been trying to get up more steam."

"If my father only knew that I was on board this tug, I should feel more hope," said Christy.

"Perhaps he suspects you are. He probably sent ashore to obtain information in regard to you. But we don't know."

Just then a cannon-ball made the splinters fly all around them.



"I HAVE HIT HER" (Page 315)

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE AMERICAN FLAG AT THE FORE

Christy rushed out of the engine-room followed by Captain Pecklar, to ascertain what damage had been done to the tug by the shot. A cloud of smoke rising from the Belle, astern of the Leopard, informed them that the shot had come from her. It had struck the house on deck, carrying away the corner of the captain's state-room; but, beyond this, no damage appeared to be done.

But the tug had broached to, and it was evident that Percy had abandoned the wheel when the shot struck the vessel; and Christy hastened to the pilot-house to restore the vessel to her course. But he was closely followed by the acting engineer. They found the volunteer pilot lying on the deck, where he had been before when the vessel was fired upon.

"Is that the way you steer the boat, Percy?" said Christy reproachfully, as he went into the pilot-house, and righted the helm.

"Didn't you hear that cannon-shot that struck her just now?" demanded Percy, partly raising himself from his recumbent posture.

"Of course I heard it: I am not deaf; and, if I had been, I could have felt it. I don't believe we shall want you on board of the Bellevite, if that is the way you do your duty."

"I don't want to be shot by my own people," pleaded Percy. "Has the shot ruined the vessel?"

"Don't you see that she is going along the same as ever? No harm has been done to her so far as any further use to us is concerned," replied Christy. "But, Captain Pecklar, as things are now, we are running right into the fire."

Christy was more troubled than he had been at any time before; and he realized that it was necessary to make some change in the course of the Leopard, though she had the enemy on each side of her.

"It don't look as well as it might," added the captain gloomily.

"The Dauphine is getting altogether too near us, and we are making the distance between us less every minute," added Christy.

"There comes another shot from the Belle. She means business, and Major Pierson is certainly directing things on board of her. We can't stand that any longer. But she wasted her powder that time, and we must do better than that. What do you intend to do, Christy?"

"I mean to come about, and take a course between the Belle and the Dauphine: that is the most hopeful thing I can think of," replied Christy, after another careful survey of the positions of the enemy.

"I think you are right."

"We will come about, then;" and Christy threw over the wheel.

"That will bring our gun where we can use it; and we shall have a better chance at the Belle than she has at us, for she is larger, and has a crowd of men on her main deck," added Captain Pecklar, as he went to the ladder.

"If you are not afraid of those shots, I am not," said Percy, coming into the pilot-house again; and he was evidently ashamed of himself when he saw a fellow younger than himself taking no notice of them.

"I don't pretend to like them, or that I am not afraid of them; but I shall do my duty in spite of them," replied Christy. "I should be ashamed to meet my father, if I ever see him again, if I gave up the fight, and allowed myself to be kept as a prisoner."

"I want to get away from here as much as you do; and I will take the wheel again, if you will let me," continued Percy.

"I don't ask you to expose yourself; but, if you take the helm, you must stick to it till you are relieved. We have no time to fool with you."

"I will stick to it, Christy."

"Very well, then you shall take it; but if you desert your post again, I will shoot you the first time I set eyes on you."

"That is rough."

"If you think it is, don't take the helm."

"I will take it, for I had rather be shot by those in the other steamers than by you."

"I am going below to help Captain Pecklar; but the moment the tug goes wrong, I shall send a ball from my revolver up into the pilot-house."



"I understand you, and it looks as though we were getting into a hot place. I will do my duty as well as I know how. Now tell me how I am to steer."

"Run for that point you see far off to the northward."

Christy went to the main deck forward, where he found Captain Pecklar getting the field-piece ready for use. The Belle was now quite near on the one hand, while the Dauphine was hardly farther off on the other hand. The Bellevite was coming down from the north-east, with the lead still going in her chains. The immediate danger was to come from the Belle.

"That won't do!" exclaimed Captain Pecklar, when they had the gun in position for use.

"What won't do?" asked Christy.

