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James Otis

With Porter in the Essex

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IT WAS ONLY NECESSARY THAT THE CREW SHOULD REACH OUT
AND PULL US ON BOARD.

WITH PORTER IN THE ESSEX

*A Story of his Famous Cruise in Southern
Waters during the War of 1812*

BY
JAMES OTIS

ILLUSTRATED BY
WILLIAM F. STECHER



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WITH PORTER IN THE ESSEX.

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PROLOGUE.

The manuscript of this story was written by Ezra McKnight, a cousin of that Stephen Decatur McKnight of Hartford, Connecticut, who was captured after the action between the *Essex* and the *Phoebe* and *Cherub*, and with a companion named James Lyman went to Rio de Janeiro as exchanged prisoners of war. From that port, according to Lossing, these two shipped for England in a Swedish vessel, and, although the ship arrived in safety, her captain never gave any account of his prisoners, nor was it known what had become of them. That they were murdered would be the natural inference, since in event of their being treacherously sent to England some record must have been found regarding them.

He who wrote the story of the cruise of the *Essex* which follows here, searched long but vainly for some clew to the fate of his brave cousin; in fact, after leaving the United States Navy it was his lifework to discover the fate of that brave lieutenant who was the only officer uninjured on board the *Essex* after that unequal conquest was cowardly forced upon her by Captain Hillyar of the *Phoebe*, whose vessel and life had once been spared by Captain Porter.

Failing to gain any information concerning the lieutenant, Ezra McKnight set himself down to write the story of that marvellous cruise of the *Essex*, the United States frigate of thirty-two guns, commanded by Captain David Porter who was born in Boston on the first of February, 1780. How this manuscript came into the hands of the editor it is not necessary to state. Suffice it to say that no change has been made in the original arrangement of the tale, nor in any of the details; it is here presented virtually as Ezra McKnight wrote it, with only so much of editing as seemed necessary in order to bring it within the requirements of a story of the present day.

To those who may read that which follows for the purpose of learning somewhat of their country's history, it is well to state a few facts which would not naturally appear in what was originally intended for an account of the adventurous voyage.

The commander of the *Essex* gained his first experience in the navy on board the frigate *Constellation*, which vessel he entered as midshipman in 1798. Concerning him Lossing says that "he was in the action between the *Constellation* and the *L'Insurgente* in February, 1799, when his gallantry was so conspicuous that he was immediately promoted to lieutenant. He accompanied the first United States squadron that ever sailed to the Mediterranean in 1803, and was on board the *Philadelphia* when she struck on the rock in the harbor of Tripoli. There he suffered imprisonment. In 1806 he was appointed to the command of the *Enterprise*, and cruised in the Mediterranean for six years. On his return to the United States he was placed in command of the flotilla station near New Orleans, where he remained until war was declared in 1812, when he was promoted to captain and assigned to the command of the frigate *Essex*, taking with him, on this last cruise, his adopted son, David G. Farragut, who, during the War of the Rebellion, was made an admiral."

Now, in order that the memory of the reader may be refreshed as to the strength of the United States Navy while this cruise was being made, the following extract is taken from Lossing's "War of 1812."

"As we take a survey from a standpoint at mid-autumn, 1813, we observe with astonishment only three American frigates at sea, namely, the *President*, 44; the *Congress*, 38; and the *Essex*, 32. The *Constitution*, 44, was undergoing repairs; the *Constellation*, 38, was blockaded at Norfolk; and the *United States*, 44, and *Macedonian*, 38, were prisoners in the Thames above New London. The *Adams*, 28, was undergoing repairs and alterations, while the *John Adams*, 28, *New York*, 36, and *Boston*, 28, were virtually condemned. All the brigs, excepting the *Enterprise*, had been captured, and she was not to be trusted at sea much longer. The *Essex*, Commodore Porter, was the only government vessel of size which was then sustaining the reputation of the American Navy, and she was in far distant seas, with a track equal to more than a third of the circumference of the globe between her and the home port from which she sailed. She was then making one of the most remarkable cruises on record."

In October, 1812, Captain William Bainbridge was appointed the successor of Captain Hull in the command of the *Constitution*; and, according to Lossing, "a small squadron, consisting of the *Constitution*, 44, *Essex*, 32, and *Hornet*, 18, were placed in his charge. When Bainbridge entered upon his duty in the new sphere of flag officer, the

Constitution and *Hornet* were lying in Boston harbor, and the *Essex*, Captain Porter, was in the Delaware. Orders were sent to the latter to cruise in the track of the English West Indiamen, and at the specified time to rendezvous at certain ports, when, if he should not fall in with the flagship of the squadron, he would be at liberty to follow the dictates of his own judgment. Such contingency occurred, and the *Essex* sailed on a very long and most eventful cruise in the South Atlantic and Pacific Oceans."

The *Essex* left the Delaware October, 1812, in pursuance with the command received by Captain Porter; and he must have already outlined in his own mind what course to pursue in case he failed to meet the little squadron, for Lossing says, "Captain Porter took with him a larger number of officers and crew than was common for a vessel of that size. Her muster roll contained three hundred and nineteen names; and her supplies were so ample that she sank deep in the water, which greatly impeded her sailing qualities."

On Porter's monument, which stands in Woodlawn Cemetery, Pennsylvania, are the following inscriptions:

"Commodore David Porter, one of the most heroic sons of Pennsylvania, having long represented his country with fidelity as minister resident at Constantinople, died at that city in the patriotic discharge of his duties March 3, 1843."

"In the War of 1812 his merits were exhibited not merely as an intrepid commander, but in exploring new fields of success and glory. A career of brilliant good fortune was crowned by an engagement against superior force and fearful advantages, which history records as an event among the most remarkable in naval warfare."

"His early youth was conspicuous for skill and gallantry in the naval services of the United States when the American arms were exercised with romantic chivalry before the battlements of Tripoli. He was on all occasions among the bravest of the brave; zealous in the performance of every duty; ardent and resolute in the trying hour of calamity; composed and steady in the blaze of victory."

JAMES OTIS.

WITH PORTER IN THE ESSEX

WITH PORTER IN THE ESSEX.

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCING MYSELF.

An awkward, raw-boned lad of fourteen was I when an opportunity came to enlist as a boy on board the *Essex*, a United States frigate of thirty-two guns, commanded by Captain David Porter. My desire ever had been to join the navy, in which my cousin, Stephen Decatur McKnight, had already won much of glory and a commission; it was through him that I was finally able to satisfy my longings, which had increased from year to year until it seemed as if I could be content in no other sphere of action than that of serving my country upon the ocean.

War had been declared; once more was it proposed to give England a lesson in good manners; and while that lesson was being taught, I intended to so act my part that when it was finished I might have gained a recognized position among men, even though I was no more than a boy.

Stephen had won his way upward, and why might not I? True, there were times when my heart grew cowardly; but as I figured it to myself at such moments, I was too timorous even to run, and therefore might gain the credit of being a hero, when in reality, had I been a trifle more brave, I might have shown the white feather.

Perhaps it is not well for me to set down all that was in my mind when I went on board the *Essex*, for it can be of no especial interest to those who may chance to read what is written here. It is enough if I say that two days before the *Essex* left the Delaware River, or in other words, on the 28th of October in the year 1812, I was rated on her papers as "boy," and had already begun to make the acquaintance of one Philip Robbins, a lad of about my own age, who held the same rank. If there had been any lower station aboard the frigate, of a truth we two would have been found occupying it, for he knew no more concerning a seaman's duty than did I.

A certain portion of the cruise, which proved to be one of the most adventurous ever made by a vessel of war, must be omitted here for the very good reason that I have little or no knowledge concerning it. During three days after we left the capes of the Delaware it was to Philip Robbins and myself as if we lingered in the very shadow of death, and while so lingering received no word of cheer from those around us because of the fact that we were enduring only that which every lad must endure who sets out to learn the trade of a sailor. Sick? It was to me as if that man who should put an end to my life would have been rendering me a service, for I doubted not but that death must eventually come, and only when it did would I be free from the pangs of that overpowering illness which beset me.

Both Philip and I had vaunted ourselves before the lads of Philadelphia because we could lay claim to being members of the crew of the *Essex*; but from the moment the good ship courtesied to the swell of the Atlantic until we were recovered and could laugh at the past, either of us would willingly have given up all which we prized most dearly in the world for the sake of being set back on shore in the humblest station that might be imagined.

It is enough if I say that we gained the experience which comes to all who venture upon the sea, whether for pleasure or for profit, and once having gained it, were in proper condition ever after to laugh at those who might be learning the same severe and disagreeable lesson.

There was never a man on board the ship who did not know that she was bound for the purpose firstly, of capturing any English vessels that we might be able to cope with, and secondly, to come across the *Constitution* and the *Hornet*, with which ships we would afterward cruise in company.

Among our crew, and there were, counting officers as well as men, three hundred and nineteen all told, were a dozen or more who had fought under Preble at Tripoli; and while we were headed for Port Praya we heard so many yarns concerning the doings of our fleet with the Barbary pirates as would more than suffice to fill a dozen such books as I count this will make. Therefore it is not well that I attempt to set down any of them, entertaining though the least exciting would prove.

When Philip and I signed our names to the ship's papers, both believed that we should be called upon to take part in sea battles from the time we gained the offing until we were once more in port; but yet there was nothing of bloodshed, save such as could be found in the yarns spun by the men, from the time of sailing until the 27th of November, when we sighted the mountains of St. Jago and entered the harbor of Port Praya, hoping there to gain some news of Commodore Bainbridge.

Nothing was learned, however, as we on the gun-deck soon came to know; for it must be understood that the crew soon have repeated to them every word which is spoken aft. Some old shellback hears a bit now and then, and by piecing the fragments together generally hits upon the truth; while the marines on guard are ever ready to carry forward such scraps of conversation as they have overheard when on duty. It is thus, as I have said, that the ordinary seaman, who is supposed to be in ignorance of everything save the happenings of the moment, is generally possessed within a

few hours of all the information gained by his superior officers.

All we got from the Portuguese governor of Port Praya was a bountiful supply of pigs, sheep, poultry, and fruit, and it can well be supposed that our officers were not exerting themselves to let him understand exactly why we had to enter the port. When we set sail again, it was on a seaward course, as if we were bound for an African port; but as soon as we were beyond sight of land the ship was hauled around to the southwest, and on the 11th of December we crossed the equator in longitude 30deg west.

Philip and I were in no very comfortable frame of mind as we neared the equator, knowing full well that lads, and for that matter seamen, who have never crossed the imaginary line, are subjected to rough if not absolutely brutal treatment at the hands of every messmate; and we expected, because of certain remarks that had been made, to receive an unusually severe dose.

But fortune favored Captain Porter as well as our humble selves; for just at noon, when the men were making ready to introduce us to King Neptune, a Britisher hove in sight, and there was no longer thought of playing pranks. The enemy had been sighted at last, and even the eldest among us were quivering with excitement, for it was believed that our success or failure in this first enterprise which presented itself would indicate the results of the voyage.

I was burning with a desire to question my cousin McKnight as to what might possibly be the result of losing this craft; but you must understand that a boy on board a frigate is not supposed to speak to his superior officer without permission. Even had the lieutenant been my father, I should have been forced by the rules of the ship to keep at quite as respectful a distance from him as from Captain Porter himself.

Up to this time neither Philip nor I had succeeded in cultivating the acquaintance of the older members of the crew; therefore we stood alone, so to speak, ignorant of what might be the possibilities, but not daring to ask a single question lest we bring the ridicule of the seamen upon us.

If the success of this first venture since we left port had been a true token of the entire voyage, then were Philip Robbins and myself to reap the greatest possible benefit from it; for when the *Essex* was finally come up with the Britisher on the following day, we lads not only aided in the capture of the rich prize, but made ourselves such a friend among the crew as we most needed.

A lad on board a man-of-war sees hard lines if there be not one among the older seamen who stands in a certain degree sponsor for him; otherwise the younger members of the crew will put upon him until his is indeed a slavish life. Now up to this day we boys could call no man our friend, and in this I am not counting my cousin, the lieutenant, for his kindness toward us would count for but little while we were among our shipmates.

However, I am saying overly much of myself, and perchance may be accused of giving undue importance to those members of the ship's company who were looked upon as of no especial consequence.

As I have said, we crossed the equator and sighted a strange sail on the same day. As a matter of course chase was made at once, and before the sun went down we knew beyond a peradventure that at last we had before us one of the enemy's vessels.

There was nothing particularly interesting in the chase as it presented itself to me. During the greater portion of the time Philip and I were kept at work below by one task-master or another, and all we knew regarding our chances of overhauling the stranger was what could be gathered from those who came near where we were. When night fell, and we lads were at liberty to go on deck, there was absolutely nothing to be seen.

In the morning, however, when the first shot was fired, just before daybreak, Philip and I tumbled out of our hammocks, wild with excitement, and at the same time inwardly quaking lest peradventure we were upon the eve of a naval engagement.

I question if any orders, however strict, could have kept us below. We forgot for the moment that one is not allowed to roam over a naval vessel at will, but clambered on deck as if free to follow our every inclination; and well for us, perhaps, was it that both officers and crew were considerably excited at the prospect of finally taking a prize, otherwise we might have been treated to a dose of the rope's end because of having unwittingly ventured so far aft.

The stranger was the British government packet, *Nocton*, carrying ten guns, and had been hove to when our shot went across her bow. There was no attempt made at resistance, and she fell into our hands as a ripe apple falls from the tree, with no particular effort on our part.

Later, and while the prize crew was being told off to take possession of her, we learned that she carried thirty-one men, was bound for Falmouth, and had on board fifty-five thousand dollars in gold and silver coin.

Lieutenant Finch was made prize-master, and a crew of seventeen told off to man the packet; for Captain Porter counted on sending her to the United States, she being a craft that would make a reasonably good addition to our small navy.

These men were transferred from our ship to the prize without delay, and then was begun the work of bringing back the specie,—a task, it is needless to say, in which Philip and I had no share.

The scene was such, however, as to attract the attention of any one, however much experience he might have had in such matters, and we lads watched with breathless eagerness all the manoeuvres, as the two vessels rolled lazily upon the long swell, while the small boats plied to and fro like ants. We gazed curiously at the iron-bound boxes which were said to be filled with gold or silver, and in our ignorance it seemed as if already was the cruise a success, since we had taken from the enemy such a vast amount of money.

Among the crews of our boats was a seaman by the name of Hiram Hackett, with whom Philip and I had vainly tried to scrape an acquaintance. A weather-beaten old shellback was he, who had, against his will, served the king, having been made prisoner by one of the press-gangs, and who escaped only a few months before enlisting on board the *Essex*.

His shipmates looked up to him as to a man of great experience, and well they might, for I question if Hiram Hackett had not seen more of the ups and downs of a sailor's life than any among us. He was the only member of the crew who had not made sport of, or imposed upon, us two in some way; but yet never a kindly word had he given us.

Master Hackett was pulling the bow oar of No. 2 boat when she came alongside with a load of stores, for Captain Porter was taking from the prize such provisions as would not be needed during the homeward voyage.

The goods were being hoisted out while the boats lay a few yards off our lee rail; and as this work was being done a cheese incased in a wooden box slipped from the sling, and, falling, struck Master Hackett a glancing blow on the head and shoulder, knocking him senseless into the sea.

The only thought in my mind at the instant, and Philip and I were perched on the brig's rail directly opposite the boat, was that the seaman, having been rendered unconscious by the blow, would be quickly drowned; and without stopping to think of possible danger, I leaped overboard.

Philip was moved by the same impulse at the same instant, and we struck the water side by side.

Looking back upon that attempt at rescue, after so many years of experience, I believe of a verity that not once in twenty times would two lads succeed in the effort; for the chances were that we should come up directly beneath the frigate, or, as we rose to the surface, be dashed against the hull with force sufficient to kill us.

As it was, however, we went down side by side until we came in contact with the man we would save, and him we brought to the surface to windward of the boat, yet so near her that it was only necessary the crew should reach out and pull us on board.

We had done nothing which merited praise,—in fact, should have been blamed for interfering when we might have hampered the movements of those who knew better what ought to be done; and yet Captain Porter was pleased to compliment us when we clambered on board looking like a couple of half-drowned rats, and the sailors clasped us by the hands as if to say that in their opinion we had proved ourselves worthy to be called shipmates.

It was natural that I should be somewhat puffed up by the attention which was paid us; but I little dreamed what an important bearing it would have upon our lives.

The old sailor, still unconscious, was taken below; Philip and I overhung the rail once more, watching the men as they transferred the provisions and specie, for the work had not been interrupted many moments by the mishap, and all was as before, save for that sense of satisfaction and pride within my heart when Master Hackett, looking none the worse for the blow and the ducking, came up behind us.

We were not aware of his presence until he laid his hands on our shoulders, and said in a deep, grave voice, much as if speaking to himself:—

"I don't know whether it was a service or contrariwise that you lads did me, for I'm told that but for your tumblin' over the rail I was like to have lost the number of my mess, bein' knocked out by the blow in such fashion that I went down like a stone, with but little chance of risin'."

I looked around at the old sailor, hardly understanding what he said; and he, gazing to windward as if there he saw something which we could not, continued:—

"An old shellback like me is of but little account; and if he hangs on to life, mayhap it's only to pay off some grudge which them as claim to know say shouldn't be harbored."

I knew from this that he referred to the grudge he owed the Britishers for having pressed him into the king's service, and wondered why he should speak in such a solemn tone when it stood to reason he ought to be rejoicing because of having escaped death.

It was a full minute before the old man went on, and then he spoke more nearly natural, as it seemed to me:--

"We'll set it down that you two lads have done a big service--that you saved my life--an' it isn't much for me to say that I'm obliged to you, 'cause mere words are cheap. Boys aboard a ship stand in need of a friendly hand, an' that's what I'm allowin' to hold out toward you until such time as I've squared off the account begun this day. Whatsoever a sailorman can do for a mate, I'm bound to do for you; an' all hands are to understand that what's sauce for you is certain to be sauce for me, or they'll know the reason why."

Having said this, Master Hackett went aft to where Lieutenant McKnight was standing, tugged at a wisp of hair which hung over his forehead, and at the same time scraped one foot behind him, which answered for a sailor's bow, saying as he did so:--

"I'm ready for duty, sir."

"Your place in the boat has been taken, therefore you are at liberty until we get under way," my cousin said with a smile, whereupon the old man went below, never so much as looking at Philip or me.

It seemed as if his manner was decidedly curt. After having voluntarily acknowledged that we saved his life, it appeared as if he might have said something more, or at least stood near us a few moments to let it be seen that he had indeed taken us under his wing, and I said laughingly to Philip:--

"Master Hackett is proving to us that words are indeed cheap. He has thanked us, and that seems to be all that is necessary."

"And so it is," Philip replied, for he was a better-natured lad than I by far, and ever ready to make excuses where I found fault. "It was really nothing of consequence for us to go overboard where there are so many to lend a helping hand, and when we came on deck again I was trembling with fear lest one of the officers give us a tongue lashing for putting ourselves forward at such a time."

"If we hadn't done so, Master Hackett would likely have gone to the bottom, for I saw no one making ready to go after him."

"You didn't give them time, Ezra McKnight," Philip replied laughingly. "The old man had no more than struck the water before we were on the rail; and yet I am not to be praised for it, because, to tell the truth, I didn't realize what I was about."

That same was true in my case; but there was no reason just then why I should speak overly much regarding it when I was hungering for yet more praise, and I put an end to the conversation by turning my attention once more to the work going on before us.

The task of transferring the provisions and specie to our ship was not a long one, and perhaps no more than three hours elapsed from the time the *Nocton* hove to until the *Essex* was on her course once more, while the prize, with her prisoners below decks, was stretching off for the home port.

Before the sun set on this night, Philip and I had good proof that Master Hackett's gratitude was more than the mere thanks we had received. Every member of the crew treated us in a different fashion--more as if we were in fact shipmates, although I saw no particular change in the old man's behavior.

It is difficult for me to explain the difference in our positions, and yet it was very decided. We were called upon to do quite as much work, to wait upon this one or that one as before, and yet the orders were given in a more friendly tone. There were not so many kicks bestowed upon us, nor did a single man lay a rope's end upon our backs; whereas from the time of leaving port until we leaped overboard for Master Hackett I question if there was a waking hour when we did not receive a blow from some one.

The old man who had declared he would stand our friend no longer wore an air which seemed to forbid our coming nearer him, and yet I cannot say that he spoke any very kindly words; but we understood that, if ever we needed a helping hand, his would be stretched forth.

That night when we were ready to get into our hammocks, Philip said to me with a certain tone of triumph:--

"This has been a lucky day for the *Essex*. She has captured a prize that will bring all hands money with which to tassel our handkerchiefs, if it be so the *Nocton* reaches a home port, and Captain Porter has the credit of gathering in fifty-five thousand dollars from the enemy; but I question if any aboard have been so fortunate since sunrise as you and me, for we have suddenly become shipmates with the one man among all the crew who is able to put us on a better footing with those who have lorded it over us."



CHAPTER II. THE COAST OF CHILI.

In order to hold a true course to my story, if perchance it should prove to be a story, it is necessary I set down here very much of what is little more than pricking out on a chart the movements of the *Essex*, for many a long, weary day passed before we had opportunity to work harm to shipping belonging to subjects of the English king, whom we were teaching a lesson in good manners.

On the second day after the capture of the *Nocton* we hove into sight the island of Fernando de Noronha; and as our commander had been told at this place we might gain information of Commodore Bainbridge's squadron, we came to anchor, but not before the ship had been disguised as a merchantman.

Then, flying English colors, we let go our ground tackle off the port, and Lieutenant Downes went ashore to ask permission of the governor for us to take on water and such stores as might readily be procured.

The lieutenant came back with a quantity of fruit for the cabin, and information that two alleged British vessels of war had called at the island a week previous, and left there a letter for Sir James Yeo of his Majesty's ship *Southampton*.

It seems, as we of the crew learned later, that these were the names agreed upon between Commodore Bainbridge and our commander, to be used in an unfriendly port. Captain Porter believed that a lie was not a lie when told for the benefit of one's country, therefore he sent the lieutenant back with a present of cheese and ale, and the assurance that a gentleman on board our vessel, a friend of Sir James Yeo's, counted on sailing for England from Brazil, and would take the letter with him.

The governor could do no less than deliver up the missive; and on being brought aboard it was found to be only such a letter as one English commander might send to another, with nothing in it to show that the writer was an American.

Captain Porter had no idea that the commodore would be such a simple as to trust his secret with a Britisher, and therefore set about trying to solve the mystery which he felt confident was contained in the letter.

Finally, by holding the sheet for some time over a lighted candle, it was found that a second message had been written in what is known as sympathetic ink, and this the heat brought out plainly, showing, as was afterward told us on the gun-deck, the following lines:--

"I am bound for St. Salvador, thence off Cape Frio, where I intend to cruise until the 1st of January. Go off Cape Frio, to the northward of Rio Janeiro, and keep a lookout for me."

It surely seemed now as if the course was marked out for us clearly, and that we would soon be in the company of friends; but it was not to come about, else I might not be trying to set down the particulars of that which proved to be a most extraordinary voyage.

Day after day we cruised up and down the Brazilian coast between Cape Frio and St. Catherine, but meeting neither American nor English vessels. The Portuguese craft which we spoke from time to time could give us no information; and from Captain Porter down to Phil Robbins and myself, all hands were most decidedly puzzled to know what would be the outcome of the voyage, when it seemed, despite the luck which attended us in the beginning, that we had cut ourselves off so completely from both friend and foe that it might not be possible to get back.

The old shellbacks told us youngsters that the Brazilian government, being at peace with England, would not allow us to provision the ship at any of their ports, and it was unnecessary we be told that the supplies were growing lower every day. With three hundred men to be fed, even a full cargo of stores soon grows slim.

Finally one of the marines who had been on guard in the cabin, told us that he heard Captain Porter say to some of his officers that it had now come to a choice between capture, a blockade, or starvation.

As a matter of course all the sea lawyers on the gun-deck argued the matter in and out of season, laying down the law in great shape, according to their own ideas; but, so far as Phil or I could see, not suggesting anything which offered the slightest hope of relief.

I might fill many pages with an account of what we two lads thought and said during this time when it appeared as if the *Essex* had got the worst of the voyage, although having captured the only enemy she came across; but it would be of little interest to a stranger if I should make the attempt. It is enough to say that every man of the crew, and the boys, too, for the matter of that, believed we would have a taste of an English prison before many days had passed, when, suddenly, came most startling news from one of the marines who had been on duty aft.

The man declared, and we afterward came to know he spoke no more than the truth, that he had overheard a consultation between Captain Porter and his officers, when it was decided that, having failed to find Commodore Bainbridge, we were to double Cape Horn and strike a blow at the British whaling fleet in the Pacific.

Captain Porter argued, so the tale-bearing marine told us, that among the whalers he stood a good chance of replenishing his naval stores, for the vessels in that trade were always well armed, and it would be possible to provision the ship as often as might be necessary, once we were among the South Sea Islands. He had decided to live on the enemy, and it only remained to be seen whether that might indeed be possible.

Of all who heard the story as told by the marine, none believed it save Master Hackett; and he said, in answer to my question as to whether he thought we might be able to come out of the scrape with whole skins:--

"Ay, that I do, lad; an' it's in my mind that the *Essex* can do British shippin' more harm in the Pacific than would be possible elsewhere. For a time we'll have everything our own way, an' then the king will have a pretty good idee of what the Yankees can do."

"But how will it be possible to get home, Master Hackett?" I asked, thinking more of my own safety than of brave deeds to be accomplished.

"That's somethin' that don't concern us,--leastways, not until the *Essex* has come to the end of her cruise. We've shipped to do all the harm we can to Englishmen, for that's the meanin' of war, lad. After we've done our duty will be time enough to think about ourselves, though I'm allowin' that if we ever see the United States again it'll be after we've had a reasonably long taste of British prisons."

Such talk as that was not calculated to make me very comfortable in mind. As a matter of course I wanted to strike a blow at the king, since we'd shipped for that purpose; but I wasn't well pleased at doing so when it was a foregone conclusion that the task would be concluded only when we were prisoners. We had captured a rich prize already, and I for one would have felt better if it had been decided that we were to take the chances of starvation while working back to the home port. This cutting loose, as it were, did not strike me in a pleasant fashion.

Before many hours had passed, however, the doubters understood that the marine had told no more than the truth.

We were off the harbor of St. Catherine when Captain Porter decided to take chances which would have deterred many another, and next morning, that is to say, on the 26th day of January, 1813, the *Essex* was headed down the coast for Cape Horn.

It seemed strange to me at the time, and even at this late day I am moved to wonderment that such should have been the case--it seemed strange, I say, that almost without exception the members of our crew hailed with delight the captain's determination to push forward rather than turn back. Surely it was a hazardous venture to leave friendly ports behind, and sail away toward that portion of the world where the power of the British was exceeding strong.

Those among the crew who argued in favor of thus trying our fortunes in the Pacific Ocean were forced to admit that we would be treated with but scant courtesy by the small nations, who dared not brave the anger of the English by showing friendship for us. Ours was but a single vessel of thirty-two guns, and should we come upon two or three whalers at the same time, it was reasonable to believe that we might find ourselves opposed by a weight of metal exceeding our own.

We could not depend upon the government of the United States for so much as a spare belying-pin, and all we might get, whether in the way of stores or ammunition, must come from the enemy. I do not believe any vessel of war was ever sent into such danger of every form, and it is hardly to be wondered at that Phil Robbins and I were filled with apprehension as to the result of the cruise, more particularly since we heard the evils described in most glowing colors during nearly every hour of the day, even by those who were in favor of the enterprise.

"We didn't ship with the agreement that we'd do our best to run into every possible danger when it might be better to shape a course for home," Phil said, in what was very like a mutinous tone. "When it comes to fighting Britishers, then we're bound to risk our lives in the hope of killing them; but sailing around the world with fair chance of starving to death before we can run across a craft of any kind, is a good bit outside of duty."

Phil was not the only member of the crew who spoke in much the same tone, and yet I defy any person to say with truth that we were in the slightest degree mutinous as we faced such a venture as was never known before.

Master Hackett seemed well content on the day when the bow of the *Essex* was turned toward the south pole, and I was resolved he should have no opportunity of believing that Phil and I were afraid of what might lie in our path.

As a matter of course, we two lads discussed the weighty affair in all its aspects, enabled to do so with some degree of

fairness because of the opinions which we heard on every side; but we took good care to do so where no one might overhear us.

It was only during the first day of this venturesome cruise, however, that we indulged in what was neither more nor less than mutinous criticism of our officers' plans; for within twenty-four hours after leaving the harbor of St. Catherine the wind increased to a full gale, which for more than eighteen days showed no signs of abatement.

Never before had I believed it possible that a ship could be so tossed and buffeted by the waves without being literally torn to pieces! It was as if our craft had been no larger than a long-boat, and I dare venture to say that many times she actually stood on end.

Phil and I were both sick and frightened, and in about the same degree, which was fortunate for us; for had we been one whit less ill, we might have lost our wits entirely. Whenever the deathly nausea permitted of thought I was firmly convinced we would all go to the bottom before making Cape Horn, and by the time this idea had become firmly fixed in my mind the sickness of the sea overwhelmed me again, bringing in its train partial unconsciousness of my surroundings.

Nor were we lads alarmed without good cause; it was possible to understand by the behavior of the crew, at such times as we were able to understand anything, that every man jack believed the *Essex* would be finally overcome in her struggle with the elements; and once, when the turmoil was at its height, Master Hackett came to where I lay in my hammock for no other apparent purpose than to clasp my hand.

It was much as though he was bidding me good-by, and I wept bitter tears of sorrow because I was not to see my dear mother again in this world.

I could write very much concerning the dreary, painful hours we spent while it seemed as if death stood very near to each of us; but it is not well to allow such personal matters to interfere with the tale of what was accomplished before the good ship *Essex* was destroyed through a British trick and British cowardice.

On the 14th day of February Master Hackett brought word to Phil and me that we were at last off Cape Horn; and to give a faint idea of the situation I will set down the fact that, old seaman though he was, it had become absolutely necessary for him to crawl along the gun-deck like a crab, otherwise he would have been flung fore and aft by the wild movements of the ship.

During that night I fancied we were in smoother water, and within twenty-four hours it was possible for Phil and me to leave our hammocks with some degree of safety.

Almost immediately after rounding the cape the wind shifted to the southwest, blowing with no more force than was needed to keep our canvas full; and from that hour we began to live once more.

We skirted the coasts of Patagonia and Lower Chili for nineteen days, and at the end of that time the glittering peaks of the Andes were seen far, far in the distance, and those who had been most despondent concerning the outcome to the cruise, now began to believe that it would be possible for us to give a good account of ourselves to the people at home before death overtook us.

We now talked of taking rich prizes, even as we previously had discussed the probability of immediate disaster, and speculated as to how we might weather the cape once more when, the work having been accomplished, we would be homeward bound.

It was the 5th day of March when we were off the island of Mocha, on the coast of Araucania, with the prospect of a day to be spent on shore after so many dangers had been encountered and passed.

To us two lads, who were sick with the odor of the salt breeze, the scene was entrancing. The mountain on the island towered a full thousand feet from the sea line, and around it could be seen countless numbers of birds, while in the surf near the shore hundreds upon hundreds of seals played like so many dogs.

For the first time since leaving St. Catherine our ground tackle was let go, and word came from the cabin that on the morrow we were to be given a full day's hunting. This last was become a real necessity, rather than a pleasure, for our stores were sadly in need of being replenished; but we thought not of this last fact, preferring to believe that permission to go ashore had been given solely that we might enjoy ourselves.

And what a day it proved to be! The island had been inhabited by Spaniards before the buccaneers reigned in that region, and the forest was literally teeming with hogs and horses so tame that but little skill was necessary to shoot them down.

From sunrise to sunset we hunted, and before noon had proved to our entire satisfaction that horseflesh was more palatable than pork, therefore we killed no more hogs than persisted in coming within easy range. By nightfall we had fresh meat enough to furnish us with food for many a long day, provided it was salted down before becoming tainted.

The next day was spent in caring for what we had captured, and in filling the ship's water-casks, after which we were in fairly good condition to continue the voyage. The eight-and-forty hours spent on shore had been sufficient to raise the courage of the most timorous, among whom could be counted Phil and myself; and all hands were in the best of spirits as the *Essex* filled away on her course once more, despite the fact that there was no possibility of receiving aid from the friends at home.

As we ran up the coast Captain Porter made preparations for the work which all hoped we should find in plenty. The running rigging of the *Essex* was carefully overhauled; the ship was repainted and otherwise put in as good condition as was possible without going into dock. The boats we carried--seven in all--were strengthened in every manner, and crews told off for each, so that at a moment's notice we might send out a flotilla of small craft against an enemy.

Lieutenant Downes was given command of this little squadron; and from the way in which he looked after the armament, we knew without being told that he was ready for any kind of fighting which might come his way.

It was in a certain sense a relief to Phil and myself when the boats were made ready for independent action; as a matter of course, our strength was not increased one whit by such means, yet it seemed to us lads that we were in much better trim to meet an enemy than before such preparations had been made.

Greatly to our disappointment we were not told off as members of the boats' crews; and I plucked up sufficient courage to ask Master Hackett concerning what seemed to us an oversight, hoping he might aid us in receiving treatment such as we believed to be our due.

"Frettin' because you haven't been given an independent command, eh?" he said with a laugh, when I had made what was little less than a complaint.

"We are not such fools as to think we can do anything very brave or wonderful; but at the same time it seems much as if we might perform our fair share of work," I replied, considerably nettled because he appeared to treat us as if we were children.

"I'm allowin', lad, that you'll be called on for all the tasks you can do conveniently. It stands to reason that the pick of the crew should be detailed for the boats, seein's how them as put off from the ship under Lieutenant Downes's command will be forced to jump lively, both as to fightin' an' work. Now, it looks to me as if you two would have chances enough, once that fleet of small craft have left us; for the *Essex* will be short-handed, an' you lads'll be asked to do the duty of men."

With this we were content, knowing that Master Hackett would not buoy us up with false hopes; and it began to seem as if we might, within a reasonably short time, show that we were made of such material as warranted our being reckoned among the *men* on board the *Essex*.

From the day of leaving the island of Mocha a watch was kept for the enemy, and each morning we two lads tumbled out of our hammocks firm in the belief that by nightfall we should be in chase of another prize. Then, as the sun set before we had sighted the British flag, we felt quite as positive we should see it when the morning came again.

Thus the time passed in anticipation unfulfilled until the 14th day of March, when, on rounding the Point of Angels, the city of Valparaiso lay full before us like something which had suddenly been thrown up by the sea.

Until this moment we had had a stiff breeze, such as sent the *Essex* along at a full ten knots an hour; but on rounding the point the wind died out suddenly, leaving us becalmed under the guns of a battery, which was hardly to our liking, for we believed Chili was still under the rule of Spain.

Captain Porter, not minded to take any more chances than was absolutely necessary, had hoisted English colors; and as we came into view it gave me a most disagreeable feeling in the region of the heart to see an armed American brig tricing up her ports as she prepared for action, although I could not restrain a sensation of pride that my countrymen should be willing to fight at an instant's notice, and against great odds, to uphold the stars and stripes.

Three Spanish ships were getting under way, and Captain Porter understood that he might miss many a rich prize if he allowed the crews of those vessels to know who we were and why we had come.

Therefore it was that three boats' crews were called away to pull the ship's head around beyond the point, where she might catch so much of a breeze as was stirring outside, and in less than two hours we were beyond sight of the city.

Phil and I mourned the necessity of being forced to leave port so soon, when we might have met countrymen who could give us later news from home than we had; but Master Hackett did much toward consoling us when he said:--

"Take my words for it, lads, we'll be in the harbor of Valparaiso before you're very much older. The captain didn't count on lettin' the Spaniards find out who we are, thus puttin' the Britishers on their guard."

The old man was in the right, as was usually the case, for on the next day we ran into port; and our anchors were hardly down when we heard important news.

Chili had just gained her independence from the Spaniards, and was more than ready to welcome us as friends; but it was reported that the Viceroy of Peru was fitting out armed cruisers to prey upon the American shipping in the Pacific.