"Didn't you notice that? They are firing rifle-balls from the Belle. One of them just struck the bulkhead."

"I don't see that we can help ourselves, whether it will do or not."

"The chances are in our favor, however, for the men cannot handle their rifles to the best advantage while the Belle heaves in the sea," added the captain. "Don't stand up where they can see you, Christy, but get down on the deck with that lock-string in your hand. When I give you the word, pull it as quick as you can," said the captain, as he sighted the gun, and changed its position several times.

He was a sailor, and the artillery officers at the forts had trained the men employed on the tugs in handling the pieces put on board of them, to be used in bringing vessels to. Better than any soldier, he could make the proper allowance for the motion of the steamer in the sea, which was becoming heavier.

"Fire!" shouted he, with more voice than he was supposed to have in the feeble condition of his lungs.

The gunner had loaded the piece himself, and it made a tremendous report when Christy pulled the lock-string. The Leopard shook under the concussion of the discharge, and she was completely enveloped in smoke; so that they could not see whether the Belle had been hit or not. But in the distance they could hear hoarse shouts in the direction of the Belle, and they concluded that something had happened in that quarter.

Christy had brought down the glass with him; and he directed it towards the steamer aimed at as soon as the smoke began to blow out of the way, though it was some time before he could get a clear view of her.

"By the great Constitution!" exclaimed Captain Pecklar, before Christy could cover the Belle with his glass. "I have hit her!"

"Where?" asked the other, elated at the intelligence.

"Right on the bow! There is a hole big enough to roll a wheelbarrow through," replied the captain, greatly excited. "She has stopped her wheels."

"That's a nice hole!" added Christy, as he got the glass to bear on it, and his hopes began to rise again. "It is just about big enough for a small wheelbarrow. But they have gone to work on it, and are putting mattresses over it."

"That craft is finished for to-day, and we needn't worry any more about her," said the captain. "She will not get that hole stopped up for an hour or longer, and I hope this affair will be over before this can be done. Shall we give them another shot? What do you think, Christy? She holds still now, and I believe I can hit her every time."

"Decidedly not: she is disabled for the present, and that is all I care for. We are not in war trim," replied Christy, as he turned his attention in the direction of the other vessels.

"As I told you, the Dauphine is fast; and she will be down upon us in less than five minutes more," said Captain Pecklar.

"I wonder that she don't fire upon us," added Christy.

"I doubt if she has any guns on board, though she may have a field-piece or two."

"The Bellevite is waking up, I think," said Christy.

"She is getting into deeper water."

"But the Dauphine is coming right between the Leopard and the Bellevite," continued Christy, as he brought the glass to bear upon her, though she was near enough to be distinctly seen with the naked eye. "Whether she had any guns or not, she has plenty of men on board; and it is easy enough to see what she intends to do."

"What do you think she intends to do?" asked the captain.

"Of course she came out here after the Bellevite, as the Belle did also; but her people have seen what the Leopard has been about for the last hour, and they intend to dispose of us before they hunt for the bigger game."

"She may capture the Bellevite after she has finished her business with us," said the captain, looking very anxious.

"She may, but I don't believe she will. You have proved that you are all right, Captain Pecklar, and I don't mind telling

you now that the Bellevite is heavily armed. Captain Breaker was a lieutenant in the navy, and he knows how to handle a ship," replied Christy.

"Then, if we escape the Dauphine, we shall be all right."

"The Dauphine will come down, and throw a few men on board of us; boarding us, in fact, as we have no force with which to help ourselves," added Christy, as he took a small American flag from his pocket.

It had been made by his mother on the late cruise of the steamer, and it was a sort of talisman with him, which he had often displayed in foreign lands. He found a pole on the deck, to which he attached the emblem of his whole country, and displayed it at the bow of the tug. He hoped that his father or the captain might see it, and recognize it as the one he had so often seen on board and ashore.

"That's a handsome flag, Christy; and it does me good to see it again," said Captain Pecklar, as he took off his hat, and bowed reverently to it.

"Percy, hard-a-starboard the helm!" shouted Christy to the helmsman. "Head her for the Belle."