Of a verity we had arrived in the nick of time, and there was great rejoicing fore and aft because of such fact. So long as we could keep secret from the British government the fact of our whereabouts, we might work the enemy great damage at the same time we protected Yankee vessels; and even after it was known that we had ventured so far from home, there was fair opportunity of taking many a prize before being overhauled by a British squadron.

Well, the people of Valparaiso gave us a royal welcome. The forts saluted the stars and stripes with twenty-one guns; nine shots were fired by the armed brig, and we replied to them all, as a matter of course, until it was as if everybody was celebrating the Fourth of July.

The American Consul General came down from Santiago to greet us; the Chilians strove to show how friendly they felt toward the United States, and there was a great time, in which the officers gathered most of the fun, for ordinary seamen are not counted in at such affairs.

The commissioned officers must have enjoyed themselves in fine style, however, and we of the crew managed to get a small slice of the welcome which repaid all hands for the long, disagreeable voyage.

Only a portion of our crew were allowed shore leave at a time, and by rare good luck Phil and I were given liberty on the same day when Master Hackett took his furlough; therefore we saw more of the city than would have been possible had we set out alone.

The old gunner was well acquainted in Valparaiso, and before setting out to visit acquaintances, he showed us all the sights. Then, presenting each of us with two silver shillings, he went his way, after cautioning us to be at the shore in time to go aboard before sunset.

It would have pleased both Phil and me had the old man remained with us; but it could not be expected that he would give all his time of liberty to two lads, even though they had gone over the rail to save his life; therefore we made it appear as if we were eager to be by ourselves, and began to explore the chief seaport town of Chili.

Unable to speak the language, we could not expect to make any new acquaintances ashore, nor did we try, although more than one Chilean lad gave token that he was as ready to extend the hospitalities of the port to Yankees as were the dignitaries of the town.

We had wandered here and there as fancy dictated until noontime, and Phil proposed that, since we had had our fill of sight-seeing it would be a good idea to go on ship, or find some of our messmates.

Strolling with a party of sailors whose chief aim would most likely be to take aboard all the liquor they could drink, was not to my liking, and I had just suggested that we go to the rendezvous on the chance of finding a boat putting off for the *Essex*, when we were surprised by a hail in our native tongue.

"Hello, you two lads! Are you from the Yankee ship?"

Wheeling suddenly around, we saw a boy eighteen years of age or thereabouts, who was regarding us with an expression which might equally well have been one of friendship or enmity.

"We're from the *Essex*," Phil replied, and as he spoke the stranger came toward us.

"Can you speak Spanish?" he asked; whereat I replied glibly:--

"Not a word, and more's the pity, else we might have had companions in our sight-seeing."

"If that's all you're wanting, come with me. I'll show you a good time."

"Do you live here?" I asked, fancying that he spoke like one lately from England.

"Yes, for the time being; and since I have nothing better to do, suppose we travel together."

Every person in the town had been so friendly toward us that we had no reason to suspect evil, and even though we had considered the possibility that any one was wickedly disposed, why should harm come to us who were of so little importance?

Phil was so delighted at the idea of making a friend in this place where almost nothing but Spanish was spoken, that he accepted the proposition without delay, and at once we three set off in company.

Oliver Benson was the name of this friendly appearing lad, as we soon learned; and before we had been together half an hour he knew very nearly as much as we ourselves concerning our position and life aboard the *Essex*.

"Boys are not of much account on Yankee ships, according to your story," he said, in a peculiar tone; and Phil replied glibly:--

"It doesn't seem so, except when there's a lot of dirty work to be done. If we never went back to the *Essex*, I reckon there wouldn't be much mourning over our loss."

I insisted that Master Hackett at least would miss us, and declared that my cousin Stephen's heart would be sore with grief if any accident happened to either of us; but Benson laughed me to scorn.

"If you failed to return there isn't one aboard who'd remember your absence after four-and-twenty hours," he said. "An enemy might work his will on you and stand no chance of coming to grief, for I doubt not but that the frigate will sail by to-morrow."

"We have no enemies here," Phil replied with a laugh, "therefore we needn't spend time discussing that question."

I noted a peculiar expression on Benson's face, but gave no great heed to it, for at that instant he had turned down a narrow street and was unlocking the door of a stone dwelling.

"Do you live here?" Phil asked.

"Yes; and I count on showing you two lads what a Chilian dinner is like. It will be something to talk about when you get home."

He held the door open as invitation for us to enter; and although there was absolutely no reason why I should suspect him of having unfriendly designs upon us, I hesitated about going in.

"Go on," Phil said, pushing me forward. "We're fortunate in having run across Benson, for there are not many lads, either here or at home, who would spend their time entertaining strangers."

I could do no less than follow our host, who led us up one flight of stairs, and thence to the rear of the building. Then he opened the door of a room and stepped back a pace, that we might advance in front of him.

At the outer entrance, I led the way, and while Phil followed close at my heels, the door was slammed behind us, the clicking of iron telling that we had been locked in.

For an instant I was so bewildered as to be incapable of speech, and then I heard from the other side of the locked door a mocking voice:--

"I'll keep you two Yankees here till your ship sails, and then find you a berth aboard a British whaler; it will be a paying speculation for me, and you'll have good opportunities for seeing the world."



CHAPTER III. OLIVER BENSON'S SCHEME.

Phil Robbins and I stood gazing into each other's eyes as if incapable of speech, during at least sixty seconds after the fellow who had trapped us announced the purpose of his scheme. That we two lads, who were of no consequence whatsoever in the sight of the officers of the *Essex*, should have been made the victims of a plot seemed too ridiculous to be true; but yet the locked door was sufficient evidence for the most incredulous.

It was Phil who first found his tongue, and he asked sharply, as if positive I could give him a satisfactory answer:--

"What does the villain mean by locking us in here? He must think we are rare prizes!"

"I'm not making any mistake as to what you're worth," Benson cried from the hallway. "Yankees don't bring any extravagant price in this part of the world; but the demand is so great that I won't be forced to keep you many hours after your tub of a ship leaves port."

My head was so thick that even then I failed to understand his purpose, but had an idea the fellow looked upon us as his personal enemies because England was at war with the United States, and said to Phil, giving no heed to the fact that I spoke sufficiently loud for Benson to hear:--

"The fellow is such a fool as to believe he serves his country by imprisoning us."

"That's where you are making a big mistake, my Yankee cub. Whalers in this portion of the world are not overly particular as to how they ship a crew, and pay a decently good price to whoever delivers them able-bodied hands."

Now I understood what this enterprising Britisher had in mind. I remembered reading, before I left home, a long account of how sailors were trapped in foreign ports by the captains of whaling vessels who had lost members of their crews by death or desertion.

If we could be held prisoners until there was no longer any American vessels in port, Benson might literally sell us to a British whaler; and once on board such a craft, our chances for escape or relief before the voyage had come to an end would be very small.

I was overwhelmed with grief and anger. The knowledge of our helplessness increased my wrath until for a certain length of time I was little better than an insane lad.

I stormed and raved from one end of the small apartment to the other, now and again throwing myself against the stoutly barred door as if by such means I might break it down; and during the paroxysm Phil lay at full length on the floor, giving noisy vent to his sorrow and despair. There was no care in my mind that Benson was most likely listening to all we said or did, and would set us down as chicken-hearted; I only gave heed to our situation, knowing full well how entirely we were in his power.

It was not to be supposed that the *Essex* would remain many days longer in port; in eight-and-forty hours she would most likely get under way, and we two lads who had dreamed of winning honor and promotion would be set down as deserters. Even Master Hackett must believe we had run away, since, by trying to make him think we were not eager to remain in his company, lest he should waste all his time of liberty upon us, we had made it appear as if our greatest desire was to be alone.

Like a flash all the possibilities of the situation came into my mind. I heard the comments of our shipmates, saw the word "deserter" written opposite our names on the ship's register, and imagined the grief of my parents when the *Essex* returned to port with such a disgraceful story concerning us. Meanwhile I could see Phil and myself forced to this or that disagreeable task, and the end of it all, a tardy release in some foreign port from which we would be forced to work our way home as best we might.

It was a most mournful picture, view it in whatever light I might, and the stoutest-hearted could well be excused for growing faint and sick with apprehension.

Whether we spent one hour or three in such useless wailings I am unable to say; it seemed to me much as if we had been a full day in that place before I so far recovered composure of mind as to be able to look at the situation with some degree of common sense, and then my first act was to soothe Phil, who still remained stretched at full length upon the floor, weeping and wailing.

It was not a difficult task to persuade him into something approaching calmness; he had literally exhausted himself by giving way so violently to sorrow, and was, like myself, ready to play a more manly part.

Our first act, after thus coming to our senses, so to speak, was to make a thorough examination of this apartment which served as prison; for of course the thought of escape had been uppermost in our minds, even when our grief was most violent.

The room was not different from what one might have fancied after seeing the exterior of the building. It was, however, twelve feet square, with a ceiling so low that I could touch it by standing on tiptoe. There were two windows, both closely barred with iron, as I had already noticed was usual in Valparaiso, and the view from them was confined to a small plat of ground enclosed by a high wall of stone, the top of which was nearly on a level with one of the windows.

"If we could get out of here, it would not be a difficult task to reach the ground," Phil said, in a certain tone of hopefulness.

"I'd guarantee to bring up on the ground all right, wall or no wall, if it wasn't for the bars."

Then, with one accord, we laid hold of the iron rods, wrenching at them with all our strength, but not moving them by so much as a single hair's breadth, so far as I could see.

That Benson yet remained in the hall outside, and could hear all that was said or done, we knew when he cried mockingly:--

"Keep on pulling at the bars so long as such work pleases you; they have held stronger men than you ever will be, and I'm not afraid of your giving me the slip in that way!"

Thus we knew that the wretch had made a business of trapping strangers to sell them to whalers, and this but served to make our case appear more hopeless; for if he had had experience in such scoundrelly work, it was probable he would be on his guard against anything we might try to do.

By this time I was weary, mentally and bodily, and, not minded to give the villain any more pleasure,--for I doubted not but that he enjoyed hearing his prisoners beat vainly against the bars of their cage,--I whispered to Phil:--

"Don't speak nor move. We'll remain silent until he grows tired of listening and goes away."

My comrade nodded to show that he agreed, and, seating ourselves on the floor where we could look out of the window, even though there was nothing save the small patch of grass to be seen, we held our peace until the shadows of evening began to lengthen.

Now was come the time when our shipmates would be returning to the *Essex* after a day's pleasuring, and as I fancied them standing on the shore, discussing the cause of our absence, it was impossible to restrain my tears.

Not until the night had fully come did we hear anything from the hallway, and then the faint sound of stealthy footsteps told that the villanous Benson, wearied with his fruitless vigil, was descending the stairs.

We listened in vain for some noise betokening that the building had other occupants than our enemy and ourselves; not a sound broke the silence, and it seemed only reasonable that the scoundrel put the dwelling to no other purpose than that of a prison.

It would be useless for me to make any attempt at setting down here all Phil and I said during the hours of the night, for much of our conversation was wild in the extreme, and we repeated the same words again and again, as would any lads in such a situation as we had so suddenly been plunged.

About midnight we fell asleep, still sitting on the floor, for there was no furniture whatsoever in the room; and the day was just breaking when a noise in the yard outside awakened us.

Looking out from between the bars we saw Benson, who was placing a ladder against the building, directly under our window.

"If he'd only come near enough for me to hit one blow!" Phil muttered between his teeth, and I wished we might have so much satisfaction as that, even while knowing he would never give us such an opportunity.

"I'm not counting on starving you Yankees," the villain said with a laugh, "and yet I'm no such fool as to open the door long enough to shove in food. You see I'm running this business alone, for the profits are not large enough to permit of my hiring a clerk, therefore some of my arrangements are not really convenient. I'm going to pass you the end of a rope. Then I can stand on the ground and serve you with food and water to be hauled up."

"I wonder if he thinks we'll indulge him in his monkey shines?" Phil whispered angrily; and I, suddenly realizing that we could only succeed in biting our own noses if we went contrary to Benson's commands, said hurriedly in a low tone:--

"Hold your tongue! We're bound to eat and drink if we count on making any effort at getting away. Take what he gives us, and we may thereby keep up our strength to be used in case an opportunity for escape presents itself."

By this time Benson was nearly at the top of the ladder; but he took good care not to come within reach of our fists.

He passed in to us a half-inch Manila rope, and I seized the end, whereupon the villain descended and bent on a small tin vessel filled with what appeared to be a stew of beans and other vegetables.

"When you've hauled in, let down the rope again and I'll send you up some water," Benson cried; and I obeyed his commands in silence.

When we had thus been served, he said in the tone of one who imparts pleasing information:--

"You'll have to get along without me to-day, for I'm counting on catching two or three more Yankees before sunset."

Phil shook his fist at the scoundrel; but I, without knowing exactly why, felt a certain amount of satisfaction because he reckoned on making more prisoners.

Then the fellow disappeared from view, and Phil said angrily:--

"I hope our messmates will have more sense than we displayed when we agreed to let him show us the town."

"And I'm hoping he'll make a big haul."

Phil gazed at me in anger and astonishment, whereupon I hastened to explain myself.

"There is no doubt but that he can easily do with us as he has proposed, and our officers will make no great effort to find two boys who are believed to have deserted. If that scoundrelly Britisher can capture half a dozen of our crew there'll be a big stir aboard ship, and, in addition, he won't be able to work his will with so many. One or more may succeed in escaping, and then the truth will be known."

Phil's face brightened wonderfully, for he had not looked at the matter in that light before, and without further conversation we set about making a hearty breakfast.

Once our stomachs were filled, hope revived. We were eager that a large number of our men might be entrapped by Benson, and discussed the possibility of his success with as much zest as he might have done.

Then, after two hours or more had elapsed, we began to reflect that it would not be possible for a lad like him to scrape acquaintance with men as easily as he had with us boys, and we grew despondent once more.

Finally I gave up all belief that he could entice any of the crew into his prison, and said with more of hope in my tones than was actually in my heart:--

"Two great hulking lads like ourselves should be able to get out of an ordinary house! If this place had been built for a jail, the situation would be changed; but it is no more than an ordinary dwelling, and I dare say these bars are not set in the wall so solidly but that we can succeed in moving them."

"Tell me how to go about it, and I'll do my best; but I fail to understand how we can accomplish anything."

Phil's despair served to give me what was very like courage; and even though there was but little hope in my heart that we could effect anything, I spoke as if certain of success.

"We have our knives, and with such tools many a man has worked his way toward freedom. The mortar which holds the wall in place can be picked out in time, and Benson won't have a chance to sell us for several days after the *Essex* leaves port."

"It would require a month of hard work to loosen even one of these stones," Phil replied gloomily.

"We shall be better off by making some effort at escape, even though we never succeed. It is almost cowardly to sit here idle, waiting until that villain can entrap our comrades."

Having said this I set myself at work pricking out particles of mortar with the point of my knife; and although the work progressed but slowly, I could soon see some slight results.

Phil watched me listlessly until I had taken out as much as would fill a large spoon, and then he began to see that the task was possible if we had sufficient time.

"It's better than doing nothing," he said, as if the idea was his own, and at once began upon the seam of mortar next

that on which I was working.

Occupation of some kind was what we most needed; and as the moments wore on we increased our efforts until, when the sun marked the hour of noon, we had made quite a showing, although at the expense of grinding away our knife-points.

We had worked upon that stone which held the side bar in place, and if it might be removed we would have an aperture not less than eight inches in width. As a matter of course, neither of us could pass through such a narrow space; but if two of the bars were pulled out, then was the way open.

We were both resting from our labors when I was seized by a sudden thought, and cried exultantly:--

"We can escape if no time is wasted!"

"I can't see but that the situation is much the same as when we were first thrust into this place," Phil said gloomily.

"So it is; but since the villainous Benson passed us the rope, I'm of the idea that we can do considerable work."

"How?"

"We have surely done something toward loosening the stones. Now, if we make the rope fast to the lower end of the bar, and also to the handle of the door, one or the other must give way when we get purchase enough."

"Yes, I reckon all that is true; but we're no more likely to get a purchase on it than we are to walk out of here this minute."

"I believe it can be done."

"Then the handle of the door will give way first."

This was rather in the nature of a wet blanket on my hopes; but I would not admit that the plan had any defects which might not be rectified, and set about solving the problem.

Finally I hit upon a plan,--not anything very brilliant, but a makeshift which might possibly serve our purpose.

Doubling the rope, I made one end fast to the bar set into the stone we had been working upon, and the other end I bent on to the corresponding bar in the next window, hauling it taut as possible.

"With our feet against the lower edge of the window we should be able to fetch something away," I said in a hopeful tone; "and even though we fail at first, the plan is sure to succeed after we've picked out a little more of the mortar."

Well, we tugged and strained to the utmost of our strength for ten minutes or more, and then, just as I had said to myself that we never could succeed, one end of the bar started ever so slightly.

"It can be done!" Phil cried exultantly, and would have bent himself once more for a supreme effort but that I stopped him.

"There's little chance we could pull two bars out before sunset, and if the job is but half done when Benson comes back, he'll understand what we're trying to do. A fellow who makes a business of trapping men won't stop at anything, however desperate, in order to prevent his villany from being known to the authorities."

"Well, are we to sit here idle?" Phil asked angrily.

"Not a bit of it! We'll amuse ourselves picking mortar from the next seam, and thus have both stones loosened by nightfall. After dark we can yank two bars out, or I'm mistaken."

Now it seemed as if liberty was near at hand; and after I had cast off the rope that we might be able to lower it from the window in case Benson proposed to give us any more food, we set to work on the difficult task of scraping away the hard mortar.

It must not be supposed that we removed any very great amount during this long day; but we had laid bare a deep seam, and thus accomplished more than I had at first believed would be possible.

When evening had come there was no doubt in my mind but that we could, by aid of the rope, wrench away the bars, and I felt brave as a lion when footsteps on the stairs outside told that the scoundrelly Benson was returning.

"He didn't succeed in trapping any one else!" Phil said jubilantly. "We were the only fools on board the *Essex*."

"Hello in there!" Benson cried out; and I said gruffly:--

"Well, what do you want?"

"It's well to let you know that I'm around. Your ship is ready to leave port in the morning, and forty-eight hours later you two duffers will be getting an idea of whale fishing."

"Which will be better than staying here forced to listen to the voice of a cur like you!" Phil replied.

"That little show of temper will cost you your supper," Benson cried in a rage. "I'll starve you into submission, if you turn rusty, so have a care."

"I reckon you've lost your temper because of not finding any more fools among the crew of the *Essex*!"

"I don't keep all my birds in one cage."

"But you've got all from the *Essex* in this one, and we two make up the list," Phil cried with a laugh, for he was finding considerable sport in thus baiting the villain.

"Better keep a quiet tongue in your head," I whispered, "otherwise he might come inside and see what we've been doing."

"I only wish he would!" and Phil flourished his knife in a manner which told what he would do if our enemy should be so indiscreet as to come within striking distance.

Benson stalked to and fro in the hallway when we ceased to reply to his jibes, and after half an hour or more we heard him descending the stairs again.

Then, by gazing through the bars, we could see that he had gone into the enclosure,—most likely to make certain everything was as he had left it; and we listened to the noise of his movements until all was silent once more.

"He's gone out in the hope of catching such of our men as have overstayed their shore leave," Phil whispered. "Now is our time to begin work with the rope."

I insisted that we wait ten minutes longer, to make it more certain the scoundrel had left the building, and then we began the task which I confidently expected would result in our release.

The rope was made fast as before, and we two laid hold of it with a will; but haul and pull as we would, the bars remained firmly in place. That one which we had started during the afternoon was immovable, and the perspiration was running down our faces in tiny streams before we were ready to admit that the plan was a failure.

"He'll work his will with us," Phil said with a sob as we ceased our efforts and stood facing each other in the darkness. "We can't get out!"

"Don't lose your courage so soon. We can work at the mortar all day to-morrow, and then I'm certain the bars will yield."

"By that time the *Essex* will have left port."

"Other American vessels put in here, and surely we can work our way home without being forced to serve on board a whaler. Besides, the *Essex* is likely to visit this port more than once before her work in the Pacific is concluded."

Phil would not be soothed, and he turned from me impatiently just as I fancied a low whistle sounded outside, near the garden wall.

In an instant I was at the window, pressing my face against the bars until the iron made great ridges on my cheeks; but the silence was profound, and I believed that which I heard was nothing more than the wind.

Turning from the window in disappointment, I was about to speak to Phil, when the whistle sounded again, low and soft, but so distinctly that there could be no mistake.

Phil heard it as I did, and we two sprang to the gratings once more, expecting, hoping, to hear the voices of our messmates.

Everything was silent, and I stood there like a simple fully thirty seconds before gathering sufficient sense to speak. Then I cried softly:--

"*Essex* ahoy!"

"Ahoy in the shanty!" a voice replied, and I sank to my knees in fervent thanksgiving, for I recognized the tones of

Master Hackett. Now, even though we might not be released, it would be known aboard ship that we had not deserted.

"Where are you?" the old seaman asked in a loud whisper, after remaining silent a few seconds.

"At a window just above the height of the wall," Phil replied, and then a happy thought came to me.

"We've got a half-inch rope here, Master Hackett, and can let it down if perchance you might be able to use it."

"If an old shellback like me can't use a rope, I'd like to see the man who can. Let it down, lads, an' move lively, for I've had hard work to keep out of the course of a British cub who's been actin' in a way that don't seem honest."

While he spoke I was lowering the rope over the wall, and when Master Hackett sung out that he had it, we belayed the remaining portion to a couple of the bars, knowing full well that the old man would soon appear at the top of the wall unless some one on the street interfered with him.

Nor were we mistaken. Before I could have counted ten he was clutching the bars of our prison, asking how we chanced to be in such a scrape.

In the fewest possible words I explained how we had been trapped and what Benson proposed to do with us; whereupon the old man said half to himself:--

"Now I can see what he was after when he came rubbin' alongside some of us, offerin' to show fine sights if we'd go with him. But instead of standin' here yarnin', I reckon we'd better get you out of the trap."

"Wouldn't it be well to report on board that we've been made prisoners, and ask that a squad of men be sent on shore?" Phil asked timidly. "If Benson should get an inkling of your being here, he'd make more trouble for us in some way; and it won't pay to take any chances."

"I don't count on takin' any more'n is wholesome, an' at the same time ain't willin' to flash up on board with the yarn that I couldn't get the best of one Britisher, an' him in a foreign country."

Then Master Hackett made an examination of the bars, after which he suddenly disappeared from view, and, to my great surprise, I saw that, pulling the rope inside the wall, he had slipped into the enclosure.

Now he was almost as much of a prisoner as were we; and if the Britisher should come back, the old man might find himself in tight quarters, for it was reasonable to suppose that a man engaged in such a villanous business as was Benson always went well armed.

However, it was destined that Master Hackett should not be disturbed; and we could see him faintly in the darkness, moving here and there as if in search of something.

Then he placed the ladder against the wall, and when he had ascended to the level of our window we saw that he had with him a short piece of joist.

Using this as a lever, after we had told him which bars we had been working on, he forced the iron rods from their sockets in short order, thus making for us an open door through which we could pass to the top of the wall.



HE FORCED THE IRON RODS FROM THEIR SOCKETS IN SHORT ORDER.

"You can come out now," the old man said with a chuckle, "an' the next time you're in a strange port I reckon you'll be more careful about followin' them as agree to give a free blow-out."

It can readily be imagined that we lost no time in acting upon the suggestion, and by the aid of the rope we slid down to the ground, exulting in the sense of freedom.

Master Hackett led us into one of the main streets, and while doing so explained that when we failed to return to the ship on time he suspected we had fallen into trouble, although more than one of the men suggested that we had deserted.

"I didn't reckon you were the kind of lads who'd turn around in that fashion, an' so got permission to come ashore for a spell, agreein' to report to-morrow mornin' if I hadn't come across anything that would show why you'd failed to turn up. Then it was I run across that Britisher, an' found he was mighty anxious to give me a free spree. It was that which made me believe he could tell somethin' about you, an' I set about findin' where he lived. It wasn't any easy matter for

an old shellback to follow that sneak, who had good reason for thinkin' some of us might want to know where he anchored hisself nights; but I managed the traverse in fair shape, an' here we are."

"Can we go on board the *Essex* to-night?" Phil asked.

"I reckon we might by hirin' a boatman; but there's no reason why we need be in a hurry."

"I'd rather be on the gun-deck than in this town," Phil replied with a shudder, and at that instant, just as we were turning a corner, we came face to face with Oliver Benson, the young Britisher who made a business of selling Yankee seamen to English whalers.

My first impulse was to run away, but before I could so much as move Master Hackett had leaped upon the villain, and then I would not have beat a retreat no matter what might have been the cost of remaining.

I joined the fray, for the Britisher immediately began to fight desperately; and during several moments the three of us had quite as much of a task as we could perform, for Benson was armed with a wicked looking knife, and knew right well how to use it.

But for Phil, the villain would have succeeded in stabbing Master Hackett in the back while the two were locked in each other's embrace; but once his weapon was taken from him, the scoundrel showed signs of submission.

"Don't give him a chance to play us any tricks," the old man said as he unknotted his neckerchief preparatory to binding Benson's hands behind his back; and I wondered greatly why we should burden ourselves with a prisoner in a town where, for aught we knew, he might have many friends or accomplices.



CHAPTER IV. AMONG THE WHALERS.

This taking a prisoner in a friendly port was, as I considered the matter for the moment, a serious affair, and without waiting to reflect I advised Master Hackett to let the fellow go free.

"He can't do us any more harm, and we'll warn others as to his scheme. There's no knowing how much of a row may be kicked up by our depriving him of his liberty."

"That's no more'n he did to you, an' the chances are that many a poor fellow is eatin' his heart out aboard a British whaler because of him. We've got the scoundrel fast, an' I count on keepin' him so, at least until after he's been brought face to face with Captain Porter."

Benson spoke no word; the pallor of his face told that he was afraid, and if we had not known it before, we understood then that at heart he was a thorough coward.

I expected each instant that he would call for help, and there were enough rough characters around Valparaiso to give us no end of trouble in case they espoused his cause.

But Benson remained silent, therefore after a time I came to believe he did not stand on very good terms with the inhabitants of the town, and had good reason for thinking his summons would not be answered by aid. This last surmise of mine was soon found to be very nearly correct, as will presently be seen.

After tying the Britisher's hands behind his back, Master Hackett seized him by the arm and led the way toward the shore, followed closely, as may be supposed, by Phil and me.

It was near to midnight; the peace-loving inhabitants of the town were asleep, and the rougher element must have had a rendezvous at some distance from the water's edge, for we did not meet a single person until after having walked to and fro on the shore half an hour or more shouting for a boatman.

Then a sleepy looking fellow lounged up to Master Hackett, professing his willingness to do whatsoever might be required, providing a sufficient amount of money was forthcoming.

He had no more than given us to understand this much when a moonbeam lighted up Benson's face, and in an instant the boatman was animated.

"Where did you get that fellow?" he asked of Master Hackett in Spanish, and the latter replied in the same language, repeating the conversation to Phil and me after we were on board the *Essex*; but for the time we were completely in the dark so far as understanding the drift of the talk was concerned.

"We picked him up a short distance from here," the old seaman replied. "He had jugged two boys belongin' to our ship, countin' on sellin' 'em to British whalers after the *Essex* left port."

"I know him for a villain, an' have had it in mind that he spent his time shanghaiing sailors, but never could bring it home to him. His game doesn't stop at Yankees; for when there are none in port he'll pick up anybody, so it's said."

"Then you have no objections to carryin' him aboard the ship?"

"What will you do with him there?"

"Let the captain settle his hash. We've got good proof of what he's been up to, an' I promise you he won't be treated any too gently."

"I'll carry you an' him out to the ship for nothing, if by so doing we can rid ourselves of the villain."

"I can't say whether the captain will take him out of your way; but you may be certain it'll go hard with him."

Until some time later Phil and I were surprised at seeing the boatman scurrying around as if we had been commissioned officers who promised a big fee; and he it was who tossed Benson on board the small boat with no more ceremony than he would have used in handling a bundle of merchandise.

In a twinkling we were hailed by the sentry on board the *Essex*, so rapidly did the boatman work his oars, and Master Hackett gave such an account of his party as gained us permission to come up the gangway ladder.

Not seeing the old seaman offer to pay the man for having pulled us out to the ship, I took one of the silver shillings from my pocket, offering it to him; but he shook his head as he pointed with a grin to where Master Hackett stood arm

in arm with Benson.

The remainder of the night was spent by the Britisher in the prison of the ship, or, as a sailor would put it, "in the brig"; and we two lads, after hearing from the old seaman a literal translation of the conversation he had had with the boatman, tumbled into our hammocks with thankful hearts.

A few hours previous it had seemed certain we would be sent on board a whaler, while our friends believed us deserters, and now we were in our proper stations once more. Surely, Master Hackett had repaid whatsoever of a debt he might have owed us for jumping over the rail to rescue him!

The reception we met with from our messmates next morning was well calculated to make lads feel proud. Every man jack came up with some pleasant word as if we were particular friends with all the crew; and many were the hopes expressed that the Britisher, Benson, would get such sauce as he deserved.

There was never a man on board who did not believe our captain would deal out the most severe punishment in his power, yet it was agreed by the idlers on the gun-deck that if the villain was let off too easily, they would ask for permission to go on shore again and make it their duty to trim him in proper fashion.

The yarn which had been told Phil and me regarding the sailing of the *Essex* was a hoax. She was taking on board provisions for a long cruise, and it was hardly probable could be got under way for two or three days at the earliest.

Half an hour after inspection one of the marines brought the word forward that Phil and I were to go aft for an interview with the captain; and while it was no more than we had been expecting, both of us were considerably excited by the prospect.

We were rigged out in our best bibs and tuckers, Master Hackett himself seeing to it that our hats were properly tilted on "three hairs," and half a dozen of the older men inspecting us gravely to make certain we were togged in shipshape and Bristol fashion.

We found the captain with half a dozen of the officers, among whom was my cousin, Stephen McKnight, seated around a large table in the after cabin, looking grave as owls; and certain it is that I was trembling like a leaf when I bowed and scraped in such fashion as Master Hackett had said was proper.

"Well, lads," the captain said, speaking as if he believed we were as good as himself, "I understand that you had quite an adventure ashore yesterday, and were near coming to grief."

"Yes, sir," I replied, after waiting in vain for Phil to speak, and my voice quivered till it was like a wheezy flute.

"Tell us the whole story from the time you left Hackett, and do not be afraid of making it too long."

Again I waited for Phil; but since he showed no signs of piping up I was obliged to spin the yarn, for it would never have done to keep the captain waiting.

All hands were still as mice while I told of our meeting with Benson; and to make certain they'd believe me, I made Phil pipe up from time to time with his, "That's true, sir," or, "It's all as Ezra says, sir."

When I was at the end of the yarn,—and it was a long one, as you may believe, for I told every little detail from our meeting with Benson until we were on board ship again,—the captain said, as polite as a fiddler:—

"You may go, lads, and send Hackett aft."

Phil came very near tumbling over me as he tried to get out of the cabin in a hurry; and we were hardly more than amidships before we met Master Hackett, togged out within an inch of his life.

"The captain has sent for you, sir," I said with all due respect; and instead of making any reply, the old fellow turned on his heel stiff as a ramrod, walking aft till his bowlegs cut a perfect circle.

Once on the gun-deck again we two lads were forced to tell the idlers all that had occurred; and we were no sooner done with our yarn than Master Hackett appeared, looking much as if he had just been made master of a prize.

With all his fine looks and lordly manner, he could not tell the idlers more than we had already done, and all hands of us were forced to wait in suspense until some long-eared marine should come forward with his budget of news gathered by eavesdropping.

Half an hour later the crew of the cutter was called away to carry Lieutenant Downes ashore; and when that officer came back No. 4 boat was manned, and the prisoner, Benson, put on board.

It was not until the next day that we learned the whole of the story, and then all hands were satisfied that justice would be done by the Chilian authorities in such a fashion that the Britisher would for some time be unable to continue his scheme of catching Yankees.

What we finally learned was much like this: Having inquired into the case thoroughly, as I have already set down, Captain Porter was convinced that a flogging would be too slight punishment for such a villain as Benson, and Mr. Downes made an official report of the case to the authorities of the port. Those officers promised that the enterprising Britisher should be imprisoned with hard labor for a year at the very least; and that this was done, Master Hackett, Phil, and I knew before the *Essex* left port, for we three visited the jail and saw the scoundrel picking oakum under charge of well-armed keepers.

He glanced out of the corner of his eye at us for a single second, and then looked steadily at his work, nor could we provoke him into speaking. I thought at the time, however, and had good reason to remember it afterward, that if the opportunity should ever present itself for him to get one or all three of us into his power, he would not be likely to show us much mercy.

It was on the day we visited the jail that the brig *Jane*, an American whaler, came into port, and from her master Captain Porter learned very much which it was necessary he should know. It was reported that nearly all the British whalers were armed and provided with letters of marque, which really put them on a footing with ships of war; and, unless their plans were speedily nipped in the bud, all the vessels hailing from the United States would be captured. In fact one of them had already been seized, the Britisher having no difficulty in coming alongside because the Yankee craft had been so long at sea that her commander had no idea war had been proclaimed.

Captain Porter did not linger after receiving such information. He had proposed to put additional stores on board; but now decided that he could not afford to spend any more time in port, and immediately signals were hoisted recalling those who were in the town on shore leave.

Master Hackett, Phil, and I were no more than on board before the *Essex* was under way, and I believe of a verity we would have been left behind had we loitered half an hour longer.

We had been at sea two days when we spoke the Yankee whaleship *Charles*, and ran so close alongside that it was possible to hail her, when the skipper was summoned on board to give information.

A more surprised set of men than those who rowed the Nantucket captain over to us, I never saw. They stared at the *Essex* in open-mouthed amaze, and fired volleys of questions at us as we overhung the rail, knowing full well that we could get the same news from these men as was being dealt out in the cabin to our commander.

Not until after we had explained the meaning of our being in the Pacific, however, could we get any information, and then we learned that there was work in plenty before us.

A Peruvian corsair, in company with an armed British brig, had already captured the ships *Walker* and *Barclay* while they were cruising off Coquimbo, and unless we took a hand the entire Yankee fleet would soon be gobbled up.

The Nantucket skipper did not stay in the cabin more than half an hour; and immediately he was over the rail, our ship was being brought around "to take a hand in the fun," as Master Hackett announced, while the *Charles* followed in the wake of the *Essex*.

It can readily be imagined that all hands were in a fine state of excitement by this time, knowing as we did that our work was cut out for us; but we counted on cruising two or three days at the very least before coming up with an enemy.

Our surprise was quite as great as our pleasure, when, not more than three hours later, and while the *Charles* was within two miles of us, we sighted the Peruvian vessel to the northward.

In a twinkling we ran up the British colors to coax her within striking distance; and the captain of the *Charles* showed himself to be quite as shrewd as are Nantucket men in general, for no sooner was our false ensign straightened out than he hoisted the English flag over the stars and stripes, thus making it appear as if he had been captured by us.

The Peruvian fell into the trap at once, and came down upon us in fine style, throwing a shot ahead of the *Essex* when he was about a mile away. It was carrying matters with a high hand; but I reckon Captain Porter wasn't very greatly displeased, since it only made our work more simple.

Orders were at once given to pitch three shots directly over the stranger as a token for him to come nearer, which the Peruvian did, at the same time sending an armed boat to board us.

Every man jack of us, save those at the starboard guns, were on deck when the boat came alongside, a lieutenant in full

rig standing in the stern-sheets, and thus it was Phil and I heard all that was said between this fine fellow and our commander.

Captain Porter professed to be in a towering rage; he ordered the lieutenant to go back at once with an order for the Peruvian to run under our lee, and then send an officer on board to apologize for having dared to fire at an English man-of-war.

How that fellow scurried back! He never so much as suspected that we were other than what had been represented, and in the shortest possible space of time another lieutenant, wearing so much gold lace that he looked like a brazen image, came up the gangway ladder grinning and bowing like an ape.

Captain Porter received him on the quarter, but never so much as invited him into the cabin, and Phil and I crowded well aft to hear what we allowed would be a mighty interesting conversation.