"All right."

"I think we can increase the distance a little between us and the Dauphine," added Christy.

"That's a good move; for we have been putting ourselves nearer to her when there was no need of it, as there has not been since the Belle was disabled."

He had hardly spoken the words before a tremendous cheer came from the Bellevite, and her fore-rigging appeared to be filled with men. The cheer was repeated till it had been given at least "three times three."

"What does that mean, Christy?" asked Captain Pecklar.

"It means that my father or some one on board has recognized my flag. I should have set it before if we had been near enough for them to make it out. But they have seen it, and I feel sure that all the steamers in the bay could not capture us now. Look at the Bellevite!"

She seemed suddenly to have taken the bit in her teeth, and she was rushing forward at a speed which she had not before exhibited. Paul Vápoor was evidently wide awake.

A little later her port-holes flew open.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### ON BOARD OF THE BELLEVITE

The crisis was at hand; for the Dauphine was darting in between the Leopard and the Bellevite, between father and son. On the port rail of the former, as if ready to leap upon the deck of the tug, were at least twenty men; and, for the first time, the plan of the enemy became apparent to Christy Passford.

He hastened to the hurricane deck of the Leopard, where he could see more clearly; and it was evident to him that the question before them would be settled within a very few minutes. If he and his companions fell into the hands of the enemy, nothing less than a severe fight with the Dauphine, perhaps aided by the Belle, on the part of the Bellevite could undo the mischief.

Christy was disposed to leave nothing to be undone. Rushing into the pilot-house, he seized the wheel, and threw it over, determined to redeem the fate of the tug while he could. Captain Pecklar had crowded on all the steam he could, and doubtless the boat was doing her very best. She flew round like a top, careening till her rail was under water.

"Hard up, Percy!" cried he, while the tug was still whirling. "Those men will drop on board of us if we don't get out of the Dauphine's way."

"The Bellevite is almost into her," added the volunteer pilot.

Paul Vapoor evidently understood the situation, and must have been preparing for it for some time, though the shoal-water had prevented the steamer from taking advantage of his effort. She had suddenly begun to dart ahead as though she had been an object shot from one of her biggest guns; and she seemed almost to leap out of the water in her struggle to come between the Leopard and the Dauphine.

The Bellevite was certainly making two miles to her rival's one in the race, and it looked as though she would strike her sharp bow into the broadside of the enemy. She seemed to rely on a vigorous blow with her stem rather than on her guns; for as yet she had not fired a shot, though she was fully prepared to do so.

The Leopard came about in double-quick time; and as soon as her keel was at right angles with that of the Dauphine, Christy righted the helm, and let her go in the direction of the disabled Belle. She rolled, pitched, and plunged in the sea, which had been increasing very sensibly within a short time; but she went ahead at her best speed, and that was all Christy wanted of her.

The Bellevite was still rushing down upon the Dauphine as though she intended to annihilate her when the crash came, as come it must within a minute or two. Christy's heart was in his throat, for he felt that his own safety depended upon the events of the next two minutes. A tremendous collision was impending, and thus far the Dauphine had done nothing to avoid it. Doubtless her commander had gauged the speed of the Bellevite by what she had been doing in the shoal water, and had not believed she could overhaul him before he had thrown a force on board of the Leopard.

"Now, keep her as she is, Percy, and we shall soon know what is going to happen," said Christy, when the tug had come about so that he could not readily see the movements of the other steamers.

"We are running right into the Belle," suggested Percy.

"This thing will be settled before we can come within hail of her, and I don't think she wants any thing more of us at present," replied Christy, as he left the pilot-house, and hastened aft, where he could get a better view of the situation.

"There is a row on board of the Dauphine," said Captain Pecklar, who had come to the stern for the same purpose as Christy. "Those men are leaping down from the rail."

"What has happened on board of her?" asked Christy.

"Nothing; but the Bellevite is coming into her full tilt, and they know that the shock will knock all those men overboard; and I think they don't want to have to stop to pick them up," answered the captain.

At this moment several sharp orders were given on board of the Dauphine, and her head began to swing around to the northward.

"That's what's the matter!" exclaimed the captain. "They think they won't wait for the rap the Bellevite is ready to give them."

The helm of the enemy's steamer had been put hard-a-port; and as she promptly came about, the sharp bow of the Bellevite shot past her quarter, and she barely escaped the blow. It look as though those on board of either vessel could have leaped to the deck of the other.

"What is the reason she don't fire upon the Bellevite?" asked Christy, when he felt that the crisis was past.

"I don't believe she has any guns on board yet, though I don't know," replied the captain.

"What is she going to do now, I wonder."

"I think she will come about and try to board the *Bellevite* now. It seems to me that if she had any guns on board, she would have opened fire before this time."

"We must look out, or the *Bellevite* will run into us," added Christy, as he went forward to the pilot-house.

"That steamer has come about," said Percy, as he joined him.

"If she had not come about, the *Bellevite* would have cut through her starboard quarter," replied Christy. "But we are all right now, and I think the excitement is about over."

By this time the *Bellevite* was abreast of the *Leopard*, and not half a cable's length from her; but there was no demonstration at all of any sort on board of her. Her high bulwarks concealed the whole ship's company; and no one could be seen but the lookouts forward, and a couple of officers in the rigging of the mainmast.

"Now we will get a little nearer to her," said Christy, as he threw the wheel over. "She is coming about."

The *Bellevite* was blowing off steam, and she had reduced her speed as soon as she went clear of the *Dauphine*. In a minute more, when she had come a little nearer to the *Leopard*, she stopped her screw.

"Tug, ahoy!" shouted some one, in whose voice Christy recognized that of Captain Breaker.

"On board the *Bellevite*!" responded Christy.

"Come alongside!" added the commander of the steamer.

"That's just what I was going to do," added Christy to his companion.

"I suppose we are all right now, are we not, Christy?" asked Percy.

"I don't know what will come up next. The *Dauphine* is still afloat, and in good condition; and I don't believe she is going to let the *Bellevite* off without doing something."

Captain Pecklar was letting off steam also; for he realized that the battle, so far as the *Leopard* was concerned, was finished. Christy steered the tug alongside of the steamer; and when he rang the bell finally to stop her, after a rope had been heaved on board of her, he left the engine, with the steam still escaping from the boiler, and the furnace-door wide open, and went to the pilot-house.

"Hurry up!" shouted Captain Breaker, appearing on the rail of the *Bellevite*, at the gangway.

Captain Pecklar looked astern of the tug, and saw that the *Dauphine* was rapidly approaching. She had come about, and her captain did not appear to be satisfied with saving his own vessel from the collision, and intended to make another movement. But he had gone some distance before he came about, though he was now rather too near for the comfort of the *Bellevite* after she had stopped her screw.

"What shall we do with this tug?" asked Christy, who had some doubts whether or not he ought to leave the *Leopard* in condition for further use by the enemy.

"We have no time to bother with her, and she don't amount to any thing. Come on board as quick as you can," replied Captain Breaker.

"Go on board, Captain Pecklar," said Christy, pointing to the gangway. "Come, Percy, your troubles are over for the present."

The captain went up the ladder, followed by Percy, and Christy went the last; for he felt that he must see his friends through before he abandoned the *Leopard* himself. The moment the owner's son showed himself on the rail, a burst of cheers came from the ship's company, to which he replied by taking off his cap and bowing.

"I am glad to see you again, Christy," said his father, as he descended to the deck and found himself in the arms of Captain Passford. "I was afraid I should have to leave you here, though I did not intend to do that as long as a plank of the *Bellevite* remained under me."

Christy found his father a great deal more demonstrative than he had ever known him to be before, and he fully realized that he had had a very narrow, and even a wonderful escape since he had been taken by the enemy.

Captain Breaker did not wait for father and son to finish their affectionate greetings; but as soon as Christy put his foot on the rail he directed the line to the tug to be cast off, and the order was given to start the screw. The *Bellevite* went ahead again, and the commander gave out the course for her.