The lieutenant reported that his ship was the Peruvian privateer *Nereyda*, armed with fifteen guns, and carrying a full crew. They were cruising for Americans, he said, and had already captured two,—the *Walker* and the *Barclay*; but the British letter of marque *Nimrod*, a whaler, had driven their prize crew from the *Walker* and taken possession of her. The Peruvian had mistaken us for the *Nimrod*, and fired for the purpose of showing that they did not count on having their prizes taken from them in such an unceremonious fashion.

It puzzled me to make out how the Peruvians, who were under Spanish rule, dared to attack our vessels while Spain was not at war with the United States; but the old sea lawyers of the gun-deck explained matters that evening to their entire satisfaction, by saying the Peruvians must have believed that Spain, who was so dependent upon England, would soon declare war against us because the king of Great Britain had done so, and this would make the capture of the whalers legal.

Whether that was the right view of the case or not, I can't say; but it satisfied our old shellbacks, and that was enough.

But to go back to the Peruvian lieutenant who stood on the quarter shaking hands with himself because he had straightened out the matter of having fired on us. I suppose he thought our captain would pat him on the back for being engaged in the work of destroying Yankee whalers, and was most likely counting on being invited into the cabin to a blow-out of the best from the officers' stores.

It was comical to see the fellow jump when Captain Porter gave a signal for the British ensign to be hauled down and the stars and stripes run up! He stared first at the flag, and then at the men amidships who were watching him, until our gun-deck crowd laughed aloud.

Captain Porter scowled, for it wasn't good manners to make sport of a prisoner, and then told the Peruvian who we were, although there was little need of that after he had seen our flag.

The next minute orders were given to pitch a couple of shots over the *Nereyda*, and down came her colors as if our balls had cut away the halliards. They didn't care to dispute the question, but surrendered off-hand, as if afraid we might take it into our heads to sink their piratical craft.

After that, and until three hours were passed, our men had a lively time taking the privateer's crew aboard the *Essex* and stowing them in the cages on the lower deck. It was good practice for Lieutenant Downes's fleet of boats, and he did all the work, us idlers overhanging the rail as we watched the sport.

When all this had been done and the ship's brig was literally packed with prisoners, Lieutenant McKnight, my cousin, was sent on board the *Nereyda* with a prize crew, and all three vessels (for the Nantucket skipper hung close to us, as if eager to take part in a fight) stood inshore to look into Coquimbo with the hope of finding there the *Nimrod* and her prizes.

I had almost forgotten to say that when the *Nereyda* was overhauled, our men found in the privateer's brig the master and crew of the captured ship *Barclay*. Of course they were brought on board the *Essex*, the officers being quartered aft, and the men messing with us of the gun-deck. A mighty happy crowd they were on finding themselves on an American man-of-war, after feeling certain they'd be sent to a Spanish prison.

From them we learned that there were no less than twenty-three Yankee whalers in the Pacific, and fully twenty Britishers, all of the last-named being heavily armed and on the lookout to capture our ships. The Englishmen were neglecting the fishery, so the newcomers told us, in order to catch a Yankee, and the *Essex* hadn't arrived an hour too soon. Surely, it seemed as if our misfortune in not meeting Commodore Bainbridge was a blessing in disguise.

Well, we didn't find in the harbor of Coquimbo that for which we were searching, and the captain of the *Charles*, disappointed in not getting an opportunity to take part in a scrimmage, hauled off to attend to the whales.

There was no reason why we should hold possession of the Peruvian, and good cause why we ought to give her up, for we were not at war with Spain; therefore, after our unsuccessful visit to Coquimbo, the two ships were hoisted to within a mile of each other, that Lieutenant Downes's fleet might gain more experience in handling their boats.

In the first place, all the privateer's ammunition, shot, small arms, and light sails were thrown overboard, which left that craft in such shape that she couldn't do much harm to anything except herself, and then her crew was sent on board once more. One of the marines told us that Captain Porter had made the officers of the *Nereyda* swear to deliver a letter to the viceroy of Peru as the price of their liberty, and in that letter our commander denounced the conduct of the privateer's captain, insisting that he be punished for having acted as a pirate.

Both Phil and I would like very much to know if that letter was ever delivered, and in case the officers kept their promise, what was done with them for having made prizes of vessels belonging to a nation with which Spain was not at war.

There was no need for any one to ask what our course would be after parting company with the Peruvian cruiser. Captain Porter would search for the captured Yankees, as a matter of fact; and the only question in the minds of us on the gun-deck was as to where he would look for them.

It goes without saying that our old shellbacks wagged their tongues furiously over this, and finally it was settled among them that the *Essex* must perforce cruise around the island of San Gallan. It was exactly this which our commander did, and those who had predicted it plumed their feathers mightily at showing so much seamanship.

Well, we made good headway until the 28th day of March, with nothing of interest occurring save that half the crew were constantly on the lookout for the captured vessels, and then we were well up with San Gallan. On this day we hauled off to the northward and westward, counting to cross the track of inward-bound craft.

It appeared that again were we just in the nick of time, for in less than sixteen hours after changing the course we sighted three sail standing for Callao.

It was a case of prize money and no mistake, for there wasn't one chance in an hundred that either of the strangers was a Yankee, and there was some lively jumping and hauling as we put the *Essex* in trim for a stiff chase.

The crew of the *Barclay* declared that the craft nearest was the one which had been taken from them by the Peruvian, and Captain Porter set about cutting her out, regardless of others.

During four hours we had a most exciting time of it, and then it began to look very much as if we would get the worst end of the bargain. I wish I was able to set down here a picture of our ship and crew as we stood with our eyes fixed on the chase, save at such times as it became necessary to perform some task; but it is beyond a thickheaded lad like me. One must needs take part in such a race in order to understand all the sensations which come to a fellow as he watches eagerly the progress of the craft, trembling with excitement lest the chase will escape, and then feeling the cold shivers run down his spine as he realizes that when he is once where he wants to be, he may, perhaps, be called upon to scrape an acquaintance with death; for if all the enemy in those waters were heavily armed, it was not probable every one would fall into our hands as readily as had the Peruvian privateer.

It was the "luck of the *Essex*," so Master Hackett declared, which enabled us to win that race; for when the chase doubled the point of San Lorenzo we were fully three miles astern, and the most sanguine among us believed that she'd gain harbor before we could run near enough to fire a shot.

We kept on, however, as if believing our chances were of the best, although knowing that in a short time we would be in the unfriendly port of Callao, and ten minutes later Master Hackett cried out the words I have just set down. It was the "luck of the *Essex*" that the wind should leave the chase as she rounded the point, and we brought a good breeze with us until we were less than half a mile off.

Then Lieutenant Downes's command was called to quarters; the small fleet of boats was lowered away, and the crew bent to the oars as if a fortune of gold awaited every man jack of them.

We had no idea but that the chase would make some kind of a fight, and yet, much though I disliked running my head into the path of a round shot, so great was my excitement that I would have given all my small possessions could I have been on board the foremost boat.

Nor was Phil Robbins behind me in enthusiasm. As the fleet got under way he flung his arms around my neck and bawled in my ears as if I had suddenly gone stone deaf:--

"Why couldn't it be our luck to be there! Why don't Lieutenant Downes give us lads half a chance?"

I shook him off just as Master Hackett came near where we were standing, and was about to make some impatient reply, for it seemed as if we lads were receiving shabby treatment by being thus left out of all the good things; but the old seaman interrupted me by saying:--

"You young cubs needn't howl because of not gettin' the thick end of all that's goin' on. Unless our captain has changed from what he was as a lieutenant when we licked the Turks, you'll get all the 'burnin' powder' that's needed before this cruise comes to an end."

Phil and I were not greatly consoled at being thus told that our turn would come by and by; but in our chagrin we did not lose sight of what was taking place so near at hand.

We saw the boats as they approached the becalmed craft spread out like a fan, that the attack, in case one was needed, might come from all points at the same time; and to our great surprise the ship's colors were struck before a gun had been fired.

She was the *Barclay*, as the blindest among us could see, for the name was painted on her rail, and we had robbed the Peruvian privateer of half her prizes!

Lieutenant Downes did not even take the trouble of sending the prize crew off to us as prisoners. He put them beneath the hatches, hoisted three of his boats inboard and sent the others back, signalling to know what the next move was to be.

It was by long odds the tamest capture I ever saw, for not a single grain of powder was burned, and there was no noise save when our crew cheered the returning boats.

Captain Porter soon told, by means of the tiny signal flags, what he expected of those who were in possession of the whaler. We hoisted the British colors, and the *Barclay* sent up the English ensign over the stars and stripes, after which the wind breezed up with sufficient force to carry us into Callao.

We were to enter the port as an Englishman with a prize, and there get such information as might be useful.

It was my cousin Stephen who went ashore with a boat's crew, never heeding the fact that both Phil and I were eager to go with him; and when he came out, two hours later, signals were shown for both vessels to gain an offing.

As we on the gun-deck afterward learned, the fact that the *Essex* was so far from home had not yet been made known along the coast, and our commander was not the kind of a man to dawdle in port when he might be out attending to business.

Once we had gained a good offing, the officers and crew of the *Barclay* were given the opportunity to go on board their own craft; but nearly all of them decided to remain with us, and some of our people were drafted to man her.

It seems, as we soon came to know, that the captain of the *Barclay* proposed that his ship cruise with us, acting as pilot to point out the enemy, and this proposition was accepted.

Captain Porter now had a fleet of two ships, and with them he stretched off the coast to the northward and westward, hunting for whatsoever might be picked up in the way of Britishers.

On that night, when our cruise was begun from a new point of departure, the sea lawyers began to argue as to what should be done now we were on profitable grounds, and before it was time to turn in they had settled to their own satisfaction all that our commander should or should not do.

I was tired with hearing their tongues wag, and had turned to go further aft where the chin music was not so loud, when Phil came up, the expression on his face telling plainly that he had some important matter in mind.

"You're to go to your cousin to-morrow morning, Ezra, and beg of him that we be given permission to join Lieutenant Downes's fleet. It is not fair that we should miss all the most exciting portion of the work by being forced to remain aboard the *Essex* when there are prizes to be captured."

"It may be exciting enough if we fall afoul of a Britisher who is in trim to fight," I said grimly, not minded to let him know how sore my heart was because we had not been selected by Lieutenant Downes when he drafted his crew.

"Master Hackett says we won't see a real fight this side of Cape Horn, because there's nothing here with metal enough to stand us off, except the British 64-gun *Standard*, and it's reported that she has already left Lima, bound for England."

"We may find some craft that will show her teeth, despite all Master Hackett says," I replied, little dreaming how nearly the truth I was speaking.

CHAPTER V. THE NEW FLEET.

It would please me greatly to be able to go into all the details of what was done by the officers and crew of the *Essex* while a new fleet was being gotten together, for we did actually collect a squadron of vessels while so far from the home port; but we met with so many startling adventures, each of which would be of greater interest to a stranger than the setting down exactly how that or the other vessel was captured, that I shall tell this portion of the yarn as briefly as possible.

First let me say, however, that Phil Robbins and I were treated by the men on the gun-deck more as shipmates and less like boys after our adventure in Valparaiso, although why there should have been any change I am wholly unable to say, for we did nothing of moment, save to show, by our willingness to accompany Benson when he baited the trap for us, that we were more simple than lads of our age ought to have been.

It is not to be supposed that the old shellbacks showed any very intense desire to be with us, and sometimes plainly said that the room we occupied was better than our company; but they spoke with us now and then as if we were in fact shipmates, sometimes even going so far as to tell us a particularly interesting yarn. It goes without saying that we were forced to wait upon the whole boiling of them, and were seldom allowed an idle hour; but, to describe the situation in a word, there was a decided and agreeable change so far as we two lads were concerned.

After the *Barclay* had been recaptured and remanned, we stood across from the mainland toward the islands without meeting a craft of any kind. On the 17th of April we made Chatham Island, but were not rewarded by the sight of an enemy, and a few days later we hove to off Charles's Island, where was located the whalers' post-office.

This last consisted only of a stout box nailed to a tree, where the fishermen deposited letters for each other, or to be taken home by the craft heading in that direction. Captain Porter did not hesitate to rifle the "mail," and by so doing gained much valuable information concerning the different ships in the Pacific.

We cruised around among the islands, seeing nothing which interested us in the way of business, until the 29th of April, just at sunrise, when all hands rushed on deck at the welcome cry of "Sail ho!" the first we had heard since the day we came across the *Barclay*.

A large ship could be seen to the westward, and an hour after we began the chase two other craft were sighted a trifle farther south.

With three ships in sight, and the odds in favor of all being enemies, it can well be understood that we were in a fine state of excitement.

Until this time I had positively refused to do as Phil desired in the way of asking my cousin, Lieutenant McKnight, to use his influence with Lieutenant Downes to the end that we might be considered as members of his fleet; but on this morning, when it seemed positive there would be hot work in plenty before night, I plucked up sufficient courage, as my kinsman was standing on the break of the quarter, to approach him.

It was the first time since we left port that I had ventured so far as to speak to an officer without first being accosted, and Stephen--I mean Lieutenant McKnight--looked surprised, as indeed he had good cause to be, since it is not customary for boys aboard a man-of-war to address familiarly those who are so far above them in station.

However, it so chanced that the lieutenant was in good humor, as he should have been, with so many possible prizes in sight, and kindly answered my salute by asking what I would have.

Had he been ashore and had I never sailed under his command, I should have accosted him by the name of Stephen, and made known my wants boldly; but now I stuttered and stammered like a simple, thus showing what a difference a uniform and a commission can make.

After a time, however, I managed to say, he kindly encouraging me to "speak up man fashion":--

"There's like to be much work for all hands before night, sir, and Philip Robbins and I are sore at heart because of never having a chance to prove that we can do more than falls to the lot of boys aboard ship."

"So!" the lieutenant said with a laugh. "You are growing down-hearted because there isn't danger enough?"

"It's not exactly that, sir; but when danger does come, we want our full share of it."

"Then you have no cause for complaint, lad. A round shot is as likely to take you off as me; aboard ship we all run the

same chances."

"But those who are under Lieutenant Downes when his fleet is called away are likely to see more service and have better opportunities for earning advancement," I stammered, whereat he laughed heartily, thus putting me considerably more at my ease.

"You are eager to try your hand at close work?" he said, rather than asked; and I fancied he was not displeased because I had ventured to approach him on such an errand.

"That is what we most desire, sir," I replied. "If you could only persuade Lieutenant Downes to take us with him when next the boats are called away, I would do anything I could to repay you when we get ashore."

"But what would my uncle, your father, say when I saw him? Do you think he is as eager that his son should be shot as you are?"

"We're not counting on that part of it, sir. All who come to close quarters with an enemy are not shot, else you would never be standing on this quarter-deck, wearing the uniform of a lieutenant."

He smiled at this bold speech of mine, whereat I plucked up courage sufficient to continue by saying:--

"Unless you had been given an opportunity of showing what you could do, a commission would never have come your way."

"Now we are getting at the real reason for this request!" he exclaimed cheerily. "You and Robbins believe that by taking part in one sharp engagement rapid advancement is assured?"

"We never will advance, sir, until we have shown ourselves worthy, and there is no great chance of doing good work while we loiter on board when others are paving their way to a commission."

"You speak right sensibly, Cousin Ezra," he said, in a tone which went straight to my heart; for it proved that he had not forgotten the ties of kinship which bound us, even though he was so much higher in station. "I will do all I may properly to persuade Mr. Downes to take you under his wing. If I succeed, remember that I would be equally shamed if you showed the white feather."

"None of the McKnights have ever done anything of the kind, sir, and it's not likely your cousin would be the first to write himself down a coward."

"I begin to believe that you're of the right sort, Ezra; and if you don't make your way in the navy, it won't be because I haven't done my share toward it."

Surely, a lad could not ask for a fairer promise than that; and after saluting properly I went forward, feeling remarkably well pleased with myself.

I found Phil on the fore-castle-deck, and the lad was so overjoyed by the news, having come to believe I would never dare ask such a favor of my cousin, that he would have kissed me then and there, but I sprang back in time to prevent an exhibition which must have made us the laughing-stock of all our messmates.

From this time on it can well be imagined that we watched the chase with even more of interest than would ordinarily have been displayed, and Phil said again and again that he hoped the wind would die away, so we might be called to the boats.

If all his wishes could have been granted so quickly, he might have counted himself the most fortunate lad in all the world.

We rapidly overhauled the ship first sighted, and it was no more than nine o'clock in the morning when we came within half a mile, pitching a shot across her bows which brought her to in short order.

The *Essex* was run within hailing distance, and then we learned that our prize was the British whaleship *Montezuma*, with fourteen hundred barrels of oil on board.

We could not afford to spend very much time on her because the other two craft were near at hand, and without further ceremony than that of hailing to learn who she was, a prize crew was called away to board her.

We waited only long enough to make certain our men were not opposed when they went over the rail, and then the *Essex* was headed for the other ships, both of whom were clawing off at the best possible speed.

For two hours we cracked on every inch of canvas that could be spread, overhauling the strangers in fine style, and

then, while we were yet fully eight miles distant, Phil's wish was granted. The wind died away so suddenly that, save for the general excitement of taking prizes, all hands would have been on the lookout for a squall, and Phil cried in my ear:--

"Now we shall see something of real business. Those craft won't submit tamely to our small boats, and we shall know what a sea-fight is like!"

I believed he spoke only the truth, and once more the cold shivers chased themselves up and down my backbone; for despite all the fine words with which I had regaled my cousin, I was not really hankering to put myself in the way of the smallest shot that might be fired. The mischief had been done, however, and by no one but myself; therefore the least I could do was to look pleasant, although I hoped most fervently that Mr. Downes would give no heed to my cousin's request.

In this last I was most woefully disappointed, for Phil had hardly more than ceased speaking when a marine came to summon me aft.

I went, knowing full well why the order had been sent, and blaming myself for a meddling fool, when by holding my tongue I might have remained safe and sound on board the *Essex* instead of pulling a heavy oar two or three hours simply that the Britishers could have an opportunity to kill me.

Lieutenant Downes was on the quarter talking with Captain Porter when I came up, and not until his interview with the commander was come to an end did he turn toward me. Then it was to say:--

"So you and your comrade are eager for a taste of boat-work?"

I could do no less than agree with him after all the fine speeches I had made to my cousin; and he said, as if believing he was doing me a wonderful favor:--

"When the boat crews are called away, you two lads will take your places alongside me. I have promised Mr. McKnight to have an eye out on you bloodthirsty youngsters, and it won't be my fault if he doesn't hear exactly how you behaved under fire."

If I had not been on the quarter-deck I believe of a verity I should have groaned; as it was I said to my miserable self that if we caught it very hot, my cousin would wish I had never been born.

I thanked the lieutenant in a shaky voice, and, saluting, went forward to wreak my vengeance on Phil for having persuaded me into such a scrape when there was no sense in it.

I changed my mind very quickly after joining the lad; he, like me, had grown faint-hearted now the opportunity for hot work was close at hand, and I knew by the expression on his face that he regretted, as did I, having made any such foolish request.

"I suppose we've got to go," he said in a faint tone; and the contrast between his manner now and when I first told him what my cousin had promised, was so comical that I could not keep my face straight. "It's all very well for you who are really brave," he continued, believing from the smile on my face that there was no fear in my heart; "but I don't think I want to go."

Since he had given me the credit of being brave when, as a matter of fact, I was more cowardly even than he, I did not propose to undeceive him, but said as stoutly as possible:--

"You can't back out now, Phil, else every man on board will set you down for the veriest kind of a coward."

"That's just what I am," he whispered, and again I laughed, this time because I had earned the reputation of being stout-hearted when any lamb would have outclassed me in that respect.

We were not given much time to mourn over the situation. Our conversation was hardly more than come to its sorrowful end when the word was given for the crews of the boats to stand ready, and we two lads ranged ourselves meekly beside Mr. Downes.

We embarked in proper fashion once the boats came alongside, and were stationed in the stern-sheets near the lieutenant, when it would have been more to my liking had we been forced to work the oars; for by so doing we might keep our thoughts from what seemed surely to be before us.

As I have said, it was about eleven o'clock when the wind died out, and the *Essex* was fully eight miles from the nearest stranger.

I could see that the men were settling to the oars for a long pull, and the knowledge that whatsoever danger awaited us was an hour or more in the future enabled me to keep my cowardly fears in check. Phil also revived when he understood that some considerable time must elapse before we had come within range of the enemy's guns, and looked quite cheerful as we answered the cheers of those on board the *Essex*.

Not until two o'clock, and by that time I was terribly cramped with sitting so long in one position, did we come near the strangers. Then we were about a mile distant when they hoisted the British colors and opened fire.

We were so far away, and their aim was so bad, that the shots failed to come within an hundred yards of us, whereat my courage increased once more; my heart came out of my boots where it had gone at the sound of the first gun, and I began to think the danger was not so great as had been represented.

Phil remained silent, clutching my belt, and I could feel his hand trembling violently.

"They can't send a shot anywhere near us," I whispered encouragingly.

"Ay, there's little danger while we're so far away; but we're going nearer each moment, and then of a surety they must strike us."

This was a very unpleasant suggestion, and I ceased my efforts at bolstering up his courage as I tried to stiffen my own.

The Britishers were lying about a quarter of a mile apart, and because the men were at the guns ready for action, I fancied we were very near a bloody engagement.

Lieutenant Downes gave a command for the boats to form in open order, and each craft shot out of line until she was heading a course of her own, the whole advancing after the fashion of the sticks of a fan.

It seemed strange to me that the enemy ceased firing at the moment we began the advance in proper fashion. We could see that on board the nearest ship they were training their guns on us, and expected each instant one of our craft would be struck, yet not a piece was discharged.

Nearer and nearer we approached, until it was possible to see distinctly every person on deck; but still the guns remained silent.

I hardly dared to breathe, nor would I look at Phil lest he should read in my eyes the fear that was in my heart.

We were come within fifty yards; every gun on the port side was trained upon us, and the officers on the quarter stood as if on the point of giving the order to open fire.

I shut my eyes, for it seemed certain that the battle could not longer be delayed, and to my mind there was little chance any of our boats would survive the first broadside.

The rousing cheers of the men startled me into opening my eyes again, and for an instant I could not understand the meaning of the shouts; but Phil soon enlightened me as he exclaimed in a tone of most intense relief:--

"They've struck their colors! They've struck their colors!"

It was indeed a fact, and our boat's crew scrambled on board, we two lads following in silent amazement, hardly conscious of what we were doing until Lieutenant Downes began calling off the names of those who would remain on board as prize crew.

We had captured the *Georgiana*, a British whaler which had originally been built for the East India Company's service, and was credited with being a fast sailer. She was pierced for eighteen guns, but had only six mounted when we took possession of her.

After the crew had been sent below, the hatches closed, and the officers were imprisoned in the cabin, Lieutenant Downes called away such of our men as had been selected to man the prize, and off we went to try conclusions with the second craft.

By this time Phil and I were quite brave; we had come to understand that danger cannot be lessened by fear, and were disposed to believe that the British whalers were not such fighters as had been supposed.

Our small fleet dashed on toward the second ship in the same order as when we came upon the *Georgiana*, and the same peaceful capture was ours. All the ship's crew were at the guns, yet they hauled down their colors when we were close upon them, and the *Essex* had taken three prizes in one day.

This last ship proved to be the *Policy*, a whaler, pierced for eighteen guns and having ten mounted.

How our men cheered when we were on board the third prize without so much as a scratch! It was something to boast of, this taking three fine ships in one day, and again did it appear as if the "luck of the *Essex*" was an established fact.

Lieutenant Downes did not think it necessary to pull back to the frigate now that the work was finished and there did not appear to be anything of importance on hand. The crews were set about this trifling duty or that, and we waited until sunset for a wind, when the prizes were sailed down to where the flagship lay close alongside the *Barclay* and the *Montezuma*.

It was a veritable fleet which Captain Porter now had under his command, and the only drawback was the number of prisoners we were forced to look after; but that was a trifling matter when one considered it as the only cost of four fine ships.

Master Hackett thought it proper to compliment Phil and me on our manliness in applying for permission to go with Lieutenant Downes at a time when it seemed positive there was hot work ahead, and I felt much as though I was acting a lie when I remained silent while the old man was bestowing so much praise upon us.

If he had known all that was in our hearts as we were pulling toward the whalers, I question if he would so much as have spoken to us again.

Now we two, Phil and I, began to ask ourselves if we were regularly drafted to Mr. Downes's fleet, or whether we had been taken for that one cruise only; and, ashamed though I should be to confess it, there was a great hope in my heart that in the future we would be forced to remain on board the *Essex* when there was any more cutting out to be done.

Before another day had come to an end we of the gun-deck learned, through one of the marines, as a matter of course, that Captain Porter had decided to equip the *Georgiana* as a cruiser, with Lieutenant Downes as commander. By so doing he would have an able assistant in searching for the enemy, and also a consort on which the crew of the *Essex* might find refuge in case of any serious injury to the frigate.

And now it was that, remaining at sea as if we were in dock, the work of making the fleet ready for service was begun; and the old shellbacks insisted that by so doing we were adding to the marvellous achievements of our ship. She had sailed halfway around the world, depending upon the enemy for supplies, going where there could be no possibility of receiving assistance in case she was overtaken by disaster,—which was something that had never been attempted before,—and now we were to eclipse even that feat by remodelling the enemy's merchantmen into war vessels while in mid-ocean, using for the purpose supplies we had just captured.

If ever there was a case of living on the enemy, ours surely was this situation.

From this day until the difficult task had been performed every man and boy was kept busy from early dawn until darkness rendered it difficult to see what we were about; and in this general furbishing our own ship was not neglected. The rigging of the *Essex* was overhauled and tarred; strained spars were replaced by new ones, and the frigate was given a complete coat of paint.

The *Georgiana* was transformed by the taking down of her try-work, which had been used for getting oil from the blubber of whales, and all the small arms from the other prizes were sent on board. She was given her full complement of guns, those from the *Policy* being transshipped, and on the 18th day of May Lieutenant Commandant Downes hoisted the American pennant on board the *Georgiana*, 16, firing a salute of seventeen guns, all of which were answered by the *Essex*, while the remaining prizes made as much noise as was possible.

We had a great celebration that day when a new ship was added to the United States Navy, and the cooks did their share toward it by filling our duff so full of plums that one could almost believe he was eating a regular, home-made pudding.

The manning of our prizes cost us so many of our crew that after all the ships were in sailing trim we had on board the *Essex* only two hundred and sixty-four, including officers, a small number, as Master Hackett declared, to handle the frigate in case we found ourselves in action,—an event which seemed only too probable when it should be known in England what mischief we were working among the whalers.

Our new man-of-war was given a fair trial to prove whether she was as good a sailer as had been believed, and we soon learned that the Britishers were decidedly at fault regarding her. She could not hold her own with the *Essex* even under the most favorable circumstances; but yet she was by no means a tub, and might be of great service before falling in with an enemy sufficiently heavy to send her to the bottom.

Four days after being put into commission the *Georgiana* set off on an independent cruise, and we hung around

Charles's Island until the 28th of May before sighting another sail.

Then one hove in sight dead ahead, and, success having made us confident, we piled on the canvas, believing she was the same as ours already.

Our three prizes, with good working crews, were close aboard us at the moment the stranger was sighted, and away we dashed in the finest style, ready to meet anything from a line-of-battle ship to a couple of frigates.

The chase was begun late in the afternoon, and we held on all night, keeping her well in sight, and heaving in view another sail of which we took no notice, save to send a couple of boats after her, for the bird which we had almost in our hand was worth any two well down on the horizon.

The stranger was a big ship, and sailed well; but she could not hold her own with the *Essex*, and by nine o'clock next morning we were alongside with the crew at quarters.

We believed of a verity that this fellow would fight, since he had ten ports on a side, and once more did I feel too nervous for comfort; but no sooner were we in a position to open the battle than she surrendered, and we were in possession of the British whaler *Atlantic*, of three hundred and fifty-five tons burden, carrying twenty-four men. She had eight eighteen-pounders mounted, and might have held us in check long enough to show that English sailors are the gluttons at fighting which they claim to be.

No sooner had we thrown a prize crew on board, and seen to it that the Britishers were secured where they couldn't make any trouble for our men, than the *Essex* was put about in chase of the sail we had sighted during the night, our consorts following a long distance in our wake, unable to keep the pace we were setting.

We came up with the chase about noon, and then were becalmed within two miles of her.

She appeared to be heavily armed, and we were short-handed in consequence of having distributed so many men among the prizes taken thus far, as well as sending out the two boats, which had probably been picked up by some of our fleet before this time.

To equip the fleet of small boats would require nearly every man and boy on board, leaving no one to handle the frigate in case the wind sprang up, and as we noted this fact--I mean as the old shellbacks discussed it--Master Hackett said to me with a long-drawn sigh of relief:--

"It's the luck of the *Essex* to find Britishers so plentiful; but this time she's got more'n a mouthful, an' that fellow yonder is like to give us the slip unless our slow-movin' prizes work up this way before the wind rises."

"Do you mean, Master Hackett, that we can't make any effort at capturing her?" I asked in surprise.

"Look about an' see if that ain't the size of it. Do you reckon Captain Porter would strip his own ship, leavin' her helpless in case this 'ere calmed with a squall?"

It surely did not seem possible our commander would do anything of the kind, and my heart was heavy as I gazed at the Britisher lying so near at hand and we unable to do so much as come up with her.

Before our crew had much time for discussion we were startled, and some of the oldest hands almost frightened, by being called to man the boats; and our surprise may be imagined when we learned that every craft was to be sent off.

I saw the old shellbacks looking at each other furtively, exchanging odd glances and shrugging their shoulders as much as to say that Captain Porter must have taken leave of his senses; but into the boats they went, and all hands followed until there were none left aboard the frigate except the captain himself, the chaplain, the captain's clerk, and the boatswain.

Four men only to look after the *Essex* in case of sudden danger, or in event of our being forced to surrender! It surely seemed as if we were gazing upon the frigate for the last time, when the boats were pulled away, and I heard Master Hackett mutter to the man nearest him:--

"Take your good-by squint at the old hooker, matey, for I'm reckonin' there's many a chance you'll never see her again. I'm willin' to admit that a man-o'-warsman is bound to run many a risk; but this 'ere beats anything I ever saw or heard of before."

And from the expression on the faces of all I understood that to a man the crew believed we were going far beyond our duty,--which fact, as may well be imagined, was not calculated to make me very comfortable in mind. There were an hundred things likely to happen that would leave us without a ship, and it was by no means even chances that we could gain a foothold on the deck of the stranger. Surely, the day must come when we should find a Britisher who

would fight, even though he was no more than a whaler, and this might be the day.

Looking back I could see Captain Porter pacing the quarter-deck, and I wondered if he believed himself fully justified in thus leaving the frigate to the mercy of the sea and weather when we might not succeed in our errand.

However, it was not for a lad like me to speculate as to whether the captain was going beyond duty and reason. I was a member of the boat's crew, and as such must do my utmost to make of the expedition a success, regardless of what threatened the *Essex*.



CHAPTER VI. A CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS.

Our fears as to what fate might overtake the *Essex* while we were away and she had only four men to care for her, were forgotten in a great measure as we neared the Britisher.

Probably the question in the minds of all was as to whether the stranger would show fight. I know it fully occupied my thoughts; but, greatly to my surprise, I was not very much afraid of what might happen. Perhaps because there were so many things to think about, I gave less heed to the enemy than I would have done under other circumstances.

There is no good reason why I should spin out this portion of the yarn any longer than is absolutely necessary, more especially since there is so much of later happening and greater importance to be set down.

It is enough to say that we approached the enemy in proper fashion, ready for any kind of a scrimmage, and instead of firing a gun he hauled down his colors as the others had done. Cowardly though I was, it disappointed me because these Britishers submitted so tamely.

We now had, as the second prize of the day, the letter of marque ship *Greenwich*, three hundred and thirty-eight tons burden, carrying ten guns and a crew of twenty-five men.

Captain Porter had taken many chances in sending us all away at the same time, yet by doing so he had gained another prize which, had she been left at liberty, might have worked serious mischief to our merchantmen.

It can readily be supposed that we did not lose any time in getting back to the frigate. Men enough to take care of the prisoners and work the prize were left on board, and the remainder of us pulled to the *Essex* at full speed, feeling, when we went on deck once more, as if the old ship had escaped some deadly peril.

By the time the remainder of our fleet came up, bringing with them the two boats we had sent out during the night, the *Essex* was lying alongside two fine prizes which had not cost us a single charge of powder.

We now had four prizes, in addition to the *Barclay*, and I was arguing with Phil as to how it would be possible to care for them all, and at the same time take any more, when Master Hackett joined us.

"I reckon you lads think the old *Essex* has got about as much as she can stagger under, eh?" he began; and I repeated to him what Phil and I had been saying.

"I allow we've got a good big job on our hands, lads," the old man said, speaking thoughtfully, as if weighing well every word, "an' now's come the time when Captain Porter is bound to make port. We're feedin' a crowd of men, an' can't do any great amount of work with so many craft to look after."

"Will we go to Valparaiso?" Phil asked, thinking of Benson.

"It's beyond an old shellback like me to say, lad; but if I was the captain of this 'ere frigate, I'd think twice before I poked my nose into that port the second time."

"Why? They treated us well before."

"Ay, an' that's why I'd keep my weather-eye liftin' while we're in these waters. England is a strong nation, an' these 'ere young republics won't dare hold out against her commands very long. There'll be a big lot of kickin' in Great Britain when word is sent there of what we've been doin', an' you'll find that she'll shut every port on the Pacific against us."

I did not fully understand all Master Hackett said; but no particular harm was done because of my ignorance, since it matters little whether a boy aboard ship knows the whys and wherefores of everything.

However, there must have been good reasoning in the old man's words, since Captain Porter did exactly that which Master Hackett would have advised.

When prize crews were on board all our captured ships we were so short of hands that Lieutenant Gamble of the marines was given charge of the *Greenwich*, because we had no naval officer to put in command, and the entire fleet was gotten under way without unnecessary delay.

None of us on the gun-deck knew for what port we were bound, until the 19th of June, when we ran into the harbor of Tumbez, and came to anchor.

Why it was, none of our old sea lawyers could determine satisfactorily; but not one of the crew was given shore liberty.

There was no unusual amount of work to be done on the ships, yet we were kept aboard as close as if there was danger some of us might desert.

The captain went on shore every day to bargain for provisions to be paid for with the money we captured from the *Nocton*, and boatloads of stores were put aboard this ship or that; therefore it was certain the inhabitants were friendly, or would be so long as our cash lasted.

There was no little amount of grumbling because we were kept so snug; but as a matter of course none of the hard words were spoken where they might be overheard by the officers, therefore nothing came of it.

Five days after we let go our ground tackle three sail were seen standing into the bay, and we were summoned to get the frigate under way, but the order was countermanded when those on the foremost ship lowered a boat as if to come ashore.

Captain Porter waited to learn who the visitors were, and soon we had the great satisfaction of seeing Lieutenant Downes in the stern-sheets of the boat, although it puzzled us not a little as to why he had returned thus soon.

Of course the lieutenant came on board the *Essex*, as did those who had manned his boat, and we of the gun-deck heard the whole story of the *Georgiana's* adventures while Mr. Downes was having his confab in the cabin.

And what a story it was! We cheered and yelled as our old shipmates spun it off, and nearly went wild with rejoicing.

Here is the yarn boiled down, and that it was true we knew full well, for yonder were the prizes coming to close under the *Georgiana* stern.

It seems that after leaving us Lieutenant Downes cruised off James's Island, where he fell in with two Britishers. Hoisting the English colors, he soon had the captains of the whalers sitting comfortably in his cabin, and then he told them who he was. Well, the prizes were taken without resistance, as a matter of course, and the United States entered into possession, less what prize money would be coming to us, of the ship *Catherine* of two hundred and seventy tons burden, carrying eight guns and twenty-nine men, and the *Rose*, two hundred and twenty tons, eight guns and twenty-one men.

After manning these prizes, Lieutenant Downes had only twenty as a crew all told, and yet that fact did not prevent him from giving chase next day to the whaler *Hector*, a ship of two hundred and seventy tons, twenty-five men, and carrying eleven guns, although she was pierced for twenty.

This last craft was a Britisher who stood ready to fight, and when Mr. Downes understood that he had an action on his hands, with hardly men enough to work his ship, he put the prisoners in irons so that they might not be able to lend a hand to their countrymen.