Before Captain Passford was ready to think of any thing except the joyful meeting with his son, Captain Pecklar suddenly dropped to the deck as though a bullet from the enemy had finished his career in the very moment of victory. Christy broke from his father, and hastened to his assistance. He had fainted again from exhaustion after the efforts of the day. Dr. Linscott was at his side almost as soon as Christy, and the sufferer was borne to the cabin, where he was placed in one of the vacant state-rooms.

"Who is that man, Christy?" asked Captain Passford, as soon as the invalid had been cared for.

"That is Captain Pecklar; and he is a Union man, though he has been in charge of that tug in the service of the forts. But he is in consumption, and he does not believe he can live much longer. He says he would rather die at home than live down here," replied Christy.

"He looks like a sick man," added the owner.

"He is, and he has worked altogether beyond his strength. But I believe I should not have been here, father, at this moment, if he had not worked with me, and acted with the utmost courage and devotion."

"Then he shall want for nothing while he is on board of the Bellevite."

"But I am sure that the doctor can improve his condition; at least, I hope he can."

"He can if any one can. But how happens Percy to be with you in the tug?" asked Captain Passford, as he looked about him for the young man, who was standing near the mainmast, watching the approaching smoke-stack of the Dauphine.

"Percy has not been as reliable as Captain Pecklar; but he has done well, and has rendered good service. He has steered the tug for some time," replied Christy, calling to him the subject of the last remarks.

"I am glad to see you again, Mr. Percy," said the owner, giving him his hand. "I am under obligations to you for all you have done to assist my son on board of that tug."

"I was at work too for myself," said Percy, taking the offered hand, "I don't belong on this side of the question, and all I want is to get back to Nassau. I have nothing to expect from my brother, Major Pierson, and my mother cannot protect me."

"In consideration of the service you have rendered to my son, I shall be glad to do all I can to assist you in getting there."

"Thank you, sir."

"But where is Florry, father?" asked Christy, looking about the deck.

"I could not allow her to be on deck when a shot was liable to come on board. She is in the cabin, and she will be as glad to see you as I have been," replied Captain Passford.

Christy hastened to the cabin.

## CHAPTER XXX

### RUNNING THE GANTLET

Captain Passford and Percy soon followed Christy into the cabin, and the meeting of the brother and sister was quite as affectionate as that between father and son had been. In fact, none of them cared now for the steamers of the enemy, or for any thing else, except to get out of Mobile Bay. Christy told his story; and he learned that his father had sent a party ashore the night before to look for him, though they had been unable to obtain the slightest information in regard to him.

Captain Breaker insisted that Christy was on board of the *Leopard*, though not till the soldiers in the long-boat had fired into the tug. The father believed that his son would not tamely submit to being made a prisoner, and the act of Major Pierson had almost convinced him that the commander was right. He had not been fully satisfied on this point till he recognized the silk American flag at the fore of the tug.

But Captain Passford was too much interested in the situation on deck to remain long in the cabin, and he left Christy there with Florry, who seemed to be supremely happy, now that the family was in a fair way to be re-united at no distant day.

"I think you know the gentleman who has made all this trouble for me, Florry," said Christy, when he and Percy were alone with her.

"How can I know him?" asked the fair girl, puzzled.

"He is my brother, Major Pierson; and they say he used to call at Colonel Passford's once in a while, while I was away at school," interposed Percy.

"Then I do know him," replied Florry, blushing.

"Father thought, or at least he feared, that you might not like to leave the South," added Christy.

"Did he say so?" asked the fair maiden, laughing.

"He did not say a word, but I could tell by his looks."

"Then papa was very much mistaken. Major Pierson was very kind and polite to me, and I think he is a gentleman; but I have had no desire to remain at Glenfield on his account."

Florry spoke as though she intended this remark to be the end of the conversation on that subject, and Christy felt quite sure that she was not deeply interested in the commander of Fort Gaines.

"Now, I wonder if I can't go on deck," continued Florry, breaking away from the disagreeable conversation. "They are not firing now."

"I don't know, but I will go on deck and ask father if you wish."

"Do, Christy, if you please."