When the *Hector* was ordered to surrender she refused, and Mr. Downes let her have a broadside which brought down her main-topmast. The crew had good pluck, however, and fought their ship until nearly all her standing and running rigging was shot away, when they could do no less than haul down their colors. The Britishers had two men killed and six wounded.

After putting a prize crew on board this last capture, Lieutenant Downes had but ten men left in the *Georgiana*, and, including the wounded, he held seventy-three prisoners. Now it seems that the *Rose* was an old tub of a ship which it wouldn't pay to bring into port under the circumstances; therefore he threw her guns overboard, and filled her with the prisoners, on condition that they head direct for St. Helena.

When that had been done he steered for Tumbez, for it appears that he and Captain Porter had agreed to go there when it was necessary to make a port.

Now our fleet consisted of nine sail, and it began to look as if we might take possession of every port in the Pacific Ocean, if we were so minded. The beauty of it was that all our ships and ammunition had come from the Britishers, which was surely an economical way of carrying on a war.

Even Phil and I were puffed up with pride because of what had been accomplished, and we crowed as loud as any man on the gun-deck when we went over and over again the "luck of the *Essex*."

We soon learned that the fleet was not yet to the captain's liking, and on the morning after the arrival of Mr. Downes our people set about making a change.

The *Atlantic*, which, as you will remember, we captured just before running for Tumbez, was an hundred tons larger than the *Georgiana*, and had shown herself to be a better sailer, as well as possessing superior qualifications for a

cruiser; therefore Mr. Downes and his crew were transferred to her. Twenty guns were mounted in this new sloop of war, and she was manned by sixty men. Her name was changed to *Essex Junior*, and a right trim little ship she was, I can assure you.

The *Greenwich* we made over into a store-ship, and all the spare stores of the other vessels were put into her. She was armed with twenty guns, but had no more of a crew than was absolutely necessary to work her; therefore we could not count that she would do much in the way of making prizes.

The carpenters were yet busily at work on the *Essex Junior* when we left port; but we had become accustomed to fitting at sea, therefore a little thing like that did not disturb the most nervous.

A brave show we made as we passed out of the harbor with the stars and stripes floating in the breeze, and I would have given half my share of prize money if the people at home could have seen us, and known how this squadron had been gotten together.

We were yet at sea on the Fourth of July, and then was held a Yankee celebration which must have astonished the mermaids. Every ship fired a salute, and, what pleased us most, did it with powder we had taken from the Britishers. We had plum duff till we could eat no more, to say nothing of roast pig, vegetables, and other such cabin stores as tickle the appetite.

Phil and I had by this time come to believe we were quite brave, and counted on the moment when in action we should do that which would cause Captain Porter to praise us from the quarter-deck in the presence of all the ship's company.

On the 9th of July the *Essex Junior* was in good sailing trim, and the fleet was hove to in order to part company with the new sloop of war. Our commander had decided to send the prizes, *Hector*, *Catherine*, *Policy*, and *Montezuma*, as well as the recaptured ship *Barclay*, into Valparaiso, and Commandant Downes was to take charge of the matter.

We parted company about noon, the frigate, with the *Greenwich* and *Georgiana*, remaining hove to until the *Essex Junior* and her convoy were hull down in the distance, after which we squared away for a cruise among the Gallipagos, so the marines who had stood guard in the cabin reported; but we knew that between where we then were and the islands in question was a good chance of taking more prizes, and, because of the "luck of the *Essex*," reckoned on adding to our list of captures before arriving at this new cruising ground.

We counted on having our average good fortune; but never dreamed, confident though we were, of the success which was so soon to be ours.

Four days after we parted company with our prizes and the *Essex Junior*, that is to say, on the 13th day of July, the lookouts sighted three sail off Banks's Bay, all on a wind, but a good deal separated.

Phil and I were no longer excited by such information. Both of us felt elated; but we had thus far captured everything which had been sighted, and when a sail was reported, we of the gun-deck at once reckoned her as a prize. Had we failed to take two or three craft during our cruise, then we would have been in suspense until the chase was ended; but so good had been our fortune that the worst grumblers among the crew began to find fault because the Britishers fell into our hands like over-ripe apples.

Our little fleet was in a bunch, hardly more than a quarter of a mile separating each craft, when the word was given that more ships had come up to be captured; and on this day we had an opportunity of learning how well the squadron could manoeuvre.

Captain Porter signalled that he would give chase to the ship in the middle of the line, which was farthest down to leeward, while the *Greenwich* and the *Georgiana* endeavored to cut off one of the others.

This race was different from others which had fallen to our lot, inasmuch as we were eager to know what was going on astern as well as ahead; and every man jack of us off duty gathered on the fore-castle-deck, confident that all three of the strangers would be taken, but curious as to how it might be done.

We of the frigate overhauled our portion of the chase rapidly; but the stranger was so far to leeward that we were forced to run a long distance from our consorts, and when the *Essex* was a couple of leagues off, those who were watching astern could see that one of the strangers which we had left for the *Georgiana* and the *Greenwich* to look after, had tacked, and was evidently manoeuvring to cut the *Georgiana* out.

Now had matters become interesting for a verity. Short-handed as our consorts were, there was a good chance that one would be captured while we were running to leeward, and I literally held my breath in suspense, expecting each moment to see the tiny wisp of red and white which we knew to be the stars and stripes, hauled down in response to the stranger's threats.

If any proof had been needed that Yankees were not inclined to surrender without a fight, we had it then, when we saw the *Greenwich* heave to, take a portion of the crew from the *Georgiana*, and bear boldly down on the enemy.

What a cheer went up from our men when this had been done! I was proud of my countrymen then, and could have hugged every old shellback on board the *Greenwich* with a good zest, had it been possible to get at them.

"I'll answer for it that our comrades hold those two Britishers in check until we can get back," Master Hackett said in a tone of satisfaction, and again we cheered until those on the ship we were overhauling so rapidly must have heard and wondered why we were making such a fuss about the capture of a whaler.

Well, we bore down on the chase hand over hand, and when we were so near that a shot might have been pitched into any part of her, the ship hove to without the slightest show of resistance.

Captain Porter hailed as the British colors were hauled down, and then we learned that this last prize was the English whaler *Charlton*, two hundred and seventy-four tons, with ten guns and twenty-one men.

Her officers were transferred to the *Essex*, a prize crew was thrown on board in a twinkling, and the frigate hauled her wind to take care of the others.

Captain Porter was so eager for information that he questioned the captain of the *Charlton* on the quarter-deck, and many of the gun-deck inquisitives heard the whole story.

By this means our commander learned that the largest of the ships we now counted on taking was the *Seringapatam*, three hundred and fifty-seven tons, carrying fourteen guns and forty men. It was this craft which had been manoeuvring to cut out the *Georgiana*, and unless we had been near at hand to lend assistance the job might have been done.

The other Britisher was the *New Zealander*, of two hundred and fifty-nine tons, eight guns, and twenty-three men.

The *Seringapatam* had been built for a cruiser, so our prisoners said, and was the most dangerous ship, so far as the American trade was concerned, of any craft west of Cape Horn.

There was not one of us who did not feel the most intense desire to capture this craft, and particularly to do so before she could work any serious damage to our consorts.

We could see that the *Greenwich* had already gone into action with the Britisher, and we cheered ourselves hoarse by way of encouragement to the brave fellows who had tackled a craft heavier than themselves, although there was not the slightest chance they would hear our cries.

Our ship, meaning the *Greenwich*, was manoeuvred beautifully; she poured in three broadsides before the enemy could get into position to fire one, and we were yet more than a league distant when the Britisher showed that she had had enough. As her colors came down we cheered and shouted like wild men, some of the old shellbacks dancing around the deck like apes who have suddenly gone mad; but before many minutes passed we saw that we had begun our rejoicings a trifle too early.

After giving token of surrender the captain of the *Seringapatam* evidently thought he yet had an opportunity to escape, for he slipped off to windward before a prize crew could be thrown on board.

We gazed in breathless suspense as the *Greenwich*, never stopping to pick up the crew in the two boats which had been lowered to take possession of the prize, crept up on the enemy's quarter and poured in such a fire as was most surprising, considering the number of men which were left on board.

The Britisher soon came to understand that we Yankees were too much for him, even though he outclassed us both as to metal and men, for he wore around and came down to us as meekly as any lamb.

Captain Porter lost no time in throwing a prize crew on board, after transshipping the officers, and away we went for the *New Zealander*, who was doing her feeble best to crawl out of the way; but succeeding very badly.

When we passed within half a mile of the *Greenwich* our crew lined the yards and gave her the heartiest of salutes, while Captain Porter winked at the performance when he should have reprimanded us severely for daring to do so without permission or orders.

The *New Zealander* was taken without opposition, and again we found ourselves with more prizes and prisoners than could conveniently be managed.

Before nightfall Captain Porter learned that the commander of the *Seringapatam* had taken one prize illegally, he having

no letter of marque; and since this was neither more nor less than piracy, the venturesome Britisher was put in irons to be sent home for trial.

Next morning the *Charlton's* guns, ammunition, small arms, and spare sails were taken out; all the prisoners were put on board, and she was allowed to make sail for Rio de Janeiro, every man jack being under parole to go to that port and none other.

Hardly had she filled away on her course than we set to work putting the *Seringapatam* into shape for our own use. The guns of the *New Zealander* were mounted in her, which brought up the number to twenty-two, but we could leave on board no more than a sufficient crew to work her.

Then orders were given that the oil which we had taken, and which was stored on the *Essex*, the *Greenwich*, and the *Georgiana*, should be put on board the latter ship, and she sent home.

Loading a ship in mid ocean with such heavy articles as casks of oil, is a slow and laborious task, as we soon learned. It was necessary to sling each hogshead into a boat, pull to the craft which was being loaded, and there hoist it inboard, working disadvantageously all the while because of the heavy swell.

It was not until the 24th day of July that the *Georgiana* was ready for the voyage to the United States, and then the captain of the *Seringapatam* had been sent on board as a prisoner to be closely guarded; but no crew selected to take charge of her.

On this evening our men, greasy and stained with their work of handling oil, were called amidships while Captain Porter stood on the break of the quarter.

All hands knew that we were now to learn who would sail in the *Georgiana*, and each man looked at his neighbor to know how he felt about going home while the most dangerous portion of the work yet remained to be done, which would be when the British men-of-war came around the Horn to wind up our career.

The captain began by reminding us that our term of service had nearly expired, and that a certain number must be sent home to work the *Georgiana*.

"I will give you all the same show," he said; "and if too many volunteer to make up the crew, we will take those whose time of enlistment is nearest at an end. You are to think it over this evening; try to settle the matter among yourselves; but if that can't be done, I will take a hand at it to-morrow morning."

With this we were dismissed, and once all hands were on the gun-deck, with the exception of those who remained above on watch, a most tremendous jawing was begun. Every man tried to speak at the same time, and the uproar was so great that no single word could be distinguished. I could not make out whether the men were excited lest they should not be able to go, or if there was a desire to remain.

Phil and I went into a corner by ourselves, where we could hear each other speak, and there I asked him what he thought about volunteering for the *Georgiana*.

"I count on staying here, if Captain Porter don't drive me out," he said emphatically, thus showing that his decision had been made before we came below. "You know, Ezra, that I don't amount to much when it comes to a show of bravery; but I'm not such a coward as to turn now, when the greatest danger is yet to be met."

I flung my arms around the dear fellow and kissed him on both cheeks. He had spoken that which was in my own heart, although I could not have put it in such proper words; and then it was decided between us that we would remain by the *Essex* so long as should be permitted us.

By the time we two had settled the question, Master Hackett had succeeded in quieting the wranglers sufficiently to make himself heard, and the old man proved to be quite a dandy at handling a meeting.

"Hold your jaw, you lubbers!" he shouted with such a volume of sound that he must have been heard distinctly by those on the quarter-deck. "The captain wants to know how many of us is achin' to get home before the Britishers send half a dozen frigates down here to blow us out of the water, an' he'll never get the information unless you settle down into peaceable sailormen. There's no use waggin' your chins over this thing; every man has a right to do what pleases him best, an' now he's got a fair chance. What I say is this: Let them as want to go aboard the *Georgiana* toddle to the port side, and them who count on holdin' by the old hooker, step over to starboard."

The men looked around curiously for an instant, and then every one of them moved to starboard, Phil and I among the rest.

There was a broad grin on Master Hackett's face when he cried with a semblance of anger:--

"This 'ere won't do at all. Some of us are bound to go, seein's how we can't let that cargo of oil run to waste. Of course *I'll* hold to the frigate; but them as have got wives an' children ashore ought 'er get over to port, an' we'll feel no shame for 'em, knowin' as we do that a crew must be made up for the *Georgiana*."

"It's none of your business how many wives or children we've got, Hiram Hackett!" one of the throng shouted. "It's as much our right as yours to stick to the frigate, an' we count on doin' it. Why not send the boys? They can do the work of sailormen aboard the *Georgiana*! Then you'll have two towards a crew."

"Come here, you skulkers!" Master Hackett roared, looking at Phil and me, and there was nothing for it but to step out from among the crew.

"Act as spokesman, Phil," I whispered. "You can go ahead of me when it comes to jawing; but remember that they can't drive us off unless the captain gives the word, and I'm thinking that my cousin Stephen will stand up for our rights."

"Are you two infants ready to obey orders an' go aboard the *Georgiana*?" Master Hackett asked, looking as fierce as if he counted on eating us.

"No, sir!" Phil shouted at the full strength of his lungs. "We've got as much right to stay as you have, an' we won't volunteer!"

"Three cheers for the infants!" some one shouted, and the men yelled until their throats were like to split.

Then the crew crowded around Master Hackett, each man trying to make himself heard, and I understood that there was little chance of finding a crew for the *Georgiana* if every one was to do as he pleased.

By this time the noise was so great that Lieutenant McKnight was sent below to learn whether or no a riot was in progress, and, luckily, I succeeded in gaining speech with him before the men knew he was on the gun-deck.

"Surely you will stand our friend in this matter, Cousin Stephen," I said, clutching him by the coat-sleeve without regard to the proprieties; for it is looked upon as insubordination for a common sailor to lay hold of an officer.

"In what way, Ezra? Are so many eager to see home again that you fear there'll be no room for you?"

"It's just the other way, sir," Phil broke in. "Not a man will volunteer, and some of them have said that we two lads must go whether we like it or not."

"It isn't right to force us because we are lads!" I cried. "We've done our duty so far as we knew, and our age shouldn't give license for injustice!"

"See here, my lads, you're not looking at this matter in the proper light. We shall soon be turning and twisting to get out of a British frigate's way, and many of us will lose the number of his mess before the *Essex* doubles Cape Horn again. You can go now without being called a coward, and it's far better to get out of the scrape while affairs are flourishing as they are at present."

"Are you going in the *Georgiana*, Cousin Stephen?" I asked.

"What? Me? Never, unless the captain gives a positive order to that effect."

"If you are allowed to remain, why should we be forced to go?"

He turned from me quickly, and, without making any attempt to restore order, went on deck.

The men jawed and argued more violently than ever after my cousin disappeared, and very soon the master-at-arms came below with an order for every man jack of us to show himself abaft the mainmast.

We found the captain waiting for us as before; and although there was very good reason why he should read the riot act because of the uproar, I understood by the expression on his face that he was well pleased the men had not shown a willingness to leave the frigate.

When all hands had quieted down once more he made a little speech in which he thanked us for being so eager to stay by the *Essex*, and declared that he felt proud of every old barnacle there; but at the same time it was absolutely necessary a crew be sent on board the *Georgiana*.

"Those men who have families must go," he said finally, after declaring that it had become necessary for him to settle the matter, since the crew themselves could not. "A list shall be made out of such as have others depending upon them,

and it will then be posted on the gun-deck. Abide by my decision as you ever have, and I will make it my solemn duty to let the people of the United States know that those who returned in the *Georgiana* did not do so of their own free will."

We were sent below once more, and Phil and I felt well content, for by the captain's ruling we could not be sent home in the oil-laden craft.



CHAPTER VII. AN ISLAND PORT.

The *Georgiana* left us next morning, carrying a sorrowful-looking crew, as can well be imagined, for every man jack of them felt as if he might be accused of cowardice in leaving the *Essex* at a time when there was good reason to expect she would meet with a superior force.

I fail to understand yet why it had come into the minds of all that we would never double Cape Horn in the old frigate. No one put such a belief into words, and yet I knew full well it was looked upon as a fact, because of certain remarks let drop now and then when was being discussed the question of seeing the friends at home.

It had really come to be the belief of us all, although carefully kept in the background, that the time must come when we would meet with such a force of Britishers as could put an end to the "luck of the *Essex*."

And it is little wonder that our crew, even counting the boys, should have considered it as inevitable that the dear old frigate would come to an end of her cruising before many months had passed, for we knew full well the English people must soon demand that we who had done so much mischief be put out of the way of working yet further damage.

Consider well what had been done, and then it may be seen that the British navy would speedily come after us with a heavy force. Here is the situation as it was defined by a member of the United States Navy, he looking at the matter a few weeks after the *Georgiana* had sailed, and we were in an island port refitting and overhauling the fleet:--

"The situation of the *Essex* was sufficiently remarkable, at this moment, to merit a brief notice. She had been the first American to carry the pennant of a man-of-war round the Cape of Good Hope, and now she had been the first to bring it into the distant ocean. More than ten thousand miles from home, without colonies, stations, or even a friendly port to repair to, short of stores, without a consort, and otherwise in possession of none of the required means of subsistence and efficiency, she had boldly steered into this distant region, where she had found all that she required, through her own activity; and having swept the seas of her enemies, she had now retired to these little-frequented islands to refit, with the security of a ship at home. It is due to the officer who so promptly adopted and so successfully executed this plan, to add, that his enterprise, self-reliance, and skill indicated a man of bold and masculine courage; qualities that are indispensable in forming a naval captain.

"In the way of service to the public, perhaps the greatest performed by the *Essex* was protecting American ships in the Pacific, nearly all of which would probably have fallen into the hands of the enemy but for her appearance in that ocean. But the positive injury done the English commerce was far from trifling. The *Essex* had now captured about four thousand tons of its shipping, made near four hundred prisoners, and for the moment had literally destroyed its fisheries in this part of the world. In October, 1812, she had sailed from America alone, with six months' provisions and the usual stores in her; and in October, 1813, she was lying, in perfect security, at an island in the Pacific, with a respectable consort, surrounded by prizes, and in possession of all the means that were necessary to render a frigate of her class efficient. Throughout the whole of these movements we see a constant tendency to distress the enemy, and to maintain the character of the ship as an active, well-organized, and high-toned man-of-war."

All this was written concerning us after we had made that island port which I shall describe later; but before entering it we were to see some service, and experience our first disappointment in the way of capturing every sail we sighted.

It was on the 25th day of July when the *Georgiana* left us, only to be recaptured, as we afterward learned to our sorrow, before gaining an American port.

We remained hove to until the oil-laden prize was hull down on the horizon, and then, with the *Essex* leading, our little squadron, consisting of the frigate, the *Greenwich*, *Seringapatam*, and *New Zealander*, trailing along in fine style, cruised here and there in search of another Britisher.

On the morning of the third day thereafter, while we lay becalmed, a strange sail was sighted carrying with her a fine breeze.

As a matter of course she soon ran out of our range of vision, but Captain Porter was not the kind of a commander to give up the hope of catching an enemy, once having clapped his eyes on her; and at sunset, when the wind sprang up again, signals were set for every ship to crowd on sail in pursuit of the Britisher, although by this time she had many leagues the start.

The "luck of the *Essex*" was with us yet, for next morning at sunrise the lookouts at the masthead sighted the stranger standing across our bow on a bowline.

By this time the breeze fined down again, and the dullest among us knew that unless we could get the frigate through the water at a better pace, our hope of taking another prize that day was at an end.

Captain Porter had a scheme of his own, however, and at once set about executing it, to the surprise and admiration of all our old shellbacks, even though it cost us considerable labor.

A three-cornered frame was knocked together by the carpenters, covered with canvas, and weighted by four-pound shot on one side. This was rigged to run from the spritsail-yard to an outrigger aft. It was dropped into the water forward, and then half the crew, trailing on to a small hawser made fast to the triangle as boys tie the string of a kite, hauled it quickly astern.

This, acting as a paddle, sent us ahead in fine style, and as soon as the contrivance was well aft, it would be hoisted out of the water, run forward, and dropped again.

The labor required to work such a machine was very great; but we made light of it on seeing that we were forging ahead faster than the stranger could sail, and, with the perspiration running in great streams down our bodies, we pulled and hauled with a will until, having come within about four miles of the ship, we counted on making a prize.

By this time it could be seen that she was a British whaler, and an uncommonly fine craft. What was more, we began to understand that she, unlike many we had already overhauled, did not intend that we should capture her without paying the piper for our dancing.

Her boats were got out to tow, and we could not work the canvas-paddle fast enough to hold our own in the way of speed.

The remainder of our fleet were hull down astern, therefore it was useless to expect assistance from them,—a fact which caused Master Hackett to say despairingly:—

"I allow, lads, that we've come to an end of the 'luck' for the time bein'. That 'ere craft will muster more men accordin' to her size than we can."

"Gettin' afraid, eh?" some one shouted scornfully; whereat Master Hackett replied with considerable show of spirit:—

"Not a bit of it, you lubber; but men count in the kind of a breeze we're tryin' to work up, an' towin' that ship with boats is child's play compared with what it would be to drag the *Essex* through the water."

I believed our men would begin squabbling among themselves, because of their disappointment in being thus prevented from taking a prize; but one of the lieutenants quickly put an end to the words by bawling out an order which showed us that the Britisher might not find towing a very profitable job.

The word was passed to lower the gig and one of the whale-boats, and our men cheered lustily while this was being done, for they had a fairly good idea of what the captain was counting on doing.

Lieutenant McKnight, my cousin Stephen, was announced as commander of the small expedition, and he began calling off the names of those whom he counted on taking with him, after word had been passed that each man, as he was thus chosen, should arm himself with a musket and plenty of powder and bullets.

Master Hackett was the first selected, and then followed name after name so rapidly that I soon understood Phil and I would be left out of the business unless something was done quickly.

Without waiting to consult my comrade, I walked across the deck, coughing loudly, and passing within a few feet of where the lieutenant was standing.

He looked up, smiled oddly, and then, after a show of hesitation called:—

"Ezra McKnight! Philip Robbins!"

"You're a beauty!" Phil whispered, as he ran past me on his way below to get the musket and ammunition, and my only regret at that moment was because I could not thank my cousin for the favor he had done us.

We two lads tumbled into the gig alongside Master Hackett, who asked gruffly:—

"What is the lieutenant thinkin' of to send a couple of infants out on a job like this?"

"Perhaps it would be a good idea for you to ask him; I don't care to take the chances of so doing, even though your curiosity is not satisfied," I said pertly. "If shooting is to be done, which seems reasonable after we've been ordered to arm ourselves, I reckon the 'infants' can do as much as some others who are older."

Master Hackett did not reply; but by the movements of his mouth I knew he was not so displeased but that he was trying to hide a smile.

Just then Stephen McKnight stepped aboard the gig, and as he did so Captain Porter cried over the rail:--

"Remember, McKnight, that you are not to make any effort at boarding, however tempting may be the opportunity. Get ahead of the chase and drive in her boats, after which you will return as soon as possible."

"I understand, sir," Stephen replied, and then came the order to "give way with a will."

Phil and I were not counted among the oarsmen, as I saw when the work was begun; but we did a trifle toward helping the good work along by pushing on Master Hackett's oar, and he made no effort to prevent us, even though we were "infants."

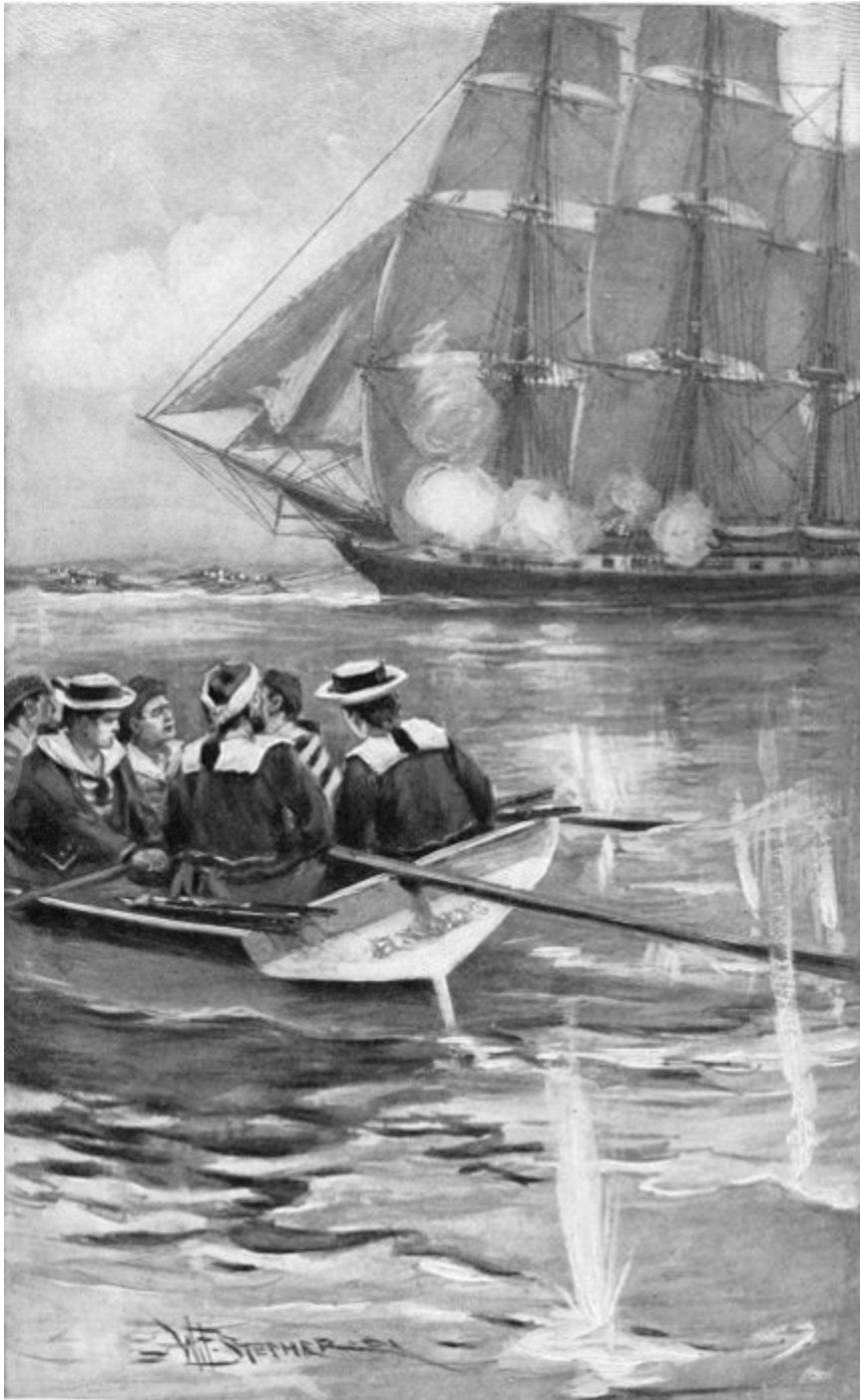
It would not have been good seamanship to go any nearer the enemy than was necessary, in the effort to get ahead of her, therefore we made a wide sweep around to port; and when we were opposite, not more than three hundred yards distant, her gunners let fly a couple of pieces which had been loaded with grape.

The whistling of the shot, which struck everywhere around us, sent the cold shivers up and down my back; but I pushed on Master Hackett's oar all the harder, keeping my eyes fixed straight ahead lest the old man should read in them more than I cared to have him know.

Phil started ever so slightly; but managed to hold himself firm after that, and each of us knew that the other was sorely afraid, although it is certain neither would have gone back had the opportunity presented itself.

We were treated to more grape, the biggest portion of which passed over our heads, and after that second volley I somehow forgot that I was frightened; but loaded my musket carefully, hoping the time would soon come when I could do a little to help balance the account.

Soon we were out of range of the grape, and then we ran across the ship's bow, every man loading and discharging his musket at the crew of the towing-boats as rapidly as possible.



**SOON WE WERE OUT OF REACH OF THE GRAPE, AND THEN WE RAN
ACROSS THE SHIP'S BOW.**

"They can't stand that kind of a game very long," Master Hackett said, as he wounded one of the Britishers in the foremost boat. "They've come out to pull an oar an' ain't in shape for a fight, so it don't stand to reason they'll hold their ground a great while."

The British oarsmen were already beginning to slacken their pace, and I looked astern to make out what our people counted on doing while we lay there preventing the work of towing.

The sight was one to warm the blood even of a coward. All our boats were out and being manned rapidly, and I had no need to ask what would be the next move.

"Ay, lad, the captain is goin' to board her," Master Hackett said quietly, when I called his attention to the frigate. "I counted the old man would be at that fun mighty soon after we'd got into position, an' the worst of it is that we don't have a hand in the scrimmage."

We soon learned to our sorrow that we had a scrimmage of our own which would occupy us in good shape so long as the towing-boats were kept out.

The Britishers had brought two guns on the fore-castle-deck, and began giving us our medicine just as the *Essex's* crew were pulling away from her side.

The first discharge did us no damage; but it was not difficult to guess that after the gunners once got our range we would suffer severely, and again I had hard work to prevent showing the white feather.

The grape came nearer and nearer, the gunners working the pieces faster than I had ever thought could be possible, and we kept peppering away at the men in the boats, firing so lively that soon they were driven in; but it had cost two of our fellows slight wounds.

The grapeshot would settle our business very speedily, I believed, unless our boarding party came along soon, and I looked anxiously astern.

The oars flashed in the water at the rate of forty strokes a minute, and our men were cheering lustily as they thought of adding another to the long list of prizes credited to the *Essex*.

Now the grape was coming with truer aim; two of our oars had been sheered off close to the rail, as neatly as if done by an axe, and it seemed certain some one of us would soon lose the number of his mess; yet, strange to say, I was not so terribly frightened as the situation warranted.

"The boarders will soon be goin' over the Britisher's rail, an' then comes the time for us to pull a little nearer," Master Hackett whispered to me, as if thinking I needed cheering. "Take aim at the gunners, an' it'll make you a heap easier in mind if you can knock one over."

I discharged my musket with careful aim, and then looked over my shoulder while reloading to ascertain whether the rest of our people were coming up.

The boats from the *Essex* were making rapid way over the water, the spray from their bows glittering in the sunlight like diamonds, and the enemy now turned his attention from us ahead to those who were so rapidly overhauling him from astern.

A full broadside was fired at the boarders, but the heavy shot passed over their heads without doing any damage, and we in advance added our shouts of joy to those of the boarding party.

The Britishers must have turned cowardly as they saw our men coming toward them without heed to their fire, and in another instant we were yelling at the full strength of our lungs, as the English flag was hauled down in token of surrender.

"The 'luck of the *Essex*' still holds good," Master Hackett cried gleefully. "Yonder ship will show well among our fleet, an' it's a pity we can't give her a crew of decent size."

The boats which we had been trying to drive in were now called alongside, and our people were coming hand over hand to take possession, when a breeze from the eastward sprang up like a squall, filling the sails of the prize in an instant.

Before I was well aware of what had happened the Britisher was hauled up close on the wind. Her colors were hoisted again, and off she went to the northward like a flash, leaving the boarding party astern as if their craft had been anchored.

Just for an instant I believed the enemy would succeed in running down those of us who were in the gig and whale-boat. She came up until we were close under her forefoot; but the helmsman could not bring her nearer, and we swept astern like a flash.

It was well for us that she came so close, otherwise we might have been knocked to flinders, for no less than six charges of grape were fired point-blank at our boats; but the missiles passed over our heads, and, instead of congratulating themselves upon the escape from instant death, the men grumbled long and loud because we had lost the first ship which by rights should have been made a prize.

"If that 'ere squall had held off five minutes longer, we'd have been in possession," Master Hackett said in a tone so sorrowful that one could well believe the tears were very near his eyelids.

To Phil and me it was most singular, this seeing one ship filling away with all the wind she needed, and another, our frigate, lying no more than four miles distant with not breeze enough to lift the vane at her masthead.

The only thing which prevented our men from having a desperate fit of the sulks was the belief that when the *Essex* did get the wind she would make chase; but as the hours wore on we understood that the Britisher was really lost to us, for this time at least.

It was near to nine o'clock in the evening before the last of our boats was hoisted inboard, and, owing to the darkness which hid the enemy from view, it was useless to think of making sail.

We laid hove to until our consorts came up, and then the fleet was kept jogging to and fro in the hope that when morning came the "luck of the *Essex*" would show us the Britisher.

We were doomed to disappointment, however, so far as this particular craft was concerned, for when day broke not a sail was to be seen.

Captain Porter did all a commander should do under the circumstances. During three days we cruised to the northward and eastward, and at the end of that time there was no longer any question, even in the minds of the most sanguine, but that the Britisher had given us the slip.

Once this unpleasant fact was impressed upon him beyond the shadow of a doubt, Captain Porter hauled away for James's Island, where we had good reason to believe more British whalers might be found.

Not a sail was to be seen in the little bay when we entered on the 4th day of August; but, believing the men would be the better for a short cruise ashore, our commander gave the word to anchor.

Next morning, before a single man had time to ask for liberty, it was reported by one of the gunners that a goodly portion of the powder which we had brought with us from the United States, had been damaged by water while we were doubling the Horn. But for the fact that this particular man was nosing around where he really had no business to be, the *Essex* might have gone into action only to discover, when it was too late, that she had nothing with which to fight.

"What will we do?" I asked of Master Hackett when our misfortune was known on the gun-deck. "We're not likely to come across ammunition in these waters, unless by taking more prizes; and it begins to appear as if we'd driven all the Britishers away."

"It ain't as bad as it might be, lad, although I allow it's rough enough. Accordin' to all accounts the *Seringapatam* has enough aboard, although when the *Essex* takes what she needs, it'll leave Lieutenant Downes well-nigh helpless."

It was a disaster so great, that not a man so much as thought of asking for shore leave, and on the gun-deck we gathered to discuss the sudden change of affairs until word was brought that one watch might land to enjoy themselves, at the same time that they took in a supply of wood and water.

After a short run on the island the men succeeded in putting from their minds all thoughts of the discovery made by the meddlesome gunner, believing that Captain Porter would succeed, no one knew how, in supplying the lack of powder.

During more than two weeks we lay at James's Island, bringing in supplies of pork, water, and wood, and during all that time not a single sail hove in sight.

Then came the word, on the evening of August 21, that the fleet would proceed to Banks's Bay, and next morning we were under way, making the run in thirty-six hours.

No sooner had the ship been brought to anchor than we understood how Captain Porter proposed to supply us with ammunition. It was reported, by one of the marines, as a matter of course, that the *Essex* would on the next morning make a short cruise by herself, leaving the prizes in the bay.

Our old shellbacks were perfectly satisfied on hearing this news. The only way in which more powder could be procured, was by taking it from the Britishers, and we had no doubt but that we should soon pick up an armed whaler who would be forced to supply us.

Well, to make a long story short, we cruised from the 24th of August until the 15th of September without seeing anything in the form of a sailing craft, and all hands were growing discouraged when, in the early morning, a ship was reported apparently lying to a long distance to the southward, and to windward.

There was no hope of coming up with her if we began the business boldly, for she had a big advantage of us in position; therefore our commander set about playing a trick which might bring the stranger into our hands with but little labor.

Our light yards were sent down, and the frigate otherwise disguised until she had much the look of a whaler. Then she

was slowly kept turning to windward, each moment drawing nearer the Britisher, for by this time we had settled in our minds that the stranger was one of the enemy's ships.

This trick worked to a charm, and by noon we were so near that it was possible to see that our intended prize was fast to a whale, which she was cutting in, at the same time drifting rapidly down on us.

An hour later we were no more than four miles apart, and then it was that the Britisher began to scent our trick. He had come to the conclusion that a big ship like ours, even though she might be a whaler, would not loaf around in that fashion unless for mischief; and once this idea was in his head the skipper cast off from his prize, making all sail to windward.