The *Bellevite* was shaking in all her frame; for Paul Vapoor was again exercising his skill upon the screw, and she was flying through the water. The *Dauphine* seemed to be struggling to get up an equal degree of speed; but, fast as she was said to be, the *Bellevite* was running away from her. There was no excitement on deck, and Christy readily obtained the required permission for his sister.

Captain Pecklar, under the skillful treatment of Dr. Linscott, had improved a great deal, though he still remained in his bed. He declared that he felt like a new man; and, whether he lived or died, he was as happy as any man ought to be on the face of the earth.

"That steamer off to the north-west has set her ensign with the union down, though I can't make out what the flag is," said Captain Breaker, addressing the owner, as Christy came on deck.

"What does that mean?" asked Captain Passford, getting upon the rail with the commander.

"I am sure I don't know. I suppose it is a signal of distress, but it may be a trick of some sort," added Captain Breaker.

"Do you know any thing about that steamer over there, Christy?" asked the owner, calling his son.

"That is the *Belle*, and I believe she came from Mobile," replied Christy.

"What is she out here for?"

"I have no doubt she came out here to capture the *Bellevite*. Uncle Homer must have sent word to some one in Mobile, judging from what I heard Major Pierson say; and probably that steamer came out here to prevent the *Bellevite* from

going into the navy of the Union."

"But why does she hoist a signal of distress?"

"I think it is very likely she is in distress."

"She is firing a gun," added Captain Breaker, as a cloud of smoke rose from the Belle.

"Why do you think she is in distress, Christy?" asked his father.

"She opened fire on the Leopard, after she had picked up the boat containing Major Pierson's party, and Captain Pecklar and I gave her a shot in return, which went through her bow and made a big hole. She stopped her wheels then, and since that she has been out of the fight."

"The Dauphine is coming about," added Christy, as he joined the commander and his father on the rail.

"The Dauphine?" queried Captain Passford.

"That is her name. Captain Pecklar can tell you something about her. He says she is fitting up for the Confederate navy, but he thinks she has no guns on board yet."

"It is beginning to blow very fresh," said Captain Breaker, as he took a look at the sky and the waters of the bay. "My barometer indicates nasty weather."

"There is too much sea, at any rate, for a steamer with a big hole in her bow," said Captain Passford.

Christy told all he knew about the Belle, and the owner declared that he had no desire to see the large number of men on board of her drowned before his eyes. The gun the disabled steamer had fired was regarded as another signal of distress, which indicated that the situation was becoming urgent with her.

"She has hoisted a white flag," added Captain Breaker; and no glass was needed to disclose the fact that a panic existed on board of her, for men who could fight bravely for a cause they deemed right might not be willing to be drowned without being able to lift a finger to save themselves.

"Come about, Breaker, and run for the disabled steamer," said Captain Passford, in a decided tone; and the order was instantly obeyed.

The commander sent Christy to the chief engineer to have him increase the speed of the steamer; at the suggestion of the owner. Paul had not seen him before, and the two friends hugged each other like a couple of girls when they came together. But the chief did not lose a moment in obeying the order brought to him. In a few minutes the Bellevite passed the Dauphine, and readied the vicinity of the Belle, which was evidently sinking, for she had settled a good deal in the water.

Four boats were instantly lowered into the water; and Christy was assigned to the command of one of them, while the first and second officers and the boatswain went in charge of the others. These boats were skilfully handled, and they dashed boldly up to the sinking craft. The soldiers on board of her were more afraid of water than they were of fire, and the four boats were soon loaded.

"Is that you, Christy?" said one of his passengers.

Christy looked, and saw that the person who addressed him was his uncle Homer.

"Yes, sir," replied the nephew; but he did not venture to say any thing more.

"I was not aware that you were taking an active part in this affair till Major Pierson told me that you had taken possession of his steam-tug, and that it was you who had fired the shot which disabled the Belle," continued Colonel Passford, evidently very much troubled and annoyed.

"I was made a prisoner by the major, and I have done what I could to get out of his hands," replied Christy. "I suppose you came out in this steamer for the purpose of capturing the Bellevite; but you have not done it yet, and I don't believe you will."

"I should like to see your father," added the colonel.