There was no longer any reason why we should keep the disguise. Our yards were hoisted once more, and with everything drawing we began the chase, each man of our crew watching the progress eagerly, for the capture of this ship meant something more than taking a prize. We could see that she was pierced with six ports on a side, and it was reasonable to suppose that on board was powder enough to provide us with as much as might be needed until another armed Britisher could be overhauled.

Not until four o'clock in the afternoon did we come near enough to pitch a few shots ahead and over her, when she hove to under our lee, and a mighty shout of mingled satisfaction and triumph went up from the crew.

This prize was the *Sir Andrew Hammond*, of three hundred and one tons, twelve guns, and thirty-one men.

And now comes the odd part of the capture: From the time our ship had brought her well in sight the men declared that she had a familiar look; and when finally she came to within half a mile of us, Master Hackett cried joyously:--

"We haven't outrun our luck, an' that's a fact! Yonder craft is the same we lost in the squall--the one that gave us such a long job with nothin' but a few broken oars to show for it!"

That the old seaman had spoken only the truth we all understood now it had been suggested; the ship lying under our lee was none other than the last we had chased and lost, but only to find again on this day when we were growing discouraged with much useless cruising.

The *Hammond* proved to be a rich prize for us just at that time, for she had on board a large supply of prime beef, pork, bread, wood, and water, and none of such stores would be wasted. The ammunition was in good condition, but not of such quantity as to satisfy us; however, half a loaf is better than none at all, and after taking the prisoners on board the *Essex*, leaving a small prize crew to handle the new addition to our fleet, we made sail for Banks's Bay.

We had hardly more than arrived there and overhauled the *Hammond*, than the *Essex Junior* came into port on her return from Valparaiso, where she had left the prizes to be sold.

She reported that five or six heavy frigates had been sent out from England to search for us, and, what seemed of more importance at the time, that the Chilian government was no longer as friendly to us as when we left port. The Britishers had most likely been threatening them.

"Well," Master Hackett said deliberately, when the news I have set down above was made known on the gun-deck, "if we had all the powder that our fleet needs, I reckon we could afford to wait for the Britishers, an', what's more, flog the whole boilin' of 'em when they come. But seein's how we ain't in condition for heavy work, it's bound to be a case of twistin' an' turnin' till we can clean up our job of capturin' whalers."

"What then, Master Hackett?" Phil asked.

"What then, lad? Why, I reckon we'll have to take our medicine like little men; an' in the swallowin' of it we'll know what British prison ships are like."

"Then you don't believe we can double the Horn without coming upon some of them?" I asked, my spine growing chilly for an instant.

"I'm allowin' that the old frigate will see her finish this side the cape, for it ain't good sense to believe she can fight her way through. I've said all along that the Britishers were bound to smash us some day, 'cause it don't stand to reason a nation what claims to rule the sea can afford to let a little craft like ours play hob with 'em in such fashion as we've been doin'. For the sake of their reputation they've got to gather us in."

It could plainly be seen that the majority of our crew held the same opinion as did Master Hackett, and yet I failed to discover anything which looked like fear. The men were satisfied that they had worked the game for all there was in it, and now believed the day to be near at hand when we'd be forced to haul down the stars and stripes, although I

venture to say that never one of them fancied it would be brought about in such a cowardly fashion as finally was the case.

The marines soon brought important news to us of the gun-deck. They reported that Captain Porter and his officers had decided to make port somewhere among the Marquesas, that group of islands in the Pacific concerning which so little was known at the time.

We were to search for some secluded harbor, so the marines declared, and there refit the fleet for the homeward bound voyage, which was to be begun at the earliest possible moment, in the faint hope that we might save the frigate from those who were coming in such force to capture her.

Two days afterward, when the stores from the *Sir Andrew Hammond* had been distributed among the vessels of the fleet, all the craft were ordered to get under way, and we set out to find a natural dockyard, for it must be remembered that ships cannot remain long at sea without gathering so much marine growth on their bottoms that the swiftest soon becomes a sluggish sailer.

It was to scrape the hulls, paint all the woodwork and put it in condition for that battle with the elements which awaited us off Cape Horn, if we succeeded in getting there, and otherwise make ready for whatever might be before us, that we set off in search of a hiding-place which should at the time serve as a dock for refitting our battered fleet.



CHAPTER VIII. NUKUHEVA.

We set sail from Banks's Bay October 2, in company with the *Essex Junior* and our prizes, but the latter were such slow sailers as compared with the frigate that we did not make the group of the Marquesas until the 23d, when we ran here and there seeking such a harbor as would admit of our performing the work the captain counted on doing.

Not until four days more had passed did we find that which seemed to suit us in every particular, and then the fleet came to anchor in a fine bay at the island of Nukuheva.

Now a word in regard to the spelling of the island's name. My cousin, Lieutenant McKnight, gave it as set down above; but I have since seen it written "Nooaheevah," and "Noukahiva," therefore the reader, if it so chances that any one ever reads what has cost me so much time to set down, may take his choice of the names. I believe, however, that it should be written Nukuheva, because my cousin, the lieutenant, told me so.

And now, before I relate anything concerning our visit to this island, which proved to be so full of adventure, I ask permission to copy here that which I read many years afterward, and this I do because it would be impossible otherwise to describe the beautiful place--the most beautiful I have ever seen.

That which follows was written by a sailor^[1] who spent many months on the island, and was fortunate in being able to describe in a most entertaining manner everything he saw, which is by long odds more than I can do.

"The cluster comprising the islands of Roohka, Ropo, and Nukuheva were altogether unknown to the world until the year 1791, when they were discovered by Captain Ingraham of Boston, nearly two centuries after the discovery of the adjacent islands by the agent of the Spanish viceroy.

"Nukuheva is the most important of these islands, being the only one at which ships are much in the habit of touching, and is celebrated as being the place where the adventurous Captain Porter refitted his ships during the late war between England and the United States, and whence he sallied out upon the large whaling fleet then sailing under the enemy's flag in the surrounding seas. This island is about twenty miles in length and nearly as many in breadth. It has three good harbors on its coast; the largest and best of which is called by the people living in its vicinity, 'Tyohee,' and by Captain Porter was denominated Massachusetts Bay. Among the adverse tribes dwelling about the shores of the other bays, and by all voyagers, it is generally known by the name bestowed upon the island itself--Nukuheva.

"In the bay of Nukuheva was the anchorage we desired to reach. We had perceived the loom of the mountains about sunset; so that after running all night with a very light breeze, we found ourselves close in with the island the next morning; but as the bay we sought lay on its farther side, we were obliged to sail some distance along the shore, catching, as we proceeded, short glimpses of blooming valleys, deep glens, waterfalls, and waving groves, hidden here and there by projecting and rocky headlands, every moment opening to the view some new and startling scene of beauty.

"Those who for the first time visit the South Seas, generally are surprised at the appearance of the islands when beheld from the sea. From the vague accounts we sometimes have of their beauty, many people are apt to picture to themselves enamelled and softly swelling plains, shaded over with delicious groves, and watered by purling brooks, and the entire country but little elevated above the surrounding ocean. The reality is very different; bold rock-bound coasts with the surf beating high against the lofty cliffs, and broken here and there into deep inlets which open to the view thickly wooded valleys separated by the spurs of mountains clothed with tufted grass, and sweeping down toward the sea from an elevated and furrowed interior, form the principal features of these islands.

"... As we slowly advanced up the bay, numerous canoes pushed off from the surrounding shores, and we were soon in the midst of quite a flotilla of them, their savage occupants struggling to get aboard of us, and jostling one another in their ineffectual attempts.

"Occasionally the projecting outriggers of their slight shallops, running foul of one another, would become entangled beneath the water, threatening to capsize the canoes, when a scene of confusion would ensue that baffles description. Such strange outcries and passionate gesticulations I never certainly heard or saw before. You would have thought the islanders were on the point of flying at one another's throats, whereas they were only amicably engaged in disentangling their boats.

"Scattered here and there among the canoes might be seen numbers of cocoanuts floating closely together in circular groups, and bobbing up and down with every wave. By some inexplicable means these cocoanuts were all steadily approaching toward the ship. As I leaned curiously over the side, endeavoring to solve their mysterious movements,

one mass far in advance of the rest attracted my attention. In its centre was something I could take for nothing less than a cocoanut, but which I certainly considered one of the most extraordinary specimens of the fruit I had ever seen. It kept twirling and dancing about among the rest in the most singular manner, and as it grew nearer I thought it bore a remarkable resemblance to the brown shaven skull of one of the savages. Presently it betrayed a pair of eyes, and soon I became aware that what I had supposed to have been one of the fruit was nothing else than the head of an Islander, who had adopted this singular method of bringing his produce to market. The cocoanuts were all attached to one another by strips of the husk, partly torn from the shell and rudely fashioned together. Their proprietor, inserting his head into the midst of them, impelled his necklace of cocoanuts through the water by striking out beneath the surface with his feet.

"... We had approached within a mile and a half, perhaps, of the foot of the bay, when some of the islanders, who by this time had managed to scramble aboard of us at the risk of swamping their canoes, directed our attention to a singular commotion in the water ahead of the vessel. At first I imagined it to be produced by a shoal of fish sporting on the surface, but our savage friends assured us that it was caused by a shoal of 'whinhenies' (young girls), who in this manner were coming off from the shore to welcome us. As they drew nearer, and I watched the rising and sinking of their forms, and beheld the uplifted right arm bearing above the water the girdle of tappa, and their long dark hair trailing behind them as they swam, I almost fancied they could be nothing else than so many mermaids--and very like mermaids they behaved too....

"The bay of Nukuheva in which we were then lying is an expanse of water not unlike in figure the space included within the limits of a horseshoe. It is, perhaps, nine miles in circumference. You approach it from the sea by a narrow entrance, flanked on either side by two small twin islets which soar conically to the height of some five hundred feet. From these the shore recedes on both hands, and describes a deep semicircle.

"From the verge of the water the land rises uniformly on all sides, with green and sloping acclivities, until from gentle rolling hillsides and moderate elevations it insensibly swells into lofty and majestic heights, whose blue outlines, ranged all around, close in the view. The beautiful aspect of the shore is heightened by deep and romantic glens, which come down to it at almost equal distances, all apparently radiating from a common centre, and the upper extremities of which are lost to the eye beneath the shadow of the mountains. Down each of these little valleys flows a clear stream, here and there assuming the form of a slender cascade, then stealing invisibly along until it bursts upon the sight again in larger and more noisy waterfalls, and at last demurely wanders along to the sea.

"The houses of the natives, constructed of the yellow bamboo, tastefully twisted together in a kind of wickerwork, and thatched with the long tapering leaves of the palmetto, are scattered irregularly along these valleys beneath the shady branches of the cocoanut tree.

"Nothing can exceed the imposing scenery of this bay. Viewed from our ship as she lay at anchor in the middle of the harbor, it presented the appearance of a vast natural amphitheatre in decay, and overgrown with vines, the deep glens that furrowed its sides appearing like enormous fissures caused by the ravages of time. Very often when lost in admiration of its beauty, I have experienced a pang of regret that a scene so enchanting should be hidden from the world in these remote seas, and seldom meet the eyes of devoted lovers of nature.

"Besides this bay the shores of the island are indented by several other extensive inlets, into which descend broad and verdant valleys. These are inhabited by as many different kinds of savages, who, although speaking kindred dialects of a common language, and having the same religion and laws, have from time immemorial waged hereditary warfare against each other. The intervening mountains, generally two or three thousand feet above the level of the sea, geographically define the territories of each of these hostile tribes who never cross them, save on some expedition of war or plunder. Immediately adjacent to Nukuheva, and only separated from it by the mountains seen from the harbor, lies the lovely valley of Happar, whose inmates cherish the most friendly relations with the inhabitants of Nukuheva. On the other side of Happar, and closely adjoining it, is the magnificent valley of the dreaded Typees, the unappeasable enemies of both these tribes.

"These celebrated warriors appear to inspire the other islanders with unspeakable terrors. Their very name is a frightful one; for the word 'Typee' in the Marquesan dialect signifies a lover of human flesh.

"It is rather singular that the title should have been bestowed upon them exclusively, inasmuch as the natives of all this group are irreclaimable cannibals. The name may, perhaps, have been given to denote the powerful ferocity of this clan, and to convey a special stigma along with it.

"These same Typees enjoy a prodigious notoriety all over the islands. The natives of Nukuheva would frequently recount in pantomime to our ship's company their terrible feats, and would show the marks of wounds they had received in desperate encounters with them. When ashore they would try to frighten us by pointing to one of their own

number, and calling him a 'Typee,' manifesting no little surprise that we did not take to our heels at so terrible an announcement. It was quite amusing, too, to see with what earnestness they disclaimed all cannibal propensities on their own part, while they denounced their enemies--the Typees--as inveterate gormandizers of human flesh....

"Although I was convinced that the inhabitants of our bay were as arrant cannibals as any of the other tribes on the island, still I could not but feel a particular and most unqualified repugnance to the aforesaid Typees. Even before visiting the Marquesas, I had heard from men who had touched at the group on former voyages, some revolting stories in connection with these savages; and fresh in my remembrance was the adventure of the master of the *Katherine*, who only a few months previous, imprudently venturing into this bay in an armed boat for the purpose of barter, was seized by the natives, carried back a little distance into their valley, and was only saved from a cruel death by the intervention of a young girl, who facilitated his escape by night along the beach to Nukuheva.

"I have heard too of an English vessel that many years ago, after a weary cruise, sought to enter the bay of Nukuheva, and arriving within two or three miles of the land, was met by a large canoe filled with natives, who offered to lead the way to the place of their destination. The captain, unacquainted with the localities of the island, joyfully acceded to the proposition--the canoe paddled on and the ship followed. She was soon conducted to a beautiful inlet, and dropped her anchor in its waters beneath the shadows of the lofty shore. That same night the perfidious Typees, who had thus inveigled her into their fatal bay, flocked aboard the doomed vessel by hundreds, and at a given signal murdered every soul on board."

After reading the description which I have copied word for word, it is possible to have a good idea concerning that harbor into which our fleet sailed, all hands knowing full well that here we might remain secure alike from the elements and Britishers, so long as it should please us to stay.

In addition, we were free from any fears regarding what the natives might attempt to do, partly owing to our strength, but chiefly because the first person to greet us was neither more nor less than a member of the American navy.

Fancy meeting a Yankee gentleman in this out-of-the-way place whose inhabitants were credited with being the most ferocious of cannibals, eager to devour anything in the way of human flesh that crossed their path!

The natives came out in boats to meet us exactly as is set down in that which I have copied; but all hands gave way to a canoe in which we saw one of our own countrymen.

He came over the side, spoke a few words with Lieutenant McKnight, who immediately treated him with the greatest consideration, and then introduced the stranger to our captain.

It can well be supposed that every man jack of our crew stood by in open-mouthed astonishment at seeing this white man come aboard as if he felt himself at home in the Marquesas group; but we were forced to remain in ignorance until that evening, when one of the marines unravelled the yarn which at first had seemed too strange to us.

Our visitor was Mr. John Maury, a midshipman of the navy, who, with three sailors, had been left in this harbor by the captain of an American merchantman, himself a lieutenant in the service, to gather sandalwood while the ship was gone to China. Now that he heard of the war for the first time, and believed his captain would not dare come to fetch him away, the midshipman proposed to Captain Porter that he and his companions join our frigate; a proposition which was quickly accepted. A little later that evening the three sailors came on board, and mighty good shipmates did they prove to be.

These last told us of the gun-deck that a fierce war was raging between the Typees over the mountains and the Happers who dwelt along the shore of the bay, and most likely it would be necessary for us to take part in it against the Typees if we counted on being allowed to remain unmolested while the repairs were being made to our ships.

This did not cause us very much uneasiness, however, and Master Hackett but echoed the thought in the minds of all when he said to the newcomers:--

"Seein's how we've driven the Britishers out of the Pacific Ocean, so to speak, I reckon it won't be any very hard job to wipe up the earth with a lot of niggers that ain't supposed to know the muzzle of a musket from the stock."

The new sailors made no reply to this rather bold remark, and I fancied from the expression on their faces that they did not believe we would find it very easy work to do the "wiping," even though the Typees were ignorant as to the use of a musket.

These jolly fellows also told us another yarn which caused some surprise, and led us to wonder whether we might not find more of our countrymen on the island.

According to the story which they had heard from the Happers, a small schooner had gone ashore further up the coast,

and at least one of her crew was yet living with the Typees, which went to prove, according to my way of thinking, that these natives were not quite the cannibals they had been represented; although Phil suggested that the man, too lean for good eating, was thus being kept until he had gathered fat enough for the roasting.

However, we gave but little heed to the story, because in the first place, none of our visitors had seen the man, and secondly, owing to the fact that the natives might easily have been mistaken.

Perhaps it would have been better for Phil and me had we paid more attention to the yarn and kept it well in mind.

Next morning when the captain and two of the lieutenants went on shore, Mr. Maury accompanied them. He, having learned the language, was to act as interpreter, which assistance, so all hands believed, would help us along in great shape.

It was owing to my cousin, Lieutenant McKnight, that Phil and I had an opportunity of seeing the landing, which was a rare sight, I assure you.

When the boat's crew was called away Stephen motioned for us two lads to take our places in the boat, and since each of us pulled an oar, it is doubtful if the captain knew that we were out of place.

The natives had been swimming around our ship since early daylight, passing up fruit and flowers until the gun-deck of the *Essex* had much the appearance of a country fair-ground; and now when the captain was rowed ashore they followed our boat, tossing and tumbling in the water like a lot of seals, or, perhaps, mermaids, though I'm not just certain how these last would act under the same circumstances.

Well, the natives gave Captain Porter a fine reception,—though perhaps they would have made him into a stew but for the fact that they were needing help in their war,—and, later in the day, we learned by way of the marines that our commander had agreed to do whatever he might to end the war.

As we were situated he couldn't have done less than agree to this, so our old sea lawyers declared after a tremendous lot of jawing; for unless the natives were willing to help us with the repairs and keep the peace, Nukuheva harbor was no place for us.

During the afternoon one watch from each ship was given shore leave, and every Happar who owned a house set out his best in the way of a feast for the frolicsome sailors.

We were given quarts and quarts of peoo-peoo, which looks exactly like thick flour paste and tastes like a nice stew, and in the eating of it we made fun enough for the natives to keep them laughing half a life-time. It seems, as we learned afterward, that the people stick their finger into the stuff, twist it around a bit, and manage to hook up a portion as large as a walnut; but there's considerable of a knack in that kind of work, as we soon learned to our cost.

Master Hackett, Phil, and I, the guests of an old native who was covered with tattooing till his body looked like a piece of calico, contrived to cover our hands and face with the sticky stuff; and if the old woman who appeared to be our host's wife had not swabbed us off with a mop, we would have been glued fast to whatever we touched.

We were also treated to the milk of young cocoanuts, which comes precious near being the best drink you ever tasted, and fruit of all kinds, which would have been received with more show of gratitude but for the fact that the gun-deck of the *Essex* was literally lumbered up with such stuff.

Describe what we saw and did that afternoon? It's beyond me entirely, and I must give over the attempt by saying that it was the queerest and quite the most enjoyable half day I ever spent. Of course we couldn't do any chinning with the natives; but we looked at them and laughed, and they looked at us laughing still harder, until we managed to get the same idea they probably did, that the whole boiling of us were firm friends forever.

I wish you could have seen those boys and girls swim! They were like so many ducks in the water, and spent the greater portion of their time, when there was no company at home, drifting around the bay with, so far as Phil and I could make out, no effort whatever to keep themselves afloat.

Next morning the other watch was given shore leave, and meanwhile our officers were making preparations for the war which must be fought before we could set about getting the fleet into trim for another rub with the Britishers.

There was more than one man on our gun-deck who began to believe, now there was no question but we should have a scrimmage ashore, that it was risky for our captain to take any part in the quarrel, and the argument they put forth was a good one, as even Master Hackett was forced to admit.

In the first place we were so few in numbers that not a single vessel in the fleet was fully manned, and there would be

no opportunity to enlist others to make up a crew. Every man killed or disabled would weaken our force just so much when we met the British ships of war, and such chances as these we had no right to take.

In the second place our jacksies understood nothing about fighting on land, particularly in such a wild country as we saw before us. The natives might not be overly well armed; but we knew for a fact that they possessed weapons of some kind and could use them to good advantage.

"How much show would an old shellback who must depend upon a cutlass or a boarding pike, stand against these black fellows in a bit of woods so thick that you couldn't swing a cat?" one of the men asked, and Master Hackett replied sharply:--

"We've muskets enough to arm all hands, an' I allow that you've got sense enough to pull the trigger after the piece has been loaded, eh?"

"I can do that much all right, matey; but what about the rest of it. While I'm mixed up with a lot of bushes tryin' to reload, how am I to keep the villains from comin' to close quarters where I'm outclassed?"

"If you're goin' to pick up sich imaginin's as that, I reckon you wouldn't be fit timber for a shore fight; but I'd hate to say I was a Yankee, an' didn't dare to stand up in front of these heathen."

"I'm willin' enough to stand up pervidin' I can find out what it all amounts to. We're mixin' in this 'ere row without gettin' any benefit from it."

"We shall have the use of the bay while we're refittin', an' won't stand in danger of bein' knocked over by a dirty heathen and a club."

"There's plenty of islands about here with bays as big as we need, an' no bloomin' war on hand," the old barnacle said in a surly tone, whereupon Master Hackett jumped upon him, so to speak:--

"How do you know that? Have you been knockin' 'round these seas so many years that you can call to mind every hole and corner? If three white men can live here a matter of ten months, as we know has been the case, why isn't it the choice island of the whole group for us?"

"I ain't kickin' about the island; it's the war that sticks in my crop."

"Let it stick there then," Master Hackett growled. "Send word aft that you've got a rush of light-colored blood to the head, an' ain't fit to be trusted ashore. I reckon the captain will let you off without makin' much of a fuss."

"See here, Hiram Hackett, you're too free with your tongue, an' that's no lie either. When I try to get out of a scrimmage, jest let me know, an' I'll make you a present of the best pair of black eyes you ever wore. I reckon a man can have his growl without it bein' told all over the ship that he's gettin' weak in the upper story, eh?"

This last remark brought the squabble to a close, and each man appeared to think that he had come off at the top of the heap, when, according to my idea, they ended in the same place they began.

Phil and I did a good bit of thinking and arguing over this new war in which we were to take part; but we were mighty careful not to speak of it where any sailorman might hear us, and in the meantime we watched and took part in the preparations.

On the third day after our arrival a crowd of Typees appeared on the crests of the mountains, brandishing spears and clubs as if they counted on killing and eating us in short order.

One of the marines told us of the gun-deck that Captain Porter had sent word to the Typees that he had force enough to take possession of the island, and if they didn't mind their eyes and keep peaceable, he'd settle the hash of the whole tribe before their chief could so much as say, scat! I didn't believe the yarn, however, for if all that Mr. Maury's sailormen had told us was true, where did the captain find a messenger to carry his threats?

Phil and I had supposed, from the preparations which were being made, and the talk we had heard, that we'd begin our share of the war before work was commenced on the vessels; but this we soon learned was a mistake.

The muskets, cutlasses, and ammunition had been taken out where we might get at them handily, I suppose, and the boats were fitted up with small 2-pounder guns, after which we were set to work on other duties.

Camps, made of spare sails, were set up in a grove a short distance from the shore, and the frigate pulled in where we might clean her bottom by diving, or, what was better still, hire the natives to do it.

Phil and I were detailed for shore duty, and we had a soft snap of it, since our only work was to help the cooks; and

while the men were setting up rigging, scraping spars, or slushing down the masts, we loafed in the cool grove, enjoying ourselves mightily.

We didn't see anything that looked like war, except once in a while when a crowd of Typees came out on the top of the mountain and shook their clubs at us; but all that was such harmless amusement for them, and did not interfere with us in the slightest, that we came to think of the promise to the natives as something already forgotten.

Now and again we would hear of the white man who was with the Typees, evidently enjoying himself, and more than one of our crew seemed to think it was the captain's duty to go in search of him; but nothing was done in that line, and meanwhile the work on the fleet was progressing in great shape.

All the ships had been cleaned of the marine growth which prevented them from sailing at their best speed, and on each a fair share of other work had been done.

Captain Porter had given out that the name of the bay was to be "Massachusetts" instead of Nukuheva; but otherwise than that, and the fact that we had grown fast friends with the natives, particularly the girls and young fellows, all was as when we first arrived.

Then came the day when we found that our commander meant all he promised, so far as taking a hand in the war was concerned.

The Typees, having danced and shaken their clubs without being disturbed, probably came to believe that we wouldn't attempt to do them any harm if they cut capers with the Happars, so they began operations by coming into the valley one dark night, tearing down houses, trampling over gardens, and killing bread-fruit trees.

The scoundrels did a big lot of mischief, and having grown bolder by action, even had the cheek to send a messenger to Captain Porter with the announcement that he was a coward who didn't dare come on the mountains.

Master Hackett was near by when the Typee boy arrived, and heard Mr. Maury translate the message. This is the old sailor's story:--

"The captain kept his face straight when the lad begun, and then Mr. Maury tried to back down from repeatin' all that was said; but our commander wouldn't have any such sneakin' as that. 'Repeat every word, sir!' he cried, an' the little midshipman went at it lookin' as if he counted on bein' kicked after it was finished. When all was said, the captain sent his message back, which was this: 'Tell him who sent you that I will be on the mountain before the sun has risen three times, an' then it will be seen which of us is the coward.' The boy went off, though some of the Happars claimed he ought 'er be killed jest for the sake of keepin' their hand in at such work; an' I reckon we'll know mighty soon what it's like to be standin' up against a lot of niggers with nothin' but a musket an' a cutlass to help out."

The island war was to be begun, and I felt very uncomfortable in the region of my spine, for there was good reason to believe I would soon succeed in proving myself an arrant coward.

FOOTNOTE:

[1] Herman Melville.

CHAPTER IX. AN OLD ENEMY.

Phil and I were not the only ones who felt disturbed in mind by the knowledge that within a few hours we should be waging war against the natives.

Many an old shellback shook his head ominously on hearing of the message sent by Captain Porter, and more than one predicted that the "luck of the *Essex*" would desert her immediately we began to "fool round on shore, sticking our noses into other people's business."

It was not for a couple of lads like Phil and me to criticise the movements of our commander, and yet we did venture to do so when certain there was no one within earshot to repeat our words where trouble might be brewed for us.

Thus far we had succeeded in carrying on the work of refitting, with no interruption whatsoever,--unless you might reckon it a disturbing influence to have a crowd of Typees on a hill-top two or three miles away shaking their clubs at us,--and, so far as any one could say, we might be able to continue at the task until it was finished.

At all events, so Phil argued, it would be wiser if we kept at work as long as possible, and knocked off to fight only when it was absolutely necessary to do so in order to save our lives or protect our property.

It was not reasonable to suppose that our sailormen would be able to make much of a fist at fighting amid the thickets and on the cliffs against those who had been accustomed all their lives to such work, even though ours might be superior weapons; and should we gain the victory, the cost might be greater than we could afford.

When a commander lacks a sufficient number of men to handle all the vessels of his fleet, it surely seems like taking a great risk to run the chance of having that number made less by the spears of an enemy, to vanquish whom can be no very great honor.

Thus Phil and I argued; but there was another phase of this war which struck us more keenly, although we did not talk about it very much. Suppose any of us should be taken prisoners! There appeared to be no question but that the natives were cannibals, and the idea of being cooked and eaten was something so horrible that we did not venture to so much as speak of it. The possible fact remained in our minds more clearly, perhaps, because we did not put the thoughts into words.

It did not afford any great relief to know that Master Hackett had very much the same mental trouble. After we three had done our share in bringing on shore a 6-pounder to be used in the battle on the mountain, and were lying in the grove taking a short rest, the old man said musingly, as if speaking to himself:--

"I don't reckon him as serves for the roast at one of these 'ere feasts knows very much about what's goin' on, seein's how he's dead an' baked; but it has always struck me that I'd rather have a grave in the ground, than inside one of these 'ere niggers."

"Do you suppose they eat all who are killed in battle?" Phil asked, his voice trembling perceptibly.

"It would come to that in the end, lad; though if the fight was a big one, I reckon some of them as were dead would have to be salted down."

"I wish we were to get under way to-morrow, instead of going out through that tangle of trees and vines to prove that Captain Porter is no coward," Phil said with a sigh.

"So do I, lad. I reckon we could refit our ships without doin' very much fightin', an' what little trouble might be necessary could be carried on here in the open, where we sailormen would have a fair show."

More than this Master Hackett did not say at the time, but from it I understood that he had come to look upon a battle with the Typees as something which might well be postponed until we had a larger crew.

I must say a word in favor of our commander's decision, otherwise it may be thought that he sent his men into danger without due cause.

In order to gain the assistance of those natives living near about the bay, he had been forced to promise the Happers that he would give the Typees a lesson such as they deserved; and now was come the time when that should be done, otherwise we might count on having trouble with those who had stood our friends.

While Master Hackett and we lads were taking our ease in the grove, a party of natives numbering two or three

hundred carried the 6-pounder to the summit of the nearest mountain, and from that moment until the expedition was really begun the Happar warriors continued to come in from their homes ready for battle until there were not less, so my cousin, Lieutenant McKnight, declared, than two thousand men stationed on or near the hill where was the gun, all in something approaching military order.

These soldiers were most imposing in appearance, even though they were heathen. The ordinary costume, now they were attired for battle, was much like this, and I have taken the description from a writer who, having lived two years among them, can well be considered as an authority:--

"The splendid, long, drooping tail-feathers of the tropical bird, thickly interspersed with the gaudy plumage of the cock, were disposed in an immense upright semicircle upon his head, their lower extremities being fixed in a crescent of guinea-beads which spanned the forehead. Around his neck were several enormous necklaces of boar's tusks, polished like ivory, and disposed in such a manner that the longest and largest were upon his capacious chest.

"Thrust forward through the large apertures in his ears were two small and finely shaped sperm-whale teeth, presenting their cavities in front, stuffed with freshly plucked leaves, and curiously wrought at the other end into strange little images and devices. The loins of the warrior were girt about with heavy folds of dark-colored tappa, hanging before and behind in clusters of braided tassels, while anklets and bracelets of curling human hair completed his unique costume. In his right hand he grasped a beautifully carved paddle spear, nearly fifteen feet in length, made of the bright koa wood, one end sharply pointed, and the other flattened like an oar blade.

"Hanging obliquely from his girdle by a loop of sinate, was a richly decorated pipe; the slender stem was colored with a red pigment, and round it, as well as the idol-bowl, fluttered little streamers of thinnest tappa. But that which was most-remarkable in the appearance of the splendid islander was the elaborate tattooing displayed on every noble limb. All imaginable lines and curves and figures were delineated over his whole body, and in their grotesque variety and infinite profusion I could only compare them to the crowded groupings of quaint patterns we sometimes see in costly pieces of lacework."

Now fancy that two thousand of these fierce-looking fellows were hanging around, while you knew that just over the mountain were seven or eight thousand more, and you will have some idea of how Phil and I felt when we knew that our little company of white people were to make, or help make war, understanding full well that the dead and those taken prisoners would serve as food for the living victors.

It was by no means a cheering prospect, view it from whatever standpoint you choose.

However, all troubles are greatest when looked at from a distance, and this was no exception to the rule.

On the morning of the second day, when Phil and I had worked ourselves into a regular perspiration of fear, the Happar army, with the exception of those on the mountain guarding the 6-pounder, were drawn up near the beach awaiting the coming of our men before proceeding to smoke out the Typees.

I listened in fear and trembling to hear the order for all hands to fall into line, and my surprise was as great as my relief, which is putting it very strong, when I learned that Captain Porter did not count on risking many of his men in an encounter.

Forty sailors and marines had already been told off, and Lieutenant Downes was placed in command, after which Mr. Maury was ordered to let the Happar leaders know that our force was ready.

Master Hackett was not among the number chosen, and although he had protested that we had no right to take part in this war, he appeared decidedly disgruntled because of being left behind.

"I see they've taken the younger sailors," he said to Phil and me as we watched the small body of white men, completely encircled by the fierce-looking savages, march off toward the mountain. "If the captain thinks that a crowd of boys will do the work of men, then I allow he's makin' the mistake of his life."

"After all that's been said against the war, you ought to be well satisfied that you're not called upon to take part," I said in surprise, whereat the old man turned upon me as if in anger.

"It makes no difference what I think, when a part of the crew are called out on an expedition like this. It's my right to go with 'em, an' perhaps Captain Porter will come to the conclusion, before this day is ended, that he's made a mistake in puttin' all his dependence on young fellows who haven't had experience enough to steady them!"

Neither Phil nor I were disposed to quarrel with that which enabled us to remain in a position of at least partial security, while the other poor fellows were perspiring and fuming as they made their way through the jungle on a six-mile tramp.

It would be no slight task to scale the mountains when the heat, even while one remained on the seashore, was most intense; and we could well fancy what the temperature must be amid the thicket.

Ten minutes after the rear-guard of the army had passed by our lounging-place, the entire force was hidden from view by the foliage, and we saw nothing more of them until two hours later, when the foremost of the gaudily bedecked warriors appeared on the naked mountain-side above the line of trees.

At such a distance they looked like ants, rather than human beings; and finding it impossible to distinguish our men from the savages, we ceased to strain our eyes, accounting it too much of an exertion while the heat was so great.

Mr. Maury had told us that the Typees had a strong fort on the summit of the second mountain, and it was probable the engagement, if one ensued, would be at such a distance from the shore that we could have no view of it whatsoever; therefore we set about our duties of waiting upon the cooks, well content with such menial offices as we thought of our shipmates in the forest.

Master Hackett found enough on board the *Essex* to occupy his time profitably, and half an hour after the army set forth, all hands of us on the shore of the bay were working as quietly as if there was no possibility a battle would be fought which might affect us most keenly.

Until dinner had been cooked and eaten we two lads found little opportunity for conversation with one another; but after the meal had come to an end, and those detailed for work upon the ships were at their tasks once more, our hour of idleness was come.

We were at liberty to do as we pleased until it was time to prepare supper, and Phil said, when I started for our old lounging-place, the grove:--

"With all the afternoon before us, why shouldn't we have a look at what's going on over yonder?" and he pointed toward the mountain summit.

"Do you mean that we, being clear of such danger because of our duties, shall voluntarily take part in a fight?" I asked in surprise.

"I'm not counting on having anything to do with one, save as spectator," he replied with a laugh. "Mr. Maury has said that the Typee fort is on the second summit, therefore our people have far to go before beginning their work. Now, it wouldn't be such a very hard task for us to climb to the top of this first mountain and there have a full view of all that's being done. A battle between savages must be something fine, and there are few lads who ever had such an opportunity as is ours if we choose to take advantage of it."

There was much of truth in what he said. The idea had not come into my head before, that I might, from some secure spot, see all that was being done, but now that it had been suggested I was decidedly in favor of the plan.

True, it would cost us severe labor to climb the mountain-side; but the descent would be easy, and surely we could well afford to spend some of our strength in order to witness such a sight as might at this moment be presented.

"I'm with you," was my reply as I rose quickly to my feet. "Shall we tell Master Hackett what we propose doing?"

"There's no real need of it, and it would cost us a good half hour's time to go out to the *Essex* and back. By hurrying up a bit now, we can be down here again before he has knocked off work."

"Come on!" I cried gleefully, and we ran forward, following the footsteps of the war party until we were come to some huge boulders about two miles from the shore, directly over which the trail seemed to lead.

"We can afford to go around such a barrier as that," I said lazily, as we came to a halt. "The savages, accustomed to such climbing, and in haste to get into position, most likely took the shortest cut."

Phil was of my opinion, and thus each of us proved himself to be a simple, for we should have realized that the Happers would take the best course, and if a pile of boulders might be avoided by a slight detour, they would not hesitate about making it.

We went on our own course, however, and after climbing for half an hour over the mossy slope which seemed slippery as glass, found the barrier still on the port side, with no indication of coming to an end.

"It can't make much difference to us," Phil said cheerily. "We're not bound for the Typee fort; but only ask for a place where we can see what is being done on the next mountain."

During fully half an hour more we climbed, and then, without warning, found ourselves in the midst of tall yellow weeds

growing together as thickly as they could stand, and as tough and stubborn as so much iron.

I tried to force them apart with my hands; but such an attempt was useless, and, half crouching, I brought my shoulder to bear against the yellow stalks, when I found it possible, by the exercise of all my strength, to move forward slowly.

We toiled on for thirty minutes more, expecting each instant to come to the end of the growth, and then Phil threw himself down exhausted.

The reeds closed in upon us as we advanced, and thus we were completely shut out from any breath of air which might be stirring. The heat was more intense than I had ever experienced, and it seemed almost impossible that I could continue the ascent ten minutes longer.

"We'd best put back, and try our luck over the boulders!" Phil said, panting so heavily that it was only with difficulty he could speak intelligently.

"We've fought our way through this stuff for an hour, and it will take us as long to go back," I said petulantly. "It stands to reason that we must come to an end of such work very soon, and we'd better push on, if only to find an easier way of descent."

Phil made no decided objection to this proposition, and after a short time of rest I led the way once more, straining my eyes in vain for some token that we were near the end of this most fatiguing journey.

On, on we pressed, I wishing most devoutly that I had never fallen in with Phil's scheme, and then, suddenly, the ironlike weeds became less dense. It was possible to make my way with far less exertion, and I shouted the joyful information to Phil, who I knew needed something to cheer him on.

"We're getting out where it will be possible to take our choice of paths!" I cried; "and if you're of the same opinion, we won't travel many miles farther for the sake of seeing a battle between the savages, but make our way back to the shore."

I had no more than thus spoken when there was a rustling of the stiff stalks just in front of me, and looking up quickly I saw the muzzle of a musket within three or four inches of my face.

While standing like a statue gazing at the metal tube, so much surprised that it was impossible to speak, a voice cried harshly:--

"Throw down your weapon, or I'll put a bullet through you."

"We haven't any weapons!" I cried; and a great simple I was for having given such information.

Then there came into my mind the thought that he who had shouted must be one of our men, because it was not probable there were any on the island besides them who spoke English, and I cried gleefully to Phil:--

"Come on, lad, we've run upon our sailors!"

Phil increased his pace as much as possible, and was just at my heels when I stepped out to find myself confronted by none other than the lad who, I had good reason for believing, was in prison at Valparaiso--Oliver Benson.

He stood there grinning, with musket at his shoulder, ready to fire at the first show of enmity from either of us.

Phil was quite as much astonished as I had been, when finally he came into view; but it was possible for him to speak, and he cried:--

"Where did you come from?"

"The last port I left was Valparaiso, where you and your friends spent so much time lodging me in jail. I'm stopping on this island just now with the natives who count on wiping your folks out of sight this afternoon, and I had an idea that you two young scoundrels might be picked up in the rear of the sailors, for I knew full well you wouldn't be found in front."

We stood gazing at him in speechless astonishment, and he, grinning as usual, seemed to enjoy our display of cowardice.

"Come up here one at a time and turn your pockets inside out."

"What's this for?" I asked; but at the same moment taking good care to obey promptly.

"I want to make certain you haven't any weapons."

"We're willing to give you our word as to that," Phil said promptly.

"I'd rather have better proof," the Britisher replied sharply; and in a very few seconds we convinced him of our defenceless condition.

While we were thus being overhauled, I asked myself bitterly how it chanced that we had been such idiots as to leave camp without so much as a knife between us; but could find no satisfactory answer to the question.

When he was convinced that we were really without weapons, Benson laid the musket carefully down at his feet and drew a huge clasp-knife, which he opened.

"Stand around here!" he commanded sharply, and, as a matter of course, we did as we were bidden.

Then the fellow drew from his pocket a small coil of ratline-stuff with which he proceeded to tie my left arm to Phil's right one in such a manner that we could not get at the knots with our free hands.

Now we were entirely in his power and he proceeded to get such satisfaction as was possible out of the capture.

"Look at me!" he said sharply. "Did you count that there wouldn't be a day of reckoning when you left me in jail?"

"We never thought anything about it," I replied, my anger causing me to appear bold. "You deserved punishment, and should be behind the bars this very moment."

"You evidently know very little about Chilian jails," he went on complacently. "Money will buy the freedom of any prisoner who is not accused of murder, and even such an one has been known to escape if he could show gold enough to convince the keepers. As soon as your miserable ships were out of the harbor, I quietly walked away one fine night, for I'd made enough selling Yankees to have a very respectable-sized hoard where no one could get at it but myself."

"But how did you chance to be on this island?" Phil asked, curiosity overcoming his fear.

"I took passage on a craft bound to the Galapagos on a trading voyage. We met heavy weather, and were cast away here. Four came ashore; but three have been roasted, and I'm living on the fat of the land, having shown the king of the Typees that I can be of more service to him alive than dead."

"Then you knew we were in Nukuheva Bay?" I stammered, so much surprised that I could not speak in proper fashion.

"Of course I did, and more than once I've crept near enough the shore to see you lads. I made up my mind that you would soon be where I could work off old scores, and began operations by advising the king to send that message to Captain Porter, knowing he'd come out. I believed you two sneaks would be with the war-party; but on finding you had hung back, like cowards, was on my way to learn where you were."

Having made such explanation Benson, who had been seated while we stood like culprits before him, leaned back in a more comfortable fashion, surveying us gloatingly.

"Well, what do you propose doing with us now that the plan has worked to your satisfaction?"

"I count on waiting here till your crew and the Happers have been thoroughly whipped, when I'll take you into the valley and see Typees roast you in proper fashion. I know how it's done, for I saw the three who came on shore with me slaughtered and cooked in fine style. My only trouble is, they'll cut your throats as if you were pigs, and that's too easy a death for those who did what they could to keep me in jail."

I had no doubt whatsoever but that the wretch would do exactly as he had said, and it is not surprising that I literally grew sick with terror.

Involuntarily I glanced at Phil. His face was pallid, and beadlike drops of perspiration stood on his forehead, telling of the fear in his heart.

It was reasonable to suppose that Benson was well acquainted with the paths from one mountain to the other, and could readily keep out of the way of the Happar army, whether it should be successful or beaten. There appeared to be no ray of hope for us; but I did my poor best to prevent the murderous Britisher from understanding what was in my heart.

Phil showed himself braver than was I, for instead of being forced to spend his time trying to keep himself from showing cowardice, he could afford to indulge in anger, and he cried, bold as if we were the masters instead of Benson:--

"It's a bad practice to crow very loudly before you've worked your will. We have more friends on this island than you

may claim; and if it so chances that you can turn us over to the cannibals, they will make you suffer."

"If the situation was different, my bantam, I'd admit that what you say might turn out true; but your people haven't any idea that Oliver Benson is anywhere except in the jail at Valparaiso, and will set it all down to the account of the Typees. I shouldn't cry very much if a few hundred of them were killed to pay for having eaten you."

After that we fell silent for a time, Benson eyeing us greedily, as if he had it in mind to learn what human flesh tasted like, and Phil and I trying in vain to devise some relief from our troubles.

There was no way out, as I speedily came to believe. This vindictive fellow could easily keep us hidden from the returning Happers, and that the Typees would welcome more captives we knew full well.

When perhaps fifteen minutes had passed and Benson gave no sign of leaving this hiding-place in the stiff weeds, Phil asked curtly:--

"How much longer do you count on staying here? There'll be no chance of seeing us roasted, unless you try a hand at the cooking, while we are hidden in this place."

"You shall have a chance to travel in due time, so don't grow impatient. I reckon on staying here until the battle is over, and then there won't be any risk, so far as I am concerned, in going across the valley."

Even as he spoke I fancied it was possible to hear faintly the report of muskets; but it might have been that my imagination played me a trick, because I was eager to hear such sounds close at hand.

We remained standing in front of Benson, while he lolled on the ground at his ease, until it seemed impossible to remain on my feet another second longer. The work of climbing up the mountain had brought us almost to the verge of exhaustion, which was forgotten for the time being in our fears, but now made itself felt more keenly than before.

Save for that of which I have already spoken, not a sound had been heard to give token that there were other human beings on the island, and I began to believe that neither Happers nor Typees were within many miles of us.

"Look here, Benson," I finally said, speaking as though he was in my power rather than I in his, "if you keep us standing here much longer it'll be a case of carrying us bodily to the roasting-place, for we've had more of a tramp this day than is really good for our bones."

"If you so much as move a finger, I'll shoot you like curs."

"Shoot and have done with it!" Phil cried boldly, scuffling his feet and waving his arm to provoke the fellow. "I allow that it's within your power to carry us where we'll be roasted and eaten, therefore the greatest favor you can do is to shoot now without further parley."

Having said this Phil threw himself on the ground, dragging me with him, and I could have kissed the lad for displaying so much spirit while I was acting the more cowardly part.

Benson did not shoot, and for two very good reasons: first, he wanted to carry us in as prisoners that he might gain credit for having captured two white fellows; and secondly, because he dared not discharge his musket, lest by so doing he bring down upon him a party of Happers, or, perhaps, some of our own men.

I believe that I would have welcomed death if it came in the guise of a musket ball, so positive did I feel that we should be delivered to the Typees within a certain length of time, when I had good cause for knowing what our fate would be; and I would have done anything within my power to provoke him into killing us quickly, even though I was usually so cowardly when death seemed near at hand.

Strange, and almost extravagant, as it may seem, Phil's eyes were closed in slumber within a very few minutes after he was stretched at full length upon the ground. The dear lad was so nearly exhausted after his long climb and the subsequent struggle with the stiff yellow weeds, that bodily fatigue caused him to forget the danger.

I, who was probably less weary, could not have lost myself in the unconsciousness of slumber even though my bed had been the most rest-inviting ever made. Death was standing very near to me at that time, and I believed the supreme moment must come before many hours had passed, for it was not probable we would be aided by those of our crew who had gone to fight the battles of the friendly Happers.

Then, after many moments, came a gleam of light into my mind. Benson's eyes were beginning to grow narrow; I saw his head droop on his bosom, and he roused up with a start, thus showing that slumber would be grateful to him. Then it was that a great hope looked in at my heart.

If he should be overcome by slumber, it was not impossible that Phil and I might be able to creep up on him so far as to gain possession of the musket; and once that weapon was in our hands, we would give the villain a most pressing invitation to go with us to where he could have a second interview with Captain Porter.

I watched him as a cat watches a mouse, literally holding my breath in suspense, and ready to take any chance, however desperate, when the opportunity should come.



CHAPTER X. AMONG THE TYPEES.

Then, when I was praying most fervently that sleep would overpower him, his head drooped lower and lower until I understood that the chains of slumber had bound him for a certain time at least.

It was most unfortunate that Phil was also asleep. I tugged gently at his arm, not daring to make any movement which would result in the slightest noise; but without arousing him. Had his eyes been open as wide as were mine, I venture to say that without a peradventure we might have succeeded in gaining our freedom.

As it was, however, it became necessary to awaken him, regardless of the possibility that Benson might take alarm, and I pressed my free hand over his mouth while I prodded him vigorously with my shoulder.

Even such a violent effort as this failed of its purpose until after three or four precious moments had elapsed, and then he stared up into my face inquiringly:--

Softly as possible I whispered in his ear:--

"Benson is asleep; by leaping upon him suddenly we should be able to get the upper hands, bound though we are."

Now he understood what I would have him do, and motioned that he was ready for any venture.

Together we worked our way toward the sleeping Britisher. It is not to be supposed that we two, fettered as we were, could move without making some noise; but yet we advanced with reasonable stillness until arriving within two feet of Benson.

It was my idea that we throw ourselves upon him, pinning the villain where he lay, with the chance that during the struggle one or the other of us lads might gain possession of the musket.

There was no time to decide upon any combined course of action, for it would have been in the highest degree dangerous had we attempted to carry on a whispered conversation just then.

We rose to our feet softly; but were hardly more than standing erect when Benson leaped up as if he had been watching from under his eyelids, and in a twinkling struck me down with the butt of his musket.

Phil would most likely have been treated to the same kind of a dose; but, as a matter of course, he fell when I did, or, rather, was dragged down by me, and the Britisher stood over us with a grin of satisfaction.

"Thought to get the best of me, eh?" he asked in a loud voice. "Do you two lads think I'm to be done up like a lamb?"

Then he began kicking us, helpless though we were, and I believed that more than one of our bones would be broken before he came to an end of such amusement.

We endured the punishment in silence, for it would have afforded him too much satisfaction had we cried aloud with pain, and not until he was wearied with the exertion did he cease.

"You're going into the valley of the Typees, my fine birds, kick against it as you may; and I shall see you roasted and eaten before eight and forty hours have passed!"

Phil was about to make an angry reply; but I prodded him with my shoulder as token that he remain silent, for it was giving this brute too much pleasure to bandy words with him.

Now that our attempt at escape had failed, there was no doubt in my mind but that what he said would come true, and I bent all my energies to appearing unconcerned; but fearing meanwhile that at the supreme moment I should give evidence of the cowardice in my heart.

Benson knew, of course, that he had fallen asleep, and most likely had no idea of how long a time he remained unconscious. He must have believed that the nap lasted quite a while, for now he began hurriedly, after having berated us to his heart's content, to look about with a view to continuing the journey.

He forced us to remain perfectly quiet, threatening to fell us with his musket if we made any noise, while he listened for some token of friend or foe.

No sound was heard; it seemed as if we, among all the inhabitants of the island, were the only ones upon the mountain.

"I reckon we'll move ahead," he said at length. "You two cubs are to march in front of me; and if you try to kick up any

bobbery, I'll put a stop to it by a blow over the head,--such as won't kill outright, but will give a good idea of what's to follow. Step out now, and don't dare to shout! It won't do you any good, and will cost a lot of trouble."

We obeyed; what else was there for us to do? My head was humming like a top from the effects of the blow he had already delivered, and I knew full well he would not hesitate to maltreat us in any way which came to his evil mind.

After we had marched straight ahead for half an hour over a trail which led first up and then down a stiff slope, we heard sounds of triumph and joyful songs from what appeared to be a large party three or four hundred yards to the left of us.

Benson stopped suddenly, listened an instant, and then a look of perplexity came over his face, the reason for which I could not so much as guess.

When the noise had died away in the distance, those who made it being apparently on their way to the bay, Benson ordered us forward once more; but he had lost his confident bearing, and seemed to be studying deeply over some vexing problem.

He continued in such mood until we arrived at what had evidently been at some time a flourishing village, but was now only a smoking ruin.

Phil and I glanced at each other in triumph. Now we understood why Benson was perplexed. He had recognized the shouts of triumph as coming from the Happers instead of the Typees, and began to believe his friends had lost the battle. Until that moment he was confident the Typees could vanquish any force sent against them, and that the fact had thus been disproved, probably worried him.

I was at a loss to understand whether this might work to our benefit or injury; but for the time being it pleased me that Benson was not getting along as swimmingly as he fancied when we first ran so unluckily upon him.

The Britisher stood facing the ruins for an instant as if at a loss to know what course to pursue, and then he bade us march ahead of him up a narrow path which led to the right through a dense thicket.

We travelled at a smart pace for fifteen or twenty minutes, and then we came to a dwelling, unoccupied, which Benson entered without hesitation and with evident relief of mind.

This same house has been described by another, and I can do no better than give his exact words in picturing it:--

"About midway up the ascent of a rather abrupt rise of ground waving with richest verdure, a number of large stones were laid in successive courses to the height of nearly eight feet, and disposed in such a manner that their level surface corresponded in shape with the habitation which was perched upon it.

"A narrow space, however, was reserved in front of the dwelling, upon the summit of this pile of stones (called by the natives a 'pi-pi'), which, being enclosed by a little picket of canes gave it somewhat the appearance of a veranda.

"The frame of the house was constructed of large bamboos planted uprightly, and secured together at intervals by transverse stalks of the light wood of the hibiscus, lashed with thongs of bark. The rear of the tenement--built up with successive ranges of cocoanut boughs bound one upon another, with their leaflets cunningly woven together--inclined a little from the vertical, and extended from the extreme edge of the 'pi-pi' to about twenty feet from its surface; whence the shelving roof--thatched with the long, tapering leaves of the palmetto--sloped steeply off to within about five feet of the floor; leaving the eaves drooping with tassel-like appendages from the front of the habitation.

"This dwelling was constructed of light and elegant canes, in a kind of open screen-work, tastefully adorned with bindings of variegated sinate, which served to hold together its various parts. The sides of the house were similarly built; thus presenting three-quarters for the circulation of the air, while the whole was impervious to the rain.

"In length this picturesque building was perhaps twelve yards, while in breadth it could not have exceeded as many feet.

"Stooping a little, you passed through a narrow aperture in its front; and facing you on entering lay two long, perfectly straight, and well polished trunks of the cocoanut tree, extending the full length of the dwelling, one of them placed closely against the rear, and the other lying parallel with it some two yards distant, the interval between them being spread with a multitude of gayly worked mats, nearly all of a different pattern. This space formed the common couch and lounging place of the natives, answering the purpose of a divan in Oriental countries. Here they would slumber through the hours of the night and recline luxuriously during the greater part of the day. The remainder of the floor presented only the cool, shining surfaces of the large stones of which the 'pi-pi' was composed.

"From the ridge-pole of the house hung suspended a number of large packages enveloped in coarse tappa; some of which contained festival dresses and various other matters of the wardrobe held in high estimation. These were easily accessible by means of a line which, passing over the ridge-pole, had one end attached to a bundle, while with the other, which led to the side of the dwelling and was there secured, the package could be lowered or elevated at pleasure.

"Against the farther wall of the house were arranged in tasteful figures a variety of spears and javelins and other implements of savage warfare. Outside of the habitation, and built upon the piazza-like area in its front, was a little shed used as a sort of larder or pantry, and in which were stored various articles of domestic use and convenience. A few yards from the 'pi-pi' was a large shed built of cocoanut boughs, where the process of preparing the peoo-peoo' was carried on and all culinary operations attended to."

Such is a good picture of the dwelling which Benson entered, we walking ahead according to his orders; and here he appeared to be perfectly at home.

I fancied that he was somewhat surprised because there was no one to greet him; but he made himself comfortable by lying stretched out on the divan at full length, while we two lads were ordered to make a resting-place of the stone floor.

My first glance fell upon the collection of weapons, and I must have been eying it eagerly, for the Britisher said threateningly:--

"Thinking that if you could get hold of them I might have the worst of it, eh? Well, don't you dare so much as move, else I'll knock in the whole top of your head!"

To this threat we made no reply, for it was useless to bandy words with the fellow, who held us securely in his power. We were so weary that even the smooth side of a stone seemed rest-inviting, and, despite our danger, enjoyed this being able to stretch out at full length on our backs.

At that moment, sore in both body and mind, I would have welcomed the assurance that we were to remain here undisturbed until another morning had come. But it seemed as if we had no more than settled ourselves down as well as the rope on our arms would permit, than the head of a native appeared from around the corner of the building; and after satisfying himself that there were no enemies to be feared, the owner of the head entered, followed by no less than ten men, all of whom appeared to have been having a rough-and-tumble fight.

Benson, without troubling himself to rise, said something to the leader in the party; and because he pointed at us from time to time, both Phil and I believed he was giving an account of our capture.

I was literally shaking with fear, fancying we would immediately be taken out and eaten; but, greatly to my surprise, all the men seemed to be angry with Benson.

He talked to them sharply for an instant, and was replied to in such fashion that I understood the villain was alarmed, for he arose with a certain degree of humility, and began making a long speech.

Before this was ended a large crowd came in, filling the building to its utmost capacity, and Phil whispered to me:--

"It seems as if every man, woman, and boy had some cause for complaint against the Britisher, and there's no question but that he's feeling uncomfortable in mind. I wonder why they don't set about roasting us?"

"I reckon Benson has done something they don't like, and he'll be hauled over the coals before anything is done with us," and as I spoke a faint hope sprang up in my heart, although I could not understand that there was any reason for it.

The Britisher talked for more than ten minutes, the Typees listening to him most intently; but no sooner had he come to an end than the man who entered first--he to whom I believed the dwelling belonged--began to question Benson angrily, and before he was come to an end every man present was speaking.

Then, when the uproar was greatest, one of the party cut the bonds which bound Phil and me, indicating by gestures that we were to recline on the couch just vacated by the Britisher.

This was indeed a startling reception, as compared with what we had anticipated, and our surprise amounted almost to bewilderment when another of the party brought us a young cocoanut with the top removed that we might drink the milk, while a third and fourth offered fruit which they laid before us on the divan.

While we were thus being treated as honored guests, the majority of the party were evidently scolding Benson with

many a menacing gesture.

"He's got himself into trouble somehow," Phil said with a chuckle of content, "and we seem to be getting the best of this party. Talk about your cannibals! Why, these people couldn't treat us any better if they were missionaries!"

Presently Benson seemed to have lost his temper, and, after loud words, attempted to stalk out of the building with his musket under his arm.

Before one would have had time to wink, the Britisher was lying on the stones of the pi-pi, and the chief man of the party was in possession of the gun.

It was a most startling transformation, and Benson appeared quite as surprised as Phil and I; but instead of showing fight he rose to a sitting posture, where he remained as meek as any lamb, evidently satisfied that it would not be well for him to make further move toward leaving the building.

With the Britisher thus disposed of, there was a tremendous lot of jawing done by the men, and at short intervals other parties came up, the greater number looking as if they had been running, until it seemed as if we had near us the entire population of the town which had been destroyed.

Puzzle our brains as we might, Phil and I were wholly at a loss to understand the meaning of what was going on around us; but were perfectly satisfied with the position of affairs so far as we were concerned.

But for the knowledge that Benson was treated so roughly, I should have thought that we were being fed up in order to get us in a better condition for roasting; but it had been shown that he was in disgrace, and no one could have mistaken the fact that they wished us to look upon them as our very friendly hosts.

Finally there was a great commotion outside and an old man appeared, showing by his manner as well as his costume that he was higher in authority than any of those around him.

The owner of the dwelling now began to tell him about our having been taken prisoners, as we could understand from the gestures; and when the story was come to an end, some order was given the Britisher, who came to his feet all standing.

The chief man--he may have been the king, for all I know--seemed to be giving Benson a severe rating; and when he had come to an end, our enemy approached us so sweetly that butter wouldn't have melted in his mouth. It was difficult then to realize that he was the same villain who had promised we should be roasted and eaten.

"You lads are to be taken to Nukuheva Bay, if you feel able to walk so far before resting," he said without raising his eyes.

"Nukuheva Bay!" I repeated in astonishment. "Do you mean that the Typees no longer intend to serve us up as a roast?" and a glimmer of the truth now flashed across my mind.

"The Typees are your friends."

"Then how does it happen you reckoned so confidently on our being killed?" I asked, grown bolder now the danger appeared to be over.

"The Yankees have beaten them in the battle which was fought this forenoon, and you are to be sent back as a peace offering," Benson said meekly; but it must have cost him an effort to admit the truth of the matter.

"And what about you?" Phil asked curiously.

"I am in more danger than since the first hour after being cast ashore, when my companions were being killed. If the battle had gone in the Typees' favor, then I should have been praised for bringing you in; but now they make a scapegoat of me, and I stand a good chance of being roasted myself before this scrape is over."

The fellow really believed what he said, and I could not keep down a feeling of pity for him; but Phil was less soft-hearted, and said quickly:--

"I think it will be a very nice ending, Master Benson. When you have satisfied the hunger of these natives, you will probably have done the first really good deed of your life. Besides, it will save you from being hanged."

That Benson was thoroughly cowed and terrified could be told from the fact that he made no reply to this cruel speech, and my pity for him increased, although it is doubtful if I would have saved him had it been in my power, unless I knew for a certainty that he would be sent immediately to a prison from which he could not escape.

The Britisher stood before us silently until one of the men prodded him with a sharp point of a knife, and he asked humbly:--

"Are you ready to go back to Nukuheva Bay now, or would you like to rest a while longer?"

"We'll go now," I replied quickly, thinking it wisest to take the Typees while they were in the humor, lest they should suddenly come to believe that more might be gained by holding us prisoners; and Phil nodded his head to show that he was quite in my way of thinking.

No sooner had Benson repeated the words than two men stepped forward, and the Britisher explained that they would act as our guides during the journey.

"Won't you do good for evil by telling Captain Porter that a white man is here in great danger of being killed?" he asked piteously. "Whatever your commander asks now will be granted; and if he sends back such request by those who conduct you, I shall be saved."

"You would be brought to Nukuheva Bay, and once there our captain would make you close prisoner."

"I care not what he does, so that I am saved from these cannibals."

"An hour ago they were your very good friends; but now you are howling to be taken from them," Phil suggested.

"They were my friends, and would be now but for the fact that I advised them to make war against the Yankees and the Happers, assuring them they would whip the whole boiling in a twinkling."

"And now, after trying not only to have us killed, but to bring about the death of all hands, you coax us to save your miserable life!" Phil cried angrily, whereat half a dozen pairs of hands were stretched out, pulling the Britisher violently backward until he fell with a thud on the stones of the pi-pi.

Phil and I rose to our feet, although feeling mighty sore in the joints, and the throng separated in a friendly fashion to give us passage.

As we walked out of the building Benson cried piteously on us to do what we could to persuade the captain into demanding his release; and the last sound we heard on leaving the dwelling where we had fully expected to meet death in a most horrible form, was his prayers that we would be merciful.

The whole change in affairs was rather perplexing, despite the brief explanation made by Benson; but at the time we gave very little heed to our ignorance, because of the fact that we were comparatively free once more.

If I have set down but few words concerning our feelings while we were prisoners, and afterward when walking rapidly toward Nukuheva Bay, it is because I cannot even make a beginning at describing our condition of mind. To be at one moment the most miserable of human beings, and in another freed from all troubles, is such a wonderful change that words fail of picturing it.

The Typees who conducted us were not disposed to delay on the journey, although again and again they asked by gestures if we would like to rest a while, and to each of these questions in turn we shook our heads most decidedly. I had no desire for rest, wearied though I was, when a couple of cannibals were to stand watch over us. The sooner I was out of such company the better pleased should I be.

There is no reason for making an overly long story of our tramp across the mountains, for it would be repeating over and over an account of our great fatigue--fatigue which could not have been borne, I believe, under less dangerous circumstances.

Not until late in the evening did we come within hailing distance of the Happar village near the shore of the bay, and then our guides told us by gestures that we must lead the way. They evidently did not care to take the chances of advancing boldly into the settlement while all hands were celebrating the victory which had been won that day.

Neither Phil nor I felt any too secure about suddenly appearing before the Happers, and instead of entering the village, we stood on the outskirts shouting "*Essex* ahoy!" at the full strength of our lungs.

More than fifteen minutes was spent in this effort to summon our shipmates before the cries were answered, and then who should suddenly appear before us but Master Hackett!

I fancied he would greet us affectionately after all the dangers we had encountered; but in this I was mistaken.

"Well, have you two infants got enough of skylarkin'?" he asked in a severe tone, and Phil cried:--

"Skylarking! If you have any idea we've been enjoying ourselves, it would please me well for you to have a turn at such fun."

"Don't wag your tongues about nothin'; but tell me where you've been, an' what you count on doin' with them niggers."

We made a short story of our adventures, for we were so nearly exhausted that it seemed impossible we could remain on our feet another moment; but the time had not yet come when we might indulge in rest.

"You're to go aboard that the captain may speak with you, an' I reckon them two fellers had better keep close behind."

"Can't we speak with the captain in the morning?" I asked, hoping to be allowed a long trick below in my hammock.

"Not a bit of it. After givin' us all to understand that you'd come to grief, an' bein' the means of havin' half a dozen men trampin' over these bloomin' mountains in search of you, the least to be done is to make a report in proper shape."

Without further protest we followed the old sailor, our Typee guards keeping close behind us, and as we walked toward the shore I asked Master Hackett for an account of the day's doings.

"There ain't much of a yarn to it," he replied laughingly. "Our men did the most of the business, an' might have worked the traverse alone, accordin' to all accounts. They marched over the mountains, drivin' the Typees before 'em, until comin' to a kind of fort, where it's said no less than four thousand of the niggers made a stand. Then the Yankees an' the 6-pounder got in their work. It wasn't any great shakes of a battle, 'cause it was so soon over. We drove 'em right an' left, an' wound up the business by pullin' the fort apart. I reckon all the natives on this 'ere island think we're the toughest fighters they ever struck. Our people came in about three o'clock, an' since then we've had visits from this gang an' that, all claimin' to be our best friends. When them as have been sent out to search for you get back, they'll be feelin' sore 'cause a couple of worthless infants have caused 'em so much hard labor."

Then it was that I thought of Benson's prayers and entreaties until my heart grew soft, and I asked Master Hackett if he believed the captain would do anything toward saving his worthless life.

"I allow he will, lad, though it seems like a waste of good breath to spend it talkin' about him. Even though we are at war with the Britishers, we can't let one of 'em be roasted an' ate up like a pig; but I'll guarantee the captain will keep the brute carefully caged till we can put him into a stronger prison than is to be found in Chili."

"And you believe we should say anything about it to Captain Porter, after Benson did his best to have us roasted and eaten?" Phil asked sharply.

"I do for a fact, lad. Just at present you're hot against him; but in a month from now you'd be eatin' your heart out if you'd held your tongue when he might 'er been saved."

We ceased talking of Benson after this, and Master Hackett regaled us with stories of the battle which he had got from those of our people who took part in it, until we were on board the ship in Captain Porter's cabin.

"Tell me all you have done and seen this day," the captain said when Master Hackett, with many a flourish and tug at his hair, reported having found us and our guides.

We obeyed the command, he interrupting us with questions from time to time, and then Mr. Maury was summoned that he might act as interpreter for the Typees.

This ended the interview so far as we were concerned, for Master Hackett dragged us backward out of the cabin, leaving the two savages looking around very suspiciously.

We had repeated Benson's request, and stated as our belief that he would speedily be killed and eaten unless a demand was made that he be brought on board the ship; but to all this the captain gave no reply, and we left the cabin uncertain as to whether the Britisher would be rescued, or left to take the punishment he had brought upon himself through trying to do the Yankees a mischief.

"Why didn't you let us stay and hear what was said?" Phil asked angrily of Master Hackett when we were outside.

"Because he'd got through with you. Are you thinkin' a couple of troublesome infants like you can loiter around in the after cabin at your own sweet will?"

"We might at least have stayed until Captain Porter told us to go," Phil retorted in an injured tone.

"That's exactly what he did do when he nodded to me. It was jest the same as if he'd said, 'Take 'em away,' an' I did it to save you from a wiggin' such as our captain can give a man with more vim than I ever heard put into it by any one

else."

I was not quite certain that Master Hackett had received such a signal; but it was too late now to repair the mischief, and we went below ready for our hammocks, as you can well believe.

Never before had I even fancied that a sailor's bed was soft; but on this night I had been inside of it no more than two minutes before I was snoring like a top.



CHAPTER XI. A NAVAL STATION.

Next morning at sunrise Phil and I were routed out by the cry of "All hands ahoy!" and if we had expected to be received with open arms and by our shipmates' congratulations on a narrow escape from death, we would have been most wofully mistaken.

Many of the crew, including those who had been forced to roam over the mountains in search of us, believed we should be brought up for punishment because of having left the encampment during hostilities without orders or permission; and those who held to it that there was no reason, in the absence of orders to the contrary, why we were not allowed to move around at will, blamed us severely for being such fools as to run blindly into the arms of an enemy.

Thus it was that, in one way or another, we had earned a reproof from all our comrades; and it was administered by their silence or severe looks when we made our appearance believing a warm reception awaited us.

Even Master Hackett glanced at us reproachfully for a time; but he grew more friendly as the forenoon wore on, and then we ventured to ask if he knew what Captain Porter had done in regard to Benson's appeal for aid.

"The two natives stayed aboard all night, an' were set ashore less than half an hour before you turned out. Of course I don't know what orders our captain gave them; but I'll wager a doughnut against a dollar that they'll be here again, bringin' the Britisher with 'em, if it so be he's yet alive, before sunset."

"What will the men say to being thus careful of a man who admits having made a business of trapping Yankee sailors in order that he may sell them like so many slaves?" Phil asked indignantly.

"I ain't overly certain as to what they'll say; but you can set it down as a fact that never a mother's son of 'em will so much as open his mouth where there's a chance his words may be repeated aft. Captain Porter ain't the kind of a seaman that a crew can afford to monkey with. He'll do as he believes right, no matter what them as sail under him may say."

This conversation was interrupted by a command which surprised even the oldest shellbacks among us.

Word was passed that a party of forty men were to take four 6-pounders from the *Greenwich*, and put them in position on a small hill overlooking the harbor and our encampment ashore.

Another force was called off to carry empty water-casks to the same place, and Master Hackett muttered sufficiently loud for me to hear the words:--

"I reckon we're to make a naval station of this 'ere island; an' if it so be we show our heels to the Britishers who've been sent out to sink us, this will be a likely property to hold in the name of the United States."

Phil and I knew full well that we had no right to linger on board the *Essex*, for we had been assigned to duty ashore; and, therefore, while the working parties I have spoken of were being made up, we clambered into the first boat that put off for the land.

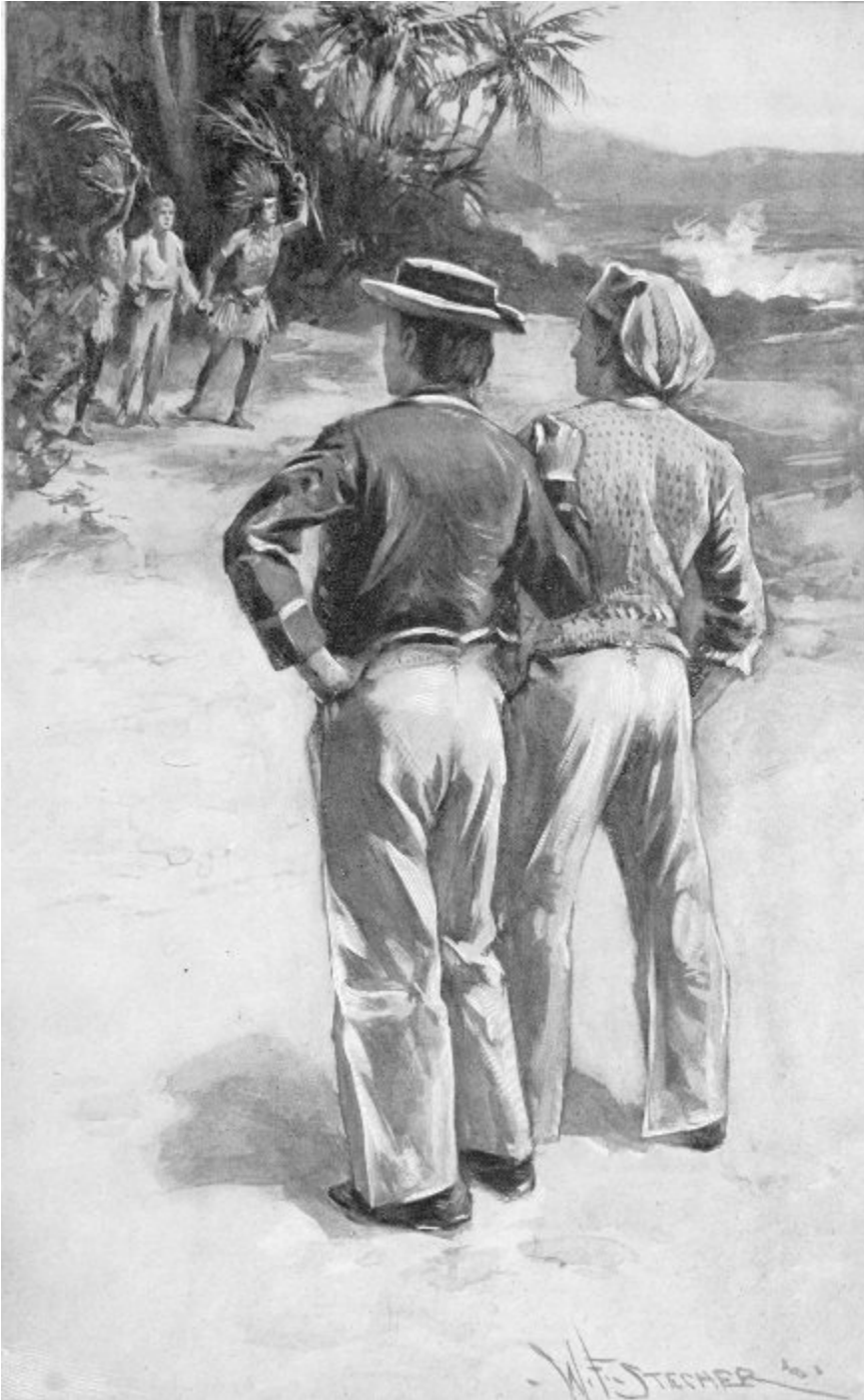
Then, as a matter of course, we took up our tasks as cooks' assistants once more, although it would have pleased us better had we been allowed to take part in the work of building the fort; for that, as we soon came to understand, was the purpose for which our men had been called off from the labor of refitting.