"We are ordered to put these people on board of the Dauphine, and she has just stopped her screw. I cannot disobey my orders, uncle Homer."

But Christy did not like to prolong the conversation, and he told his men to give way. The sea had certainly increased till it made it lively for the boats, and the colonel said no more. The passengers were put on board of the Dauphine, and it was not necessary for more than two of the boats to return to the Belle for the rest of the men on board of her. Colonel Passford insisted upon boarding the Bellevite, after the others had left the boat, and Christy yielded the point.

The Confederate brother was received by the Union brother as though nothing had occurred to divide them. He was conducted to the cabin, as it had just begun to rain, where he was greeted as kindly by Florry.

"I am sorry you left me in such an abrupt manner, Horatio," said Homer, very much embarrassed. "I think you took a rather unfair advantage of the circumstances."

"Unfair? What? When you said outright that you intended to take steps for the capture of my steamer, the only means of reaching my family, and conveying my daughter to her home, that were within my reach. I came here on a peaceful mission, and I think the unfairness was all on the other side," replied Horatio.

"I still believe that I had no moral right, before God and my countrymen, to allow you to hand this fine steamer over to the Yankee navy: but I was on board of the Belle for the purpose of seeing that no harm came to you, or any member of your family," said Homer with deep feeling.

"Then I thank you for your good intentions. But I believed, before God and my countrymen North and South, that I had no moral right to let this vessel be taken for the use of the Confederacy, and I would have burned her on the waters of Mobile Bay before I would have given her up," added Horatio, quite as earnestly as the other had spoken.

"Fortune has favored you this time, Horatio; but when you are suffering and in want from the effects of this war, remember that I shall always have a brother's heart in my bosom, and that it will always be open to you and yours."

"I heartily reciprocate this fraternal sentiment, and I am confident that you will need my assistance before I need yours: but all that I have and all that I am shall be at your service, Homer."

"I am glad that we understand each other, and I rejoice that I came on board of your steamer for these parting words. I will not ask you what you are going to do next, for you would not tell me; but I shall expect to hear that the Bellevite has been sunk in attempting to pass the forts."

"Better that than in the service of the enemies of my country, Homer."

They parted with tears in the eyes of both, and never before had they realized how stern and severe was the mandate of duty. Christy conveyed his uncle back to the Dauphine, shook hands with him, and returned to the Bellevite.

The mission of the steamer in Mobile Bay ended, and she had nothing more to do but return to her native waters, though perhaps this would prove to be the most difficult part of the entire enterprise. The steamer stood down the bay in the drenching rain, and was soon buried in a dense fog that was blown in by the wind from the gulf. She lay off and on during the rest of the day, and the commander made his preparations for running the gantlet of the forts.

This was not so difficult and dangerous an enterprise as it became later when the channel was obstructed, though even now the feat could not be accomplished without great difficulty and danger. In the course of the day, Captain Pecklar left his berth and came on deck. Captain Breaker decided to leave the piloting of the steamer to him, after he had conversed for hours with him.

No better night in the whole year could have been selected for the undertaking. It had ceased to rain, but the darkness and the fog were as dense as possible. The pilot manifested entire confidence, as he had plenty of water in the channel, and he knew all about the currents, the tide, and the action of the wind. It was an exciting time, when every light on board was extinguished, and the steamer started down the bay with Captain Pecklar and two quartermasters at the wheel.

After the Bellevite had passed the dangerous part of the channel, firing was heard from Fort Morgan; but the vessel was soon in the Gulf of Mexico. Heavy guns were heard for some time, but all on board of the steamer could afford to laugh at them. The ship continued on her course, and among the islands near Nassau Percy Pierson was put on board of a schooner bound to New Providence.

In eight days from the time she passed the forts, the Bellevite steamed into New York Bay, and then to Bonnydale on the Hudson, where the family were again re-united, and the fond mother wept over her two children, restored to her after all the dangers of the past.

On his arrival, Captain Passford found letters for him from the Government, and the offer of the Bellevite had been promptly accepted. After having been Taken by the Enemy, on the next voyage Christy found himself Within the Enemy's Lines.



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