We two lads had ample time, however, in which to observe all that was being done, for, as I have already set down, we were allowed many a spare hour between meals.

The empty water-casks were filled with earth and sunk a couple of feet into the summit of the hill in such manner as to form a circle. Then sand was shovelled against the outside of these, and an excavation made inside, until we had a breastwork not to be despised even as a protection against musket balls. The guns were mounted so that they would cover the harbor and camp, and a flag-staff, on which was hoisted the stars and stripes, set up in the middle of the enclosure, the whole presenting the appearance of a regular fort.

Before all this work had been completed, however, we saw two of the Typees coming down the mountain-side, escorting a third person whom we knew full well was none other than Benson, and the question as to whether our captain would take any trouble to save the life of a Britisher was answered.

Phil and I were near the beach when this party came in, waving green palm-leaves, which answered the purpose of a white flag; and while they halted, awaiting some word from the ship as to where they should leave the living peace-offering, we two lads had an opportunity of holding converse with our enemy.



THE PARTY CAME IN, WAVING GREEN PALM-LEAVES.

He was as humble and friendly as possible, as well he might be, considering the fact that we had been the means of saving him from being served up as a Typee roast or stew.

"If ever it comes my way, I'll do you boys a good turn," he said in a tone of thankfulness, and I was disposed to let the promise pass without comment; but Phil did not hold the same opinion.

"That is to say, you count on being friendly to us until another chance comes your way of selling us to the whalers, or of seeing us roasted and eaten," he said angrily; whereupon Benson replied with what I believed was sincere regret for having attempted to do us bodily harm:--

"If you'd been in my position since yesterday, you'd know full well that I couldn't be other than thankful for what you have done."

"I allow we were in much the same situation when you had us in your keeping, and was determined we should be

roasted!" the lad said hotly. "But for the fact that the Typees got the worst of the battle, we'd be ready for cooking this very minute."

Benson could make no reply to what was neither more nor less than the truth, and he hung his head, as seemed to me most proper.

After a few moments of silence he asked:--

"Do you know what your captain counts on doing with me?"

"He isn't in the custom of telling the crew what he proposes to do," Phil said curtly; "but this you can set down for a fact, that if he turns you loose around the bay, you'd better be mighty careful, for there are those among the men who wouldn't count it a crime to kill you as they would a mad dog."

By this time a boat had come ashore from the *Essex*; Benson and the Typees who had brought him in were taken on board, and we did not get a glimpse of the Britisher until many days afterward. The natives, however, came ashore half an hour later and were conducted by our men a short distance up the mountain, lest the Happers, disregarding the flag of truce, should set upon them.

Three days later Captain Porter took possession of the fort and island in a formal manner. He and his officers went into the fortification where the flag, which had been lowered a few moments previous, was hoisted while the ships saluted it in fine style, and then it was announced that the island had become a portion of the United States. From that hour, so the captain declared, Nukuheva should be known as Madison Island, in honor of the President, and the fort was given the same name. The bay had already been christened Massachusetts, and at the time it seemed to me that my country had come into possession of a valuable territory; but those at home thought differently, for in after years no effort was made to hold what the gallant old *Essex* had fairly won.

The remainder of this day when we took possession was spent in sport, all hands having full liberty until one hour before sunset; and a grand jollification we had, visiting the most respectable Happer families.

Next morning twenty-one men were told off as the force to man the fort, and command of the same was bestowed upon Lieutenant Gamble of the Marines. The duty of this little party was to guard the remainder of the company while at work on the fleet, and otherwise keep peace between the Happers and the Typees. Then the task of putting the ships into sailing trim was continued, and Phil and I sincerely regretted having been assigned to the cook's department, otherwise we might have been numbered among the defenders of the fort,--a position which would have pleased me mightily, for it seemed certain that the Typees were more than willing to let us severely alone.

As I stop writing at this point for an instant, I come to realize that my yarn is being spun out too long. It would please me greatly to be able to set down here all we did while on Madison Island, for we spent many a happy hour there, despite the hard work; but by so doing I might never come to an end of that which I hope will pass for what landmen call a "story," although every word is no more than the truth, as all our ship's company can testify.

In order, therefore, that nothing of importance concerning the cruise of the *Essex* may be omitted through lack of time and space, I will copy here what was afterward written by a great historian^[2] concerning what cost us three days of fighting, and to relate which in detail would force me to write over many pages.

"After their first fears had been allayed, or they came to understand how small was our force, the powerful Typees remained hostile, and became more and more defiant, to the great discomfort of the Happers and the annoyance of the Americans. At length Porter resolved to make war upon them.

"An expedition of thirty-five Americans, including Captain Porter, and five thousand Tacehs and Happers, moved against the incorrigibles. The Typees, armed with slings and spears, met them with such overwhelming numbers and fierce determination, that at the end of the first day they were compelled to fall back to the beach, numbering among their casualties a shattered leg belonging to Lieutenant Downes, caused by a sling-man's stone. That night the valley of the Typees resounded with shouts of victory, and the sonorous reverberations of many beaten drums.

"Porter renewed the attempt the next day, and led his motley army boldly over the rugged hills into the Typee valley, in the midst of great exposure to hostile missiles from concealed foes, and many privations.

"Village after village was destroyed until they came to the principal town, in which were fine buildings, a large public square, temples and gods, huge war-canoes, and other exhibitions of half-savage life. These were all reduced to ashes, and by the broom of desolation that beautiful valley, four miles in width and nine in length, was made a blackened desert. The Typees, utterly ruined and humbled, now submissively paid tribute."

It seems almost cruel to tell so brave a yarn in such few words; but for the fact that there are yet more important

adventures of our cruise to be set down, it should not thus be hurried over.

Neither Phil nor I was of the party which Captain Porter himself led over the mountains. I am not prepared to say that we would have gone with the army if permission had been given; we knew what fate awaited those who might be made prisoners, and would have shrunk from thus taking the chances of being the principal dish at a Typee feast.

When our men came back to the beach whipped, at the close of the first day's fight, and we saw Lieutenant Downes brought in by four Happers, looking as if death sat on the litter with him, it began to appear as if Massachusetts Bay was not a desirable naval station.

Nor were Phil and I the only ones among the company who grew faint-hearted when the reverses were made known. The old shellbacks who had previously grumbled because we were to take part in a native war, now came out strong with their predictions of evil; and to have heard them scold and mutter, one would have said that already were we hopelessly overcome.

Next day, when our men set out leading the entire army, we watched until they were lost to view in the distance, firmly believing we would never see them again. During the time we spent anxiously waiting for news from the battle-field, all hands were in the fort or on board the ships, ready to open fire if the Typees should chase our people to the shore of the bay; but at nightfall our anxiety was changed to rejoicing.

A Happer messenger came in with the information that Captain Porter had whipped the Typees thoroughly, and would remain absent from the bay another day in order to destroy the villages belonging to the enemy.

It was my good fortune to have the opportunity of carrying this news to Lieutenant Downes, who lay in his cabin on board the *Essex*, and to my great surprise I discovered that he had never been in doubt as to the result of the expedition.

"It couldn't have been otherwise," he said, when I had emptied my budget of news. "Thirty-five white men with ample supply of ammunition could beat off all the natives of the island, providing they were not ambushed. It went without saying that Captain Porter would flog them into submission."

Because he spoke to me so familiarly, I ventured to ask him concerning Benson, for up to this time neither Phil nor I had been able to learn anything regarding him.

"He is below, in such snug quarters that I promise you there is no chance of his escaping."

"Will he be taken back to Valparaiso?" I ventured to ask.

"I think not, my lad. It is my opinion that he will remain on board until we arrive at the home port, and then be delivered over to the proper authorities. So long as Captain Porter holds command of the *Essex*, there's little chance the young scoundrel will play any more tricks on honest seamen."

As a matter of course, Phil and I knew full well that Benson was on board the frigate; but we were not just certain what the captain proposed to do with him when we made Valparaiso again, and this assurance of Lieutenant Downes's caused me to feel decidedly better mentally, for we were not minded he should escape his just deserts.

When our people came back, escorted by the triumphant Happers and followed by the chief men of the Typees, who were eager that peace be made between us, we gave them a grand reception, which was not prolonged, for on the following morning the work of refitting the ships of the fleet was continued as if our commander was impatient to be at sea once more, as really was the case if the statements made by Master Hackett the evening following the return of the army were true.

I had asked him why Captain Porter was bent on pushing the work forward to the utmost limit of speed, and the old man said gravely, as if he considered it an exceedingly serious matter:--

"It is near time for the arrival in the Pacific of one or more of the frigates sent out from England to destroy us. From all I've gathered, an' by puttin' this an' that together when I've overheard the officers talkin' it amounts to considerable, it's our commander's idee to meet the Britishers one by one as fast as they arrive, instead of givin' them a chance to come at us with a squadron after due preparation. We've got to fight our way home, if we ever get there; an' accordin' to my way of thinkin' Captain Porter couldn't do a wiser thing than to meet the enemy as soon as possible after they round the Horn."

"Why then, Master Hackett?"

"Because after such a voyage every ship is bound to be at her worst, an' it's our best chance; if we give them time to

overhaul an' lay plans, we stand a show to get beaten."

"And are we to give up the island after having so much trouble to subdue the Typees?"

"Not a bit of it, if all I've heard be true. Lieutenant Gamble, with midshipmen Feltus an' Clapp, are to remain behind in command of the force detailed for the fort."

"And they are to stay here to keep peace among the natives," Phil exclaimed in a tone of surprise, whereupon Master Hackett corrected him by saying:--

"It goes without sayin' that they will keep peace on the island; but that ain't the reason for leavin' 'em here, by a long shot. We'll need a harbor for repairs while we stay in the Pacific, especially after two or three battles at sea, which I reckon will fall to our share. Them as remain behind will see to it that the Britishers don't take possession by some of their whalin' vessels or otherwise, an' we'll have a port to run to if the odds are too great against us."

I failed to figure out what was to become of those left behind in case the *Essex* was destroyed, or if she was forced to flee around the Horn; and Master Hackett could not help me to a solution. He seemed to treat it as one of the chances of war which the defenders of the fort must take, and as such, not worthy of discussion.

Well, the refitting was pushed forward with all speed, and near about the first of December we were so far ready for sea that it was only necessary to take in a quantity of water and fresh provisions.

The prizes were warped in close under the fort, and moored there in such manner that nothing short of a most violent tempest could disturb them.

The encampment ashore was broken up, and all the men ordered on board the ships which were to venture out.

When this last order was given, we had signs of serious trouble.

The natives, who had become fast friends with our men, set up a terrible howl, and from morning until night we could see them on the beach crying and begging that the crew be sent ashore again, while on board the frigate and the *Essex Junior* the sailormen themselves were bewailing a fate which seemed unnecessarily hard.

There was little mutinous talk on our ship; but we heard again and again that the crew of the *Essex Junior* was nearly in a mutinous frame of mind because the pleasant stay ashore had come to an end.

As a matter of course the old shellbacks were not concerned in this insubordination. They recognized the fact that we must put to sea as speedily as possible, and were even eager to be gone; but many of the younger fellows would have deserted except for the strong guard which was kept both night and day.

Only those who could best be trusted were sent on shore for the stores, and among these was Master Hackett, therefore we lads heard much of what was happening aboard of our consort.

It was the evening of the second day after we had been ordered aboard ship that Master Hackett told Phil and me, while he was smoking comfortably near No. 1 gun, the following startling news:--

"Bob White of the *Essex Junior* has been blowin' his gaff so loud that it has come to the ears of our officers, an' all hands will be called up for a wiggin' from the commander before another day goes by, or I'm a Dutchman, which I ain't."

"What has he been saying?" Phil asked curiously.

"That we of the frigate have come to a solemn agreement not to get under way when the order comes; or, if we're forced to do that, we're to seize the ship in three days after leavin' port, an' them on the *Essex Junior* are to stand by us."

"But all that is a lie!" I cried hotly. "If there had been a mutiny on board this ship, surely it would have come to the ears of Phil and me!"

"I allow that some of our youngsters have been makin' foolish talk against puttin' to sea when there's so much fun to be had ashore; but as for downright mutiny, why it's all in your eye, Biddy Martin. I count that the worst insubordination has been argued in my hearin', an' that only went so far as to swimmin' ashore for a night's frolic. Bob White will find himself in trouble, or I'm mistaken."

Master Hackett's prediction was verified early next morning, when the crew of the *Essex Junior* was ordered aboard the frigate, and, in company with all our men, summoned to the break of the quarter, where was standing Captain Porter and his officers, decked out in their newest uniforms.

The captain did not show any sign of anger when we stood before him, but began like a preacher, by telling what he

had heard was talked of among the men.

It goes without saying that this was the same yarn Master Hackett had spun for us the night before, and the commander said flatly that he didn't allow there was any truth in it.

"I can't believe any of you who have braved so many dangers during this most glorious cruise would turn mutineers simply because life on the island is so pleasing. If it should be, however, that you came to such a pass, rather than allow the shame put upon us, I will without hesitation hold a match to the magazine and blow all hands into eternity, for it is better that the ship and every man in her perish, than have it told at home that we were ready to sacrifice the interests of our country to personal desires. While I don't believe it possible such an agreement could have been made, there may be some hot heads among you who do not care for the disgrace which would come upon all this ship's company, therefore I wish to see who will agree to obey my commands in the future as you have in the past. Let those who are ready to do their duty like men, by remaining on board when we go to meet the enemy, step over on the starboard side—I mean those who are not only willing, but eager, to get the good ship *Essex* under way when the order may be given to do so."

In a twinkling every man jack of us was lining the starboard rail, looking curiously behind to see who would dare show himself mutinously inclined.

No one remained on the port side, and Captain Porter looked pleased; but the end of the matter was not yet, as he then proved by saying:--

"Let Bob White come forward!"

The mutinous sailor obeyed sheepishly; and when he stood out from the rest of us, a mark for every eye, the captain said sternly:--

"This is the man who has reported that you had not only agreed to disobey orders, but were ready to turn pirates for the sake of spending your lives on the island. He who will spin such yarns about honest sailormen is not fit to associate with them. Mr. McKnight," he added, turning to my cousin Stephen, "see to it that this scoundrel is dropped into one of the canoes which are hanging around, and let it be understood that the sentries are to fire at him if he makes any effort to come aboard again."

My cousin had hardly more than stepped off the quarter to give the necessary order, when Master Hackett and a couple of his cronies seized Bob White, and before one could have counted ten the mutineer was kicking and splashing in the water alongside. They had not taken the trouble to see whether a canoe was close at hand.

There were so many islanders near about, however, that White was speedily picked up, and from that time he was never seen again, unless, perchance, it may have been by those who garrisoned the fort.

Then, after thanking us for what we had already done while under his command, and for what he expected we would do in the future, the captain dismissed us that we might get about the work of the day.

It was only natural that while engaged in this task or the other my mind should be filled with thoughts of the insubordination, and the possible result if the crew had been able to remain on the island.

The seamen among us who had had the most experience in such matters, believed that we stood but little show against those ships which had been sent from England in search of us; that the *Essex* would never round Cape Horn with the stars and stripes flying. In such case we had only death or imprisonment to look forward to, and it is not so very surprising that some of the men should desire to remain among the islanders.

As for myself, and I can also speak for Phil in the same words, cowardly at heart though I was, it seemed far wiser to make a brave fight for it than go into voluntary exile among cannibals. Yet, while I thus decided, there was a great fear in my heart concerning our fate, and I would have given up anything I possessed, with a mortgage on everything which might come to me in the future, had it been possible to step at that moment into my own quiet home. I had seen enough of war, although having viewed it only from the brightest side, and I quaked at the prospect of what lay before us, even though we might, in the end, succeed in giving our enemies the slip.

It was the morning of December 12, 1813, when we got under way, amid the booming of the guns from Fort Madison, and I venture to say there was not a man in either ship, whether officer, ordinary seaman, or marine, who did not wish we might have remained there a few weeks longer, providing it could be done safely and honorably.

The prizes were left under the guns of the fort, for now we were going out to meet the foe in battle, and could not be bothered with such as they. The *Essex Junior* and the frigate were to perform the hard work, receive the British fire, and then, if we were successful, which hardly seemed probable, would return to take our captured craft to a home port.

By nightfall the island was lost to view in the distance, and on the vast expanse of the ocean nothing could be seen by us save the good frigate *Essex* and her namesake and consort, *Essex Junior*.

Now let me set down something which I have copied from a yarn spun by an old sea-dog^[3] who can jockey a spar or make a book with equal ease:--

"Up to this time not a dollar had been drawn to meet the expenses of the frigate. The enemy had furnished provisions, sails, cordage, medicines, guns, anchors, cables, and slops. A considerable amount of pay even, had been given to the officers and men, by means of the money taken in the *Nocton*. Thus far the cruise had been singularly useful and fortunate, affording an instance of the perfection of naval warfare in all that relates to distressing an enemy, with the least possible charge to the assailants; and it remained only to terminate it with a victory over a ship of equal force, to render it brilliant. It is, perhaps, a higher eulogium on the officers and crew of this memorable little frigate to add, that while her good fortune appeared at last to desert her, they gave this character to their enterprise by the manner in which they struggled with adversity."

On this our first evening at sea, after so long a stay in port, Master Hackett was unusually agreeable and friendly with us lads who had done our best toward saving his life, whether that best was ill-advised or opportune. Instead of smoking in the company of the other old sea-dogs, he joined us near No. 1 gun, and there began to hold forth on the "luck of the *Essex*" as if believing we needed heartening now that we were pressing forward to meet an enemy of equal or greater strength than our own.

"You lads haven't made quite as bad a fist of sailarin' as I counted on when you first came aboard," he began. "You've given good attention to your duties, an' when next you ship, I reckon it should be as ordinary seamen--"

"Providing we ever get a chance to ship again," Phil interrupted. "It seems to be the opinion among all hands that we're on our last cruise."

"Pay no attention to what those old croakers are sayin'," Master Hackett replied quickly. "Sailormen always borrow trouble when there's little show for it, an' don't take the pains to work out the traverse that can be made. I hold that the 'luck of the *Essex*' is still with her, an' will be when we meet the Britishers yard-arm to yard-arm, or at whatever range our commander believes to be best. No man can go into an engagement an' do his full duty if he counts on bein' knocked out before it's over. Believe that you've *got* to lick the other fellow, an' then you'll have an advantage."

Master Hackett could not have said anything which would have caused me to believe more firmly that he, like many another on board the *Essex*, was convinced we had come to an end of our "luck," and I turned away abruptly rather than listen further.

FOOTNOTES:

^[2] Benson J. Lossing.

^[3] J. Fenimore Cooper.



CHAPTER XII. AT VALPARAISO.

I forgot to set down the fact that we brought away from Nukuheva, or, I suppose I should say, from Madison Island, Mr. Maury and his companions. They had had quite enough of the place and the life there, beautiful though the first was, and enticing as the latter might be. It was said Captain Porter proposed that these men remain in the fort, since, conversant with the language as they were, communication with the natives would be more readily had.

To such a proposition they declined flatly, and this fact should have been sufficient to show those of our crew who still hankered for the flesh-pots of Nukuheva, what would have been their condition of mind after having remained as long in that veritable garden of Eden.

Our voyage had hardly more than begun, that is to say, it was on the second day after leaving port, when one of the marines brought word that Phil and I had been summoned to the quarter-deck.

The wooden-headed fellow had not taken the trouble to find out why such an order was given, nor which of the officers had sent it; he only knew that his sergeant told him to summon us, and we two lads were in a fine state of excitement. Even Master Hackett looked grave when he questioned us closely as to whether we had made foolish talk which might have been overheard by the officers, or if our duties had been seriously neglected at any time lately.

He was helping us make ready for the visit all the while he asked these questions, therefore no time was lost in such converse.

We could not have neglected our duties, for, as a matter of fact, we had none while at sea save to answer the beck and call of every member of the ship's crew, and were so far beneath the officers in station that they did not even take the trouble to look at us, except when our services were required.

However, there was neither rhyme nor reason in our speculating very long as to why we were thus summoned. We were bound to answer the call as soon as might be or find ourselves slated for punishment; and as soon as Master Hackett announced that we were togged out in proper fashion, Phil and I went aft feeling very uncomfortable in mind. And we came to know then, if never before, that there is no sense in crossing bridges till you come to them, or, in other words, it's unwise "to trouble trouble till trouble troubles you."

On going aft we found my cousin, Lieutenant McKnight, standing near the break of the quarter-deck, and, saluting him as I would have done had there been no kinship between us, I asked if he knew who had summoned us.

"I did, lad," he replied. "It is the captain's orders that you and your mate look after the prisoner, Oliver Benson. He has been cared for by one of Robert White's cronies, and it is believed best to give him in charge of those who have personal reasons for holding him fast, particularly while we are in the harbor of Valparaiso. You'll find him in the brig, and separate rations will be served out for him. See to it that he holds no communication with any of the crew; but allow him to walk about for half an hour every day while you stand guard over him with loaded muskets. In order to render you more careful, lads, I may say that we believe the fellow has some plan for escape in his mind, and you are detailed as his keepers in order that we may be certain of nipping it in the bud."

This was the longest speech the lieutenant, my cousin, had favored me with since I came on board, and it pleased me mightily, as did also the fact that we two lads were rated by our officers as being better able to look after the prisoner than some others of the crew.

Having spoken, Lieutenant McKnight turned on his heel, and we were left to set about the new duties according to our own ideas as to how they should be performed.

We went below from the after end of the gun-deck, and there found the gloomy cage guarded by a single sentinel, with whom Benson appeared to be carrying on a lively conversation.

This portion of the ship would have been shrouded in darkness but for a lantern which hung over against the bench where I fancied the guard should remain, and the light was so dim that for the moment Benson did not recognize us.

"Have you come to relieve me?" the marine said as we approached, and while replying to him I was seized by a sudden thought.

"Will you ask Lieutenant McKnight if he expects us both to remain on duty, or may we stand watch and watch?"

"It ain't likely he counts on two lads at the same time lookin' after one man who's locked in where he can neither help hisself nor hurt others," the marine replied pertly, whereupon I told him that we should expect him to bring an answer

directly from the lieutenant, otherwise I would go on deck and learn the reason why.

He looked at me for an instant as if surprised that a boy aboard ship should speak to him in such a fashion, and indeed I was rather astonished at my own air of authority; but I would not lower the words, once having given them utterance, and he, most likely knowing of the kinship between the lieutenant and myself, turned on his heel without giving vent to the sharp words I believed were trembling on the tip of his tongue.

Five minutes later, and before either Phil or I had gone so near the cage that Benson could distinguish our features, the man came back with the word that we were to look after the prisoner according to our own ideas of how such work should be done.

When the marine had left us once more, I went boldly up to the bars of the prison, and Benson uttered a low cry of what I took to be mingled disappointment and anger.

"So you two are to look after me?" he said with a sneer, evidently having forgotten that he had promised ever to remember us with liveliest gratitude because of what we had done when he was in the power of the cannibals.

Phil, who had never believed soft words should be wasted on a villain like Benson, answered his remark, which was at the same time a question:--

"It is only right we should do so, if for no other reason than to repay you for the care you have had over us on two occasions. We shan't threaten, however, either to sell you to the whalers or make certain you are roasted and eaten; therefore the account won't be really squared however long a time may elapse before we gain a home port."

"Home port?" he cried as if in dismay. "Am I not to be sent ashore at Valparaiso?"

"Captain Porter doesn't consider it necessary to tell us all he intends to do; but I'd be willing to wager considerable that you'll remain in this cage until we are anchored in some port of the United States."

Benson appeared to be staggered by this reply, and during two or three minutes remained as if in deep thought, after which he asked sharply:--

"Why has the guard been changed? Isn't an armed marine enough to keep me here, when it would be impossible to get out unless some one supplied me with the proper tools for prying off the bars?"

"We know nothing more than that we have been ordered on duty," Phil replied curtly. "If the captain had counted on your understanding fully about the business, I reckon one of the lieutenants would have been here before this to make explanations."

Benson gave over for the time being trying to learn the reason for our coming, and appeared eager to be friendly with us, as might be seen when he tried to enter into conversation; but neither Phil nor I gave him any encouragement. We believed there was some serious cause for thus changing the guard, and were determined not to hold more converse with the prisoner than was absolutely necessary.

It was agreed between us that we would stand watch and watch, two hours at a stretch, and that he who was off duty should not leave the other alone more than fifteen minutes at one time.

You see, we suspected that the marines had shown themselves too friendly to the Britisher; and because it was believed by our officers that an escape was being connived at, we were assigned the duty of making certain the sailor-selling Benson remained on board the frigate until he might be sent to some prison more secure than could be found in Chili.

Quarters on the gun-deck were luxurious as compared with those we were forced to occupy while acting as jailers. Above we had good air and plenty of it, save during a severe gale; but in the hold of the frigate we were shut out from everything, even the light of day. One hour was the same as another in that place of blackness; the *Essex* might overhaul and capture half a dozen prizes without our being any the wiser, and we could only judge what might be the weather by the heel or lurch of the ship. All this we understood before having been on duty an hour; and as I realized that many, many long, dreary days might be spent by us in this disagreeable task, I began to wish most fervently that the Britisher had been left in the Typee village to supply the cannibals with the materials for a feast.

When an hour had passed and we had come to an end of discussing the reasons for our having been assigned to this duty, we drew lots to decide who should take the first trick, and Phil was thus selected; whereupon I proposed to go and have a chat with Master Hackett, to learn if he could throw any light on the subject.

"Remember, you are not to remain away more than fifteen minutes," Phil said warningly, and I promised to keep that fact

well in mind.

When I gained the gun-deck once more, I found the old sailor in a fine state of anxiety concerning us. Because we had not returned, he believed we yet remained in the cabin, and was worrying lest we had been accused of some serious misdemeanor.

He was evidently relieved and considerably surprised by my explanations, but could give us no information whatsoever, save that he, like us lads, believed the captain had reason to suspect that one or more of the marines had become too friendly with the prisoner.

"I'll keep my eyes an' ears open, lad, an' it'll be odd if I don't pick up a bit of news here an' there. It goes without sayin' that the captain has good cause for givin' such an order, an' the reason is bound to leak out sooner or later."

"Will you come below sometimes and have your smoke with us?" I asked.

"If it so be there are no objections made, I will, lad. It might be a good plan, in case you have a chance of speakin' with Lieutenant McKnight, to ask if I would be allowed there. The rule is that none save the guards are to go near the brig."

It was time for me to join Phil once more, the fifteen minutes having been spent, as nearly as I could judge, and back I went to the dreary post of duty.

I had hardly more than repeated to him the brief conversation held with Master Hackett, when my cousin Stephen came down the ladder, greeting us in most friendly fashion.

After he had spoken of our duties, enjoining upon us the necessity of keeping the prisoner in full view all the time, he was pleased to give the following explanation for what appeared almost like an excess of precaution:--

"It is your especial duty to see that no one has an opportunity of speaking with the prisoner. It is not supposed that he can escape unaided; there is a possibility some of our people have been taken in by his smooth talk, and the captain is determined he be lodged in prison at a port where we may be certain he will be held."

Then it was that I made bold to ask if Master Hackett might be allowed to visit us, and the permission was given without hesitation.

"There is nothing to prevent his paying you a visit at such times as he is off duty; but if any other member of the crew should come without authority from one of the officers, you are to warn him away at once, and in case he refuses to go immediately, give the alarm aft without delay."

With that the lieutenant left us, and Benson, who must have overheard at least a portion of the conversation, said mockingly:--

"I always believed the Yankees were cowards; but never before fancied the crew of a frigate could be scared by one Englishman."

Phil would have made an angry reply, but that I motioned him to be silent, afterward saying in a low tone:--

"It is worse than foolish to bandy words with the fellow. We know by his anger that our coming here has broken up some scheme he had in mind, and he may as well be allowed the poor satisfaction of gibing at us now and then."

"He may have full swing of his tongue once in a while, but I'm not minded to let him go on as he pleases all the time. While you were on deck he had altogether too much to say. Suppose you let Master Hackett know what Lieutenant McKnight said, and then we'll settle down to the work in shipshape fashion."

Once more I went on deck; the old sailor seemed greatly pleased at the confidence which the officers appeared to have in him, by thus stipulating he should be the only visitor allowed near the brig, and promised to keep us posted on all that was happening aboard ship.

And he kept his promise to the letter. No less than twice each day, and sometimes much oftener, he sat with us repeating the talk of his shipmates, until we who were forced to remain alone in the darkness had a very good idea of what was going on above us.

The gun-deck barnacles were positive, according to Master Hackett, that at least two of the marines had been detected in favoring the prisoner more than was allowable, and some of them went so far as to say with assurance that a plot to liberate him when the first port was made had been discovered.

Not until the new year had begun did we learn anything of the outside world, and then Master Hackett reported that we were lying at San Maria, on the coast of South America, taking in water. No sail had been sighted during all this time;

but information was given us at this port that the British frigate *Phoebe*, 36, Captain Hillyar, had weathered the Horn searching for the *Essex*.

One week after this, Master Hackett reported that we were entering the port of Concepcion; and before the day had come to an end we learned that no vessels had been found, but that the news regarding the *Phoebe* was confirmed.

"We're now under way for Valparaiso," the old man said, "an' unless I'm way off in my reckonin', we'll find there that the Chilian authorities have had a change of heart so far as we Yankees are concerned."

"Are you of the mind that they'll make trouble for us?" Phil asked.

"I ain't reckonin' they'll go quite so far as that, but it'll stand us in hand to be prepared for anything while we're lyin' there."

"Why doesn't the captain give that port the go-by?" I asked. "Why should we put in there if the Chilians are like to be disagreeable to us?"

"Captain Porter isn't the kind of a man to run away from an enemy, lad, an' that's what it would look like if we tried to slip around the Horn just now. His plan, accordin' to my way of reckonin', an' I've said it before, is to take the Britishers one by one as they come along, until we've given the whole boilin' of 'em a floggin'. If we didn't look in at Valparaiso, the enemy would say we were afraid to tackle anything but a whaler."

"How much heavier than our frigate is a 36-gun ship?"

"She'd be about the same in weight of metal, though there might be considerable difference in the way it was distributed. Now, a regular 36-gun ship should carry twenty-six long eighteens below, with sixteen 32-pound carronades an' two chase guns above, makin' forty-four in all. We've got, as you know, forty 32-pound carronades, an' six long twelves, which would make the *Phoebe* heavier than the *Essex*, even though our craft has two guns more. Now, there isn't a man aboard this 'ere frigate who wouldn't kick, an' kick hard, if Captain Porter should try to run away from the Britisher. Give us half a show, an' we'll prove that whalers are only taken by us in order to replenish stores an' protect our own merchantmen."

"That's brave talk; but you'll sing a different tune when we're alongside the *Phoebe*!" Benson cried from his cage; and this taunt threw Master Hackett into a towering passion.

Although it was forbidden that he should hold any converse with the prisoner, he freed his mind by telling us in a tone sufficiently loud to be heard by the Britisher, what he would do, regardless of rules, in case "that chimpanzee in the cage" had anything more to say against the Yankees.

"I've heard too much talk from him already," the old man continued, "an' the next time he so much as peeps while I'm around, I shall go straight aft an' ask permission to give him a dozen flicks with the cat, laid on by myself, which will be all he'll need by way of puttin' a stopper on his tongue."

From that moment until we were done with him forever, Benson never so much as snored while Master Hackett was near at hand.

On the 3d day of February we knew the frigate had come to an anchor, and shortly afterward the old sailor appeared to give us the news.

"Yes, we're in Valparaiso again, an' now we're salutin' the fort."

We could both hear and feel the report of the guns as they were discharged, and already knew as much as the old man was telling us.

"The captain will go ashore to chin with the governor accordin' to the rules an' regulations of the navy, an' after that the old chap will visit us."

"But what of a change of heart, Master Hackett?" I asked with a laugh. "I thought you counted on our getting a different reception from what we met with last."

"All this visitin' an' firin' salutes don't cut any ice. It's a way these 'ere swells have, no matter how they're feelin'. That puffed up old governor might come aboard of us a dozen times, hobnobbin' with the officers, an' yet be jest as willin' to cut our throats. Wait till the *Phoebe* heaves in sight, an' then we'll have a fairly good idee of whether they're friendly or not."

"Are we lying at our old anchorage?" Phil asked.

"Not a bit of it, my lad. We're well out in the bay, where we can get under way in a jiffy, an' the *Essex Junior* is cruisin' around outside, so's to give us warnin' when the Britisher heaves in sight."

"Then the captain is expecting a fight?"

"Expectin' it, lad? Why, he knows it's got to come! The only thing we're in the dark about is how soon the Britisher will show up."

Phil and I took turns going on deck during this and the following day, and I was on the forecastle twenty-four hours after our arrival, when the governor, his wife, and a boat-load of officers, came off to pay a ceremonious visit.

It was near sunset when Master Hackett visited us again, and this time he had quite a budget of news to unfold.

In view of the fact that the enemy might appear at any moment, shore leave was forbidden the crew, and only three of the officers had been allowed to land since they made their calls upon the governor; but these last visits were enough to show that Master Hackett's predictions were verified.

The officers found, so the marine gossips reported, that there was no longer any great show of friendliness among the people regarding us, and, in fact, it was openly said that the Chilians would be well pleased if we were beaten in the battle which seemed so near at hand.

"The British government has been threatenin', I reckon," Master Hackett said with an air of great wisdom, "an' the governor himself is countin' on our gettin' the worst of the fight; but there's where he's makin' a mistake, unless it so chances that too many Englishmen come up at the same time."

"We shall have the *Essex Junior* to help us," I said like a simple, whereupon the old man replied scornfully:--

"What would she amount to in a fight? In an action with a frigate she wouldn't be any force to speak of. A craft carryin' ten 18-pound carronades and ten short sixes, with a crew of only sixty men, would likely be in the way rather than lend any help. No, lad, the *Junior* ain't to be thought of; an' when we go to quarters, you'll find that she'll get orders to keep at a proper distance, if only for the sake of showin' that we don't put two craft against one. The *Phoebe* will get fair play, an' no mistake."

There was never a thought in Master Hackett's mind that the commander of the *Phoebe* might not count on giving us fair play; but the fact was soon made known to us.

"How many men can we muster?" Phil asked.

"What with prize crews, an' them as have been drafted to the *Junior*, I'm told that there are only two hundred an' twenty-five aboard this 'ere ship, countin' officers, cooks, boys, and sich-like useless raffle."

"How many would likely be on board the *Phoebe*?"

"A full hundred more than we've got, an' when it comes to boardin', or close quarters where muskets can be used, that extra hundred will count against us terrible."

"Are you growing faint-hearted, Master Hackett?" Phil asked with a laugh; at which question the old man turned upon him savagely.

"An old shellback like me grow faint-hearted? You're talkin' at random, lad! My time is bound to come before many years have passed, an' I only hope to lose the number of my mess while standin' by the guns in a fair fight. A sailorman ain't built to die in his bed, nor does it beseem him to be buried on shore. What he needs to put him out of this world comfortably is the roaring of a broadside, the cheers of his messmates, an' a shot tied to his feet when he's dropped over the rail after havin' done his duty. So that we win the battle, it don't make much difference when I go into the next life; but if you should speak of bein' took prisoner, an' kept cooped up in a cage like that day in an' day out, there's where I might show the white feather, an' small blame to me."

The conversation was taking on altogether too gloomy a turn, more especially since we knew beyond a peradventure that before many days the frigate would be in action, and I put an end to it by proposing that one or the other of us go on deck for a whiff of fresh air.

Phil took advantage of the opportunity; Master Hackett followed him up the ladder, and I was left with only my gloomy thoughts for company, unless one counts the prisoner, as perhaps would be correct, since on this occasion he took it upon himself to be unusually friendly.

"I'm not counting on saying what your chances will be when the *Essex* meets the *Phoebe*" he began. "Your people may

get the best of her--"

"As we surely will!" I replied angrily, for I did not like the tone of doubt which accompanied the words.

"Very well, say that you whip her handsomely. Do you think it can be done without sacrificing some of your men?"

"Of course we must expect that more than one poor fellow will lose the number of his mess."

"The *Phoebe* isn't the only ship that's likely been sent out against you; and even though you whip the first two or three you come across, the time must arrive when you'll be too short-handed to work the frigate. In other words, no matter how successful your ship may be, you're bound to come to grief finally."

It was some such thought as this which was in my own mind, and it angered me that the Britisher should put it into words, for I did not relish being reminded of what appeared to be a fact.

"Why should you figure on our meeting vessel after vessel until we no longer have a crew left?" I asked sharply.

"Because it proves that in the long run I shall be set free by my countrymen, and then will come the time when I'll have the upper hand once more."

"Well?" I asked, failing to grasp his meaning.

"Well?" he said with a laugh. "To save your own neck, why not make friends with me now? It isn't to be expected that you could set me ashore; but you might leave the door unlocked by accident, and when the time came that you were in the brig of a British man-of-war, I would do you a good turn."

It surprised me so much, this speech of Benson's, that I allowed him to finish, instead of checking the villain as I should have done when it first dawned upon me that he was proposing I play the traitor.

"Look you, Oliver Benson!" I cried, speaking slowly that the words would have more weight. "If I knew beyond a peradventure that I might save my own life by doing the wicked thing you propose, I would say 'no' with my last breath. If you so much as hint at such a proposition again I will go straight to the captain with the story, and then you may be certain he'll give you a taste of the cat."

"My turn will come before the *Essex* is out of this scrape, and of that there is no doubt," he replied venomously; and I questioned not but that he would wreak vengeance upon Phil and me whenever the opportunity presented itself.

I was yet in the dumps when Phil returned, refreshed by a sniff of the sea air and a glimpse of the sun; but did not think it well to give him an account of the conversation just held with Benson. In the first place it could do no good, and, secondly, might make him as dispirited as I had become; for a fellow may not speak of death or imprisonment, when one or the other is sure to come soon, without experiencing a certain heaviness of heart which does not tend to mental comfort.

If we were to suffer death or imprisonment as the conclusion of the cruise, there was no good reason for looking forward to it.

Phil reported that the *Essex Junior* could be seen in the offing; that the frigate was lying near the entrance of the harbor where she could be gotten under way whatever the direction of the wind, and that everything, save the taking down of the bulkheads aft, was in trim for a fight.

"You'd hardly recognize the gun-deck now," he said in conclusion. "The men are not lounging around jawing or spinning yarns; but appear on the alert as if expecting the call to quarters at any instant, and it needs only sand on the deck, so Master Hackett says, to give the proper showing."

"Sand on the deck?" I repeated.

"Ay, so that the planks shall not be slippery when covered with the blood of our men. I am told that it is always strewn around before a ship goes into action."

I could not repress a shudder. It was bad enough to hear Benson talk of what must surely come to us finally, without listening to an account of the preparations made for the actual approach of death.

At that time, when it seemed as if we were cornered like rats, I thought of my home which I had left so many months, and with the thought came a great wonderment that boys should ever be eager to leave their mother's side in order to take part in the wickedness of the world--for surely a war is wicked, whatever the cause.

While I sat there in the darkness, staring at the bars of Benson's prison, I heard again my mother's voice, and for the

hundredth time since leaving home realized that she was my best friend; that I had voluntarily left her in order to come at last face to face with death or a lingering imprisonment.

Surely, this world never held a lad so foolish as I had proved myself to be!



CHAPTER XIII. THE BRITISHERS.

After making the proposition that I allow him to escape, Benson gave over holding any intercourse with Phil and me. According to orders, we allowed him to come out of the cage every day and pace to and fro on the deck by way of exercise; but he did so in silence, and I was by no means disgruntled because he held his peace.

Master Hackett spent considerable time with us two lads while we were in port awaiting the enemy; but, after the conversation lately set down, he did not indulge in any speculations which might arouse disagreeable thoughts in our minds. Perhaps he understood that, confined in the dark hold, we would quite naturally give ourselves more wholly up to reflection and foreboding than would be possible on the gun-deck, and brooding over possible dangers while we were thus virtually alone would cause them to seem greater than they really were.

Whatever may have been his motive, I noted with satisfaction the fact that he spoke in a more cheery strain of the expected action, and on one or two occasions even went so far as to predict that the *Essex* would live to carry the stars and stripes around the Horn again.

Both Phil and I had come to believe that when the Britishers did arrive to give us battle, he and I would be forced to remain below, guarding our prisoner, and again and again we questioned the wisdom of setting two to watch one when the frigate was really short-handed.

Despite the cowardly thoughts which we realized would come into our minds as soon as an engagement was begun, we were sad because there seemed to be no chance we should bear our share of it. It would have pleased both of us very decidedly if it could have been possible to sail the *Essex* into a home port without a severe fight; but since one must come, we were eager to perform our full part, whatever might be the result, and this could not be done if we were forced to act as jailers.

However, this, like many another trouble, was of slight consequence when the decisive moment arrived, as we soon learned.

One morning when the men were beginning to believe that the information regarding the Britishers having passed around Cape Horn was false, Master Hackett came below with every evidence of excitement on his face and in his movements.

"The enemy are in the offin' at last!" he cried, slapping us two lads on the back as if believing he had brought most glorious news.

"Can we see them from the deck?" Phil asked as he leaped toward the ladder, for it was my time of duty.

"No, lad, not yet: but the *Junior* is headin' for the harbor with signals set that she has sighted the enemy, an' it won't be very long now before we'll be showin' the *Phoebe* what we're made of!"

Having said this much Master Hackett went swiftly on deck again, and I was left with my own fears and Oliver Benson for company.

I fully expected that he would try once more to persuade me into letting him escape, but fortunately for his own skin he said not a word, and I sat there silent and motionless, trying to picture my behavior in case it should by some lucky chance be possible for me to bear a hand in the action which seemed to be so near at hand.

The moments passed slowly yet quickly, and I believed that a full hour had elapsed when Phil finally showed himself with excuses for having stayed away so long.

"The *Junior* is close alongside with her anchors down, and Lieutenant Downes is with Captain Porter, most likely getting orders as to how his ship is to be handled during the engagement."

"Can you see the Britisher?" I asked breathlessly.

"Not yet; the boat's crew which brought the lieutenant on board says that they should be off the harbor in an hour at the longest."

"*They* should be off the harbor. Is there more than one?"

"Ay, two, so it's reported, and Master Hackett says we'll tackle all that come, even if it's a whole squadron."

"He is talking foolishly!" I cried petulantly. "It isn't reasonable to suppose our commander will take any more chances

than are absolutely necessary."

"I can't say what he may do; but our people are wild with excitement, and if the decision was left to them I doubt not but that Master Hackett's statement would sound less improbable. Go on deck and have a look around; but give me a chance when the Britishers heave in sight."

I lost no time in acting on his proposition, and as I came into the open air I saw Lieutenant McKnight approaching.

"Well, lads, your disagreeable work has come to an end for a time at least, and I can't fancy that you'll be sorry."

I looked perplexed, as indeed I was, and my cousin added:--

"The prisoner will be sent on board the *Junior* for a while."

"May I ask why, sir?"

"Because it would not be quite the proper treatment to keep him under fire. As soon as Lieutenant Downes comes on deck again some of our men will be sent below to iron the fellow and bring him on deck for transshipment."

I did not wait to hear more, or even to take a look around; but ran below with all speed to impart the cheering news to Phil.

On hearing what my cousin Stephen had said the lad was almost beside himself with joy; but Benson was overpowered by rage. He tore and beat with his fists at the bars of the cage, now crying out that we should be paid off with interest for treating him in such a manner, and again begging that we ask Captain Porter to allow him to remain on board.

There could be but one cause for his frenzy, which was that he had really made friends with some of the marines, and counted on their aiding his escape during the excitement of a battle.

We gave no attention to either his threats or entreaties; but it was a wonderful relief when three men, headed by Master Hackett, came below, the latter telling us we were free to go on deck since there was nothing we might do to aid them in their work.

I breathed freely for the first time since we had been given charge of the Britisher, when we stepped on the spar-deck and had a look around.

Within half a cable's length lay the *Essex Junior*, her boat alongside our ship, and in the offing two British men-of-war standing directly into the harbor.

"I wonder if the fighting will be done while we lay at anchor?" I said like a simple that I was, and Phil replied with the air of one who is wiser than his comrade:--

"Certainly not. In the first place, Master Hackett says it is against all the rules for ships to fight in a harbor belonging to a nation with which we are not at war. Then again, it is necessary to manoeuvre the frigate while the fighting is going on, and to do that she must be on the open ocean."

"I see no signs of our getting under way."

"Then you must be blind indeed! Notice the men; each is at his proper station, and on the gun-deck the ammunition has already been brought out. Perhaps they have sanded the decks."

I turned away from him impatiently. Of what good was it to mention such a sinister preparation as that? It quickened the blood in one's veins to see the crew standing motionless, ready to execute on the instant the first order which should be given; and made the cold chills run down a fellow's spine to think that measures were being taken to cover that which represented the life of our people.

While I stood, half a coward and half eager to have a hand in the work about to be done, Benson was brought up from below--literally brought up, for he refused to lift hand or foot--and then dropped bodily into the boat alongside.

Lieutenant Downes took his station in the stern-sheets, and the small craft was pulled quickly away, leaving us on the *Essex* to meet the coming enemy.

The wind fined down as the Britishers came into the harbor, the *Phoebe* leading the way, and we had a good opportunity of examining them minutely.

I had taken a station by Master Hackett's side, and therefore came to know a good many things which otherwise would have failed of attracting my attention.

"They've taken on extra metal to meet us," the old sailor said with a chuckle, as if such fact pleased him wonderfully. "Thirty long eighteens, sixteen 32-pound carronades, one howitzer, an' six 3-pounders in her tops. That's givin' us the credit of bein' good fighters, even though they do accuse us of not darin' to tackle anything but whalers."

"Did you ever see the other ship, Master Hackett?" I asked.

"Ay, lad, time and time again. She's the *Cherub*, a 20-gun ship; but now she's carryin' twenty-eight in all—eighteen 32-pound carronades below, with eight 24-pound carronades and two long nines above. There can't be less than two hundred men on board, an' take it all in all, we've got a decently tough job laid out for us; but we'll tackle it in great style, lad. Why, the fact that the Britishers don't care to meet us with such a frigate as the *Phoebe* alone, is enough to stiffen the backbone of every man jack belongin' to this 'ere craft."

As the leading ship came nearer we could see that her crew was at quarters, and more than one old sea-dog looked aft questioningly, as if expecting our captain would give the word to prepare for action.

Friendly port or not, it seemed very much as if the Britisher was making ready to give us a broadside without the courtesy of hailing.

Nearer and nearer came the *Phoebe*, forging ahead slowly, and when she was less than a pistol shot distant her commander, Captain Hillyar, hailed, asking after Captain Porter's health as if the two were warm friends.



NEARER AND NEARER CAME THE PHOEBE.

Our commander answered politely, and then warned the Britisher that he was coming too near.

"If you foul us, sir," Captain Porter cried, "there will necessarily be much confusion, and I cannot be answerable for the consequences."

"I certainly do not meditate making an attack, my dear sir," the Britisher replied with a bow; but there was that in his voice which caused me to believe he was not speaking the truth, and Master Hackett muttered:--

"He'll take us if he gets into position, an' now's the time when our captain should give him somethin' more'n soft talk. If I was in command of this 'ere frigate I'd sink him off-hand."

At that moment the wind shifted, taking the *Phoebe* suddenly aback, and her bow payed off directly upon the *Essex*.

It was as if they were minded to board us, and Captain Porter must have believed that such was the case, for suddenly came the command to call away the boarders.

"Now we're in for it, lad!" Master Hackett cried gleefully as he ran to his station, I following close by his side. "The Britisher counts on havin' a scrimmage whether we're in a neutral port or not, an' I reckon we're in the mood to give him all he wants!"

"I do not intend to board you, sir!" the British captain shouted when he saw that we were ready for him, and Captain Porter replied with a warmth that pleased me wonderfully, considering the fact that at heart I am a coward:--

"If your ship fouls this frigate, sir, I shall open upon you, for I am fully prepared for action!"

"I do not intend to board you, sir!" Captain Hillyar cried again; but all the while the *Phoebe* was creeping nearer to us.

"Stand ready, boarders!" Captain Porter shouted, giving no further heed to the Britisher's announcement. "Get away the instant she touches us, and once on her decks you know your duty!"

By this time the jib-boom of the *Phoebe* was across our forecastle, and the ship in such a position that we might have sunk her before the *Cherub* could come near enough to take part in the work. Master Hackett had already laid hold of the spar, and I was alongside of him, never for an instant remembering that I should have been frightened. Phil, a huge cutlass in his hands, was looking about for a place on which to leap; and, taking it all in all, if I had been capable of connected thought, I would have said that neither ship could avoid an action.

Fortunately--there were many aboard us who would say *unfortunately*--the two frigates did not come into actual contact, and, seeing that he had put his ship into a most dangerous situation, Captain Hillyar began shouting:--

"It is all an accident, sir! I have no intention of opening an engagement!"

While he spoke he waved his hands, the better to attract attention, and otherwise behaved much like a man who is afraid after he has voluntarily got himself into a bad scrape.

Captain Porter gave the word for our men to retire from the forecastle-deck, and the Britisher slowly drifted by, her captain bowing and waving his hat, as well he might, considering the fact that our commander would have been justified in sinking him while it was not possible for him to strike a blow.

How our men raved and stormed when the Englishman went by to the inner harbor uninjured; but they took precious good care that our commander did not hear their angry words.

Then, after the *Cherub* passed us and joined the *Phoebe* at a berth nearer the town, leaving our men at liberty to do as they pleased, what a noisy confab went on among the deck lawyers! All were agreed that we should have sunk the Britisher; that the boarders should have been sent away because by coming across us there was every indication that the enemy intended mischief; and again, that there can be but one meaning when a man-of-war approaches with her crew at quarters.

I do not think the men were actually enraged with Captain Porter for not having taken advantage of the opportunity; but they blamed him severely for accepting the apology instead of beginning an action which could have had but one ending, owing to the fact that the *Phoebe* would surely have been sunk before her consort could creep up.

"Mark my words!" one of the old barnacles shouted. "Captain Porter won't find the Britisher so willin' to let him sneak out of a small hole; an' if the time ever comes when he can get at us unfairly, we may count on his doin' it."

"That's the solemn truth!" half a dozen voices shouted, and I asked Master Hackett to tell me exactly what he thought of the whole affair.

"Well," the old man said slowly and thoughtfully, "I don't feel called upon to rough into our commander simply because he acted the part of a gentleman. That man Hillyar is a bully, or he'd never come into the harbor with his men at quarters, an' I'll lay all my prize money against a herrin', that if he'd found us unprepared, his boarders would have been called away in short order."

"Then you think he really meant to attack us?" Phil, who had just come up, asked.

"What else could he have counted on doin'?" He was takin' the chances of gettin' the advantage in some way; but his consort didn't keep quite as near as he'd have liked, an' then when the ship was taken aback, he found himself at our mercy. If he wasn't up to mischief, why should he have come so close alongside before luffin'? Captain Porter wouldn't be fooled by the fine words thrown aboard the *Essex* when the Britisher was quakin' in his boots; but he acted the gentleman, as sailors always should, an' I ain't the man to blame him, though I do wish he could have seen it in his way to rake the *Phoebe* when she'd come into such a beautiful position for the work!"

The people aboard the *Essex Junior* were in quite as high a state of excitement as were we. When word was passed for

the boarders, Lieutenant Downes began warping his ship alongside the frigate in order that he might have a hand in the scrimmage, and now the *Junior* was so near that we could talk in whispers to her crew, who still overhung the rail.

I suppose Captain Porter knew full well how disappointed our people were because of having lost such a fine opportunity. He went below, calling some of the lieutenants after him, and it is in my mind that he did so simply in order that our old shellbacks might have a chance to ease their hearts by hard words.

The Britishers were at anchor, therefore all hands knew we would not have an encounter for some time to come; and after each man had talked himself hoarse over the matter, we began to turn our attention to other things.

Phil and I were eager to learn if Benson would be kept safely on board the *Junior*, and questioned some of her men regarding the villain.

"Don't worry your heads about him," one of the crew replied with a grin. "We've got no bloomin' marines here, an' every man jack of us has it well in mind that he's to get what's due him this time. He'll stay where he is until we make the home port, unless it so be that some of his friends overhaul us."

"Is there a brig aboard the *Junior*?" I asked.

"We've got what answers much the same purpose. He's ironed, an' made fast to a stanchion."

"How long are you to keep him?"

"Until you've given that Britisher the floggin' he deserves, an' ought to have had half an hour ago. Don't fear the Yankee-seller will give us the slip; an' if you're feelin' lonesome on his account, come aboard an' see him now an' then."

"No, thank you, we've had all we want of that fellow, although we'd rather take him on board if there's any chance of his getting overboard in the harbor," I replied with a laugh, feeling much relieved in mind at knowing that we were not to be burdened with him again immediately.

Simply to show that we of the frigate were not the only ones who believed Captain Hillyar had not spoken the truth when he apologized for coming alongside, I want to set down here that which was written by the historian Lossing many years after the occurrence, while I have been trying to put this yarn into something like proper shape for reading:-

He says: "It was afterward generally believed that Hillyar had positive orders to attack the *Essex*, even in a neutral South American port, and that his intentions were hostile, until the moment when he discovered his imminent peril in the power of the gallant American."

Twenty-four hours later the British ships stood out to sea, having taken on board whatever supplies they needed, and you may be certain they gave us a wide berth while passing. Our crew was at quarters, ready for any kind of a trick they might attempt; but Captain Hillyar had had quite enough of running us down; one experience was sufficient to show him that Yankee sailors in an unfriendly port are not easily caught napping.

Now all hands were certain the *Phoebe* would speedily show her willingness to engage us, for she was the heavier craft, and we remained with our nerves strung to their highest tension until it was shown plainly that the Britisher did not intend to tackle us except at that moment when it would be possible for her to take us at a disadvantage.

On the day after the two ships left the harbor we stood boldly out, with good reason to expect that a ship carrying so much metal as did the *Phoebe* would not hesitate to attack us even though the *Essex Junior* was near at hand; but, if you please, that valiant Captain Hillyar had no idea of fighting us on anywhere near even terms. His ship was superior to ours by at least twenty-five per cent, and yet when we were outside, ready for a fair battle, he refused to fight until the *Cherub* was in position to share a full half of the scrimmage.

It is not to be supposed that our commander would engage against both the Britishers, if it could be avoided. He was ready enough to show them of what stuff his crew was made; but did not propose to do so when it was impossible we could even so much as hold our own.

The days went by until four weeks had passed, we ready to fight the *Phoebe* alone, and Captain Hillyar showing the white feather on every occasion when an engagement was possible and the *Cherub* chanced to be at a distance.

Our men chafed and fumed at the cowardice, as we called it, but all in vain; and one day I asked Master Hackett flatly if he believed Captain Hillyar was afraid to tackle us.

"No, lad, I don't," he replied promptly. "It's showin' yourself a fool to claim that all the Yankees are brave, an' all the Britishers cowards. The commander of the *Phoebe* has had his orders to capture or sink us. He and his consort

together can readily do it, an' considerin' that he's got us bottled up where we've no choice as to comin' out, he counts to hold the advantage. From his standpoint it's all right, an' I'm not certain but that our commander would do much the same thing if the tables were turned."

It wasn't all idleness with us, however, as we waited for a chance to engage one or the other of the enemy singly.

Time and again we got under way as if determined to tackle them both, and, standing out of the harbor, gave the Britishers an opportunity of measuring speed with us. We might have shirked a battle by leaving the *Essex Junior* to her fate; but Captain Porter did not count on doing one or the other.

Each time we stirred up the Englishmen we came back to our anchorage again, as much as to say that we would leave in company with our consort, or not at all.

One day I overheard little Midshipman David Farragut talking with Lieutenant McKnight about a boat expedition which was to be sent out some dark night for the purpose of capturing the *Cherub*, and I burned to make one of the party; but when I spoke of it to my cousin he reproved me sharply, saying that it was not seemly for boys to be listening to the conversations of their superiors.

Now, I never looked upon midshipmen as my superiors. Of course they lived aft, and ordered the other boys, and old men for that matter, about in the most ferocious manner; but it seemed as if the lieutenant was stretching matters when he allowed that thirteen-year-old David Farragut's conversation should not be listened to by such as me, even though he was the captain's adopted son.

However, nothing came of the boat expedition, and perhaps no one save Midshipman Farragut seriously thought of such a rash venture.

It was on the 27th day of February when we believed the time had come for the battle; when Captain Hillyar gave every evidence of being willing to meet us singly.

The *Cherub* was fully a league to windward when the *Phoebe* ran in toward the entrance to the harbor, and hoisted a banner on which were the words, "God and Our Country; British Sailors' Best Rights: Traitors Offend Both." Then she fired a gun to windward, giving as plain a signal as sailormen could that she was ready for action.

You may well believe that we did not spend many minutes in getting under way, and on the *Essex* was flying a banner with this motto, one which we had run up many times before when coaxing the Britishers to stand up like men:--

"Free Trade and Sailors' Rights!"

It seems that the sail-makers had been at work on another banner, for as we came out of the harbor a second was run up to the masthead of the *Essex*, and on it in bold letters were the words:--

"God, Our Country, and Liberty; Tyrants Offend Them."

Our crew was at quarters, Phil and I among the rest, with the officers in fighting trim on the quarter-deck, and I heard little Midshipman Farragut say to one of the lieutenants:--

"This time we've got them, and we'll show how Yankees fight!"

I took a fancy to the lad from that moment, although I had seen but little of him previous to this last visit at Valparaiso; and even though he was a Spaniard by birth, it did not surprise me to hear him claim to be a Yankee, although he had no right to the name save by grace of his adopted father, our commander.

The crew cheered lustily when the *Phoebe* stood her ground until we were within range, and every man was worked up to the highest pitch of excitement as the order was given for us to let fly a broadside.

The cheers were changed to groans and yells a moment later, however, for the Britisher, instead of returning our fire, ran down and joined her consort.

After that, even Master Hackett allowed there must be a strain of cowardly blood in the make-up of Captain Hillyar.

Once more I set down what another^[4] has written, this time concerning the trick the Britisher played us that day:--

"This conduct excited a good deal of feeling among the officers of the *Essex*, who rightly judged that the challenge should not have been given if it was not the intention of the enemy to engage singly. Taking all these circumstances in connection, there can be little question that Captain Hillyar had been positively instructed not to fight the *Essex* alone, if he could possibly avoid it. As he bore the character of a good and brave officer, it is not easy to find any other reasonable solution of the course he pursued. His challenge off the port was probably intended as a ruse to get the

Essex into his power; for demonstrations of this nature are not subject to the severe laws which regulate more precise defiances to combat."

Well, we went back to our anchorage again, not in the best of spirits, for we believed firmly that we could whip the *Phoebe* in a fair fight, and every man jack among us, including several of the officers, had harsh words in his mouth regarding the British captain, Hillyar.

Within a very few days after this Captain Porter learned that other English frigates were working their way up to Valparaiso; and when the blockade should be stronger, it was almost positive both our ships would fall prizes to the enemy.

All this we heard from the marines, as a matter of course, and finally they brought that information which aroused us to the highest pitch once more.

It was said by these eavesdroppers that there had been a consultation of officers in Captain Porter's cabin, and it had been decided that we bend all our energies to giving the *Essex Junior* an opportunity of escape, while we would remain and take the brunt of the fight.

On some day in the near future, when the wind should be strong and favorable, we were to put out as if willing to meet both the Britishers. The *Essex* could outsail them, as had been proven several times already, and she was to run two or three leagues off the coast, knowing full well that the enemy would follow.

When we were hull down in the distance, the *Essex Junior* would get under way, and do her prettiest at doubling the Horn without running afoul of a British frigate.

Surely, it seemed as if that plan would work without a hitch, so our old sea-dogs argued, for the *Phoebe* and *Cherub* must follow us, since neither of them was willing to meet us singly, and they could not run the chance of waiting for the *Junior*, because we might be trying to save our own skins, which would not seem improbable in view of the fact that the frigate was the more valuable ship of the two.

By such a course we would not be bringing the matter to an issue as far as the *Essex* was concerned; but it would open the way for the *Junior* to make a home port and give tidings of us who were ready to venture all rather than have it believed we dared not stand up to a ship of our size, or even two of them.

Now we thought and talked of nothing save the scheme to outwit the Britisher, and it is safe to say that never a crew watched the sky more intently than did we, for a strong, favoring wind was to be the signal for getting under way, as we knew by this time from the officers as well as the marines.

We were to make a venture which might bring us to grief; but we believed firmly that the *Junior* would get safely out of the scrape.

FOOTNOTE:

[4] J. Fenimore Cooper.



CHAPTER XIV. THE BATTLE.

We were not kept long watching the weather, nor did we play the ruse exactly in the same manner which had been determined upon, as will be seen shortly.

It seems, as I afterward learned, that when the eavesdropping marines announced to us of the gun-deck that the scheme had been decided upon, our officers were as yet only discussing it.

To be precise, as one should be while setting down facts which go to the making up of history, it was not until the afternoon of March 27 when Captain Porter came to the conclusion that, under the circumstances, there was nothing better to be done than give the *Essex Junior* an opportunity to slip out of the harbor while we were leading the Britishers a long chase seaward.

In case the *Junior* got safely off, we would not soon again be troubled with Oliver Benson; for, as Master Hackett declared, there was every reason now why he should remain where he was, and, if all went right with us Americans, he would soon find himself in a prison from which he could not depart at will.

I will set down at this point, lest it be forgotten in that whirl of excitement which always comes over me when I ponder upon the thrilling deeds of bravery I witnessed within a few hours after Captain Porter had decided to give the *Junior* a chance for her life--I will set it down that from that 27th day of March I ceased to know aught concerning Oliver Benson. He was in irons on the evening before the gallant frigate was overtaken by misfortune, and there his history ends so far as I am concerned. Neither Phil nor I heard of the villain again, although in after years we made many inquiries concerning him.

And now I am come to that portion of my poor yarn where the *Essex* lost her "luck," and the losing of it cost the life of many a brave man, each of whom stood facing death with a cheer and a smile until the grim messenger gained the victory.

No time in my life stands out in memory so vividly as does the evening of March 27, 1814, and yet nothing of particular interest to a stranger occurred at that time. That portion of the crew not on duty had gathered well forward on the gun-deck, discussing the chances that the *Junior* would take in trying to weather the Horn when we knew that the Britishers had many ships between that point and a home port.

The majority of our men believed she would pull through all right, for Mr. Downes was a skilful and at the same time careful seaman, who would not run unnecessary risks. Besides this fact, our people still relied on the "luck of the *Essex*," for they were as yet ignorant of the fact that it had at last deserted the old frigate whose career had been so glorious.

There was much jawing and arguing on that evening, but in a friendly way. Never a man lost his temper, and, to the best of my knowledge, not a harsh word was spoken during that time of tongue wagging. All hands were in the best of spirits, thinking that soon we would show the Britishers a trick worth half a dozen of their clumsy ones, and believing we might yet prove the *Essex* to be a match for both the ships in the offing. It was the most enjoyable time I ever spent aboard the frigate, for on the eve of that terrible disaster we had forgotten entirely the dangers which threatened.

And now let me describe the entrance of Valparaiso harbor, for the better understanding of that which follows:--

It opens to the northward, being formed by a headland on its western side, and a cove that makes to the southward within it; the main coast sweeping round to the north and east again, affording the necessary protection.

When Phil and I turned in on this 27th day of March it was nearly a dead calm, with no indication landward that a stiff breeze was concealed by the fleecy clouds which had been lighted to a crimson glory by the setting sun.

Next morning on turning out we found the wind blowing half a gale from the southward, and the frigate leaping and plunging to the anchors as if bent on getting under way on her own account.

My first thought was that the moment had come when we might play our trick on the Britishers, and I went directly to Master Hackett to learn if there was any show of leaving port that day.

"I reckon we'll hold to the ground, lad," the old man said as he gazed around after the general fashion of sailormen before replying to a question regarding the weather. "That 'ere Britisher is so careful of himself that he mightn't think it safe to chase us very far at such a time, so it stands to reason we'll stay where we are till things look more promis'in'."

Having satisfied myself on this score, I went with Phil for our pannikins of tea and whatever the cooks might be

pleased to dish out in the shape of breakfast; but before we had succeeded in our purpose, and while yet standing in line, with a dozen men ahead of us, the ship gave a mighty plunge; we heard a noise like the muffled report of a 24-pounder, and the frigate swung around with a lurch that brought us up all standing against the starboard rail.

For the instant I was at a loss to understand what had happened, and then came the cry:--

"The port cable has carried away!"

The heavy chain had snapped under the enormous strain put upon it as the frigate made a wilder plunge than usual, and in an instant we were being driven stern foremost directly toward the entrance of the harbor, where could be seen, less than a mile in the offing, the two Britishers with everything snugged down to the gale.

In a twinkling there was a scene of apparent confusion on board the frigate, although as a matter of fact the seamen were working with a well-defined purpose, each intent on his portion of the task.

There was nothing to be done but crowd on all sail, and, whether we were ready or no, begin that trick which we believed would result in giving the *Junior* an opportunity of running the blockade.

Our men worked like beavers, and even Phil and I took a hand in pulling and hauling until the good frigate was well under way, staggering toward that jutting land known as the Point of Angels, a dangerous bluff to double in the best of weather, because of the sudden and violent squalls which are frequent there. As a rule all ships reef down while going around, and here was the *Essex* under full sail.

We expected the order which came a moment later, and the topmen were already standing by the rail to execute it.

In with the gallant-sails! We were going to haul close by the wind, counting on holding our weatherly position, and surely it seemed as if all would go as was desired; but the "luck" of the *Essex* had left her!

The Britishers were at such a distance that we might easily, by hugging the land, give them the slip, and then the chase would begin.

There was no time for tongue wagging. Every man stood at his post ready for the next command which might be given, and Phil and I, sheltered by the starboard rail and the fore-castle-deck, were breathlessly watching the old ship's gallant fight against both the elements and the enemy.

On the maintop four men stood ready to loose the canvas after we passed the danger point, and it was to me as if we had already doubled the bluff when there was a great crash, a swaying of the ship as if she had received a deadly wound, and we saw the maintopmast with its raffle of cordage trailing in the water alongside, pounding and threshing against the side as if bent on staving in the planks.

The four brave seamen went with the spar; but no effort could be made to save them. It was a case of holding on hard and running for dear life, otherwise the *Essex* would soon have been piled up on the rocks with all hands battling to keep off death a few seconds longer.

Phil gripped my arm till it was as if an iron band encircled it, and I believe of a verity that I ceased to breathe for a full minute.

To run before the wind with our top hamper dragging astern would have been to throw ourselves into the arms of the enemy, and while one portion of the crew were trying to cut away the wreckage, the remainder did their best to put the frigate about.

Even green lads like Phil and me understood that we could not beat up to our old anchorage, even though the frigate had not been wounded, and we gazed anxiously aft to learn what might be the course whereby we should slip past the Britishers and the yet more dangerous headlands.

That question was speedily answered when the *Essex* was headed directly across the harbor entrance to its northeastern side, and the anchors were let go within a pistol shot of the shore, just under a bluff on which was the Chilian battery.

I drew a long breath of relief. The ship was no more than three miles from the town; she lay hard by the land, and equally as much, if not more so, within a neutral port as before.

"That was a tight squeeze!" I said, bawling in Phil's ear, because the roar of the wind rendered ordinary conversation difficult; and he replied by saying:--

"At one time I counted it as a certainty that we must run on such a course as would allow the Britishers to rake us!"

At the same instant I noted the fact that while our crew should have been snugging down the canvas, they were moving here and there as if going to quarters, and, pouncing on Master Hackett who chanced to pass near at hand, I asked him for an explanation.

"Look yonder, lad," he cried. "Are you blind that you can't see both the Britishers comin' down upon us with motto flags and jacks set? The brave Captain Hillyar whom our commander spared when we might have sent him to the bottom, is countin' on tacklin' us while we're wrecked aloft, an' in no position to manoeuvre."

"But we're still in the port!" I cried, almost beside myself with astonishment and fear.

"He doesn't give a fig for the port, now we're the same as disabled. It's what the coward has been waitin' for, an' he'd take advantage of us if we were lyin' just off the town! A gallant Britisher he, who wouldn't give fair battle, but hangs off an' on till he finds us in a tight place! Show me a Yankee who'd play so contemptible a game, an' I'll help keel-haul him!"

The first boat's crew was called away to get a spring on our cable, and the *Phoebe* was bearing down upon us with her men at quarters, thus showing, if we had had any doubt before, that it was her intention to open the action when we were well-nigh helpless.

Our commander was not one to show the white feather, however great the danger. At every point where we could reeve a halliard, flags were hoisted, and orders were given to go to quarters, although if the spring was not got on the cable we might never be able to give them a broadside.

None but a bully and a braggart like Captain Hillyar would have attacked an enemy while in such a condition.

The *Phoebe* rounded to when nearly astern of us, and while our men were working at the spring she opened fire at long range. The *Cherub* hauled off our starboard bow and blazed away at the same time.

The engagement was on, and I hardly realized that I was taking part in as cruel a sea-fight as was ever waged. Phil and I served the ammunition for Nos. 1 and 2 guns, and so rapidly did our people deliver their fire that we were kept on the jump every minute.

I saw the men throwing sand on the decks, and forgot to be frightened. I even understood how necessary it was, how greatly it might be to my advantage in the work, for a 24-pound shot had come through one of the midship ports, killing three men and wounding as many more, and the red blood with its odor of salt flowing across the planks where no sand had been strewn, caused me to slip and slide as if on greased timbers.

My shirt was covered with blood; my throat smarted with the fumes of burning powder, and my eyes were half blinded by the smoke. Here and there lay the body of a shipmate who would never again answer to the call of his superior; a wounded man had crawled against the forward bulkhead and was trying to stanch the flow of life fluid, and amid it all I had no consciousness of fear. The fever of battle was upon me like a consuming fire, and my only thought, outside of the duties I should perform, was that we might be mowing down as many of their men as they were of ours.

Now and then I saw Phil dimly through the smoke as he passed me going to and from the magazine. His shirt had been torn away, or flung off, and thus, half-clad, begrimed with powder until one might have mistaken him for an African, he cheered whenever we succeeded in firing a broadside, or waved his arms now and then in response to some command from the gunners.

Now I heard a shout from the hatchway that a spring had been got on the cable, and as we sent a broadside toward the *Phoebe* or the *Cherub*, as the case might be, I added my voice to the others, exulting in the thought that we had sent death aboard the cowardly Britishers.

Again I heard the cry that our springs had been cut away by a shot, and was sensible of the fact that the gallant old frigate was being swung around by the wind until the after gunners were forced to cease work because they could not bring their pieces to bear.

Three several times did our brave fellows, working under the enemy's heavy fire, succeed in getting the springs on the cable, and as often were the hawsers shot away.

"The *Phoebe* is punishing us terribly," so I heard Midshipman Farragut say; but through an open port I saw the *Cherub* running down to leeward to take a position near her consort. Surely, we had given that ship enough, although not succeeding in doing the frigate any great injury.

The *Phoebe* was so far away that we had hardly a gun which could touch her, while because of her station and long pieces, she sent nearly every shot aboard us.

Then came a lull in the fighting, and I heard the word passed from one to the other that we were to get three long twelves out aft, and side by side with Phil I aided to the best of my ability in the work.

The Britishers poured in a heavy fire while we were thus engaged, and here, there, and everywhere on our decks were dead or wounded men before we got the new pieces in position.

Then our most skilful gunners were sent to the long twelves, and we lads brought ammunition till we were ready to drop from mingled excitement and fatigue, yet were hardly conscious of our condition, for now were our guns beginning to tell, and we could see that the Britishers were suffering as they had made us suffer.

Then, suddenly, a deafening cheer went up from our men, and running to one of the ports I squeezed my body out past the gun till I could see the *Phoebe* and *Cherub* hauling off like crippled ducks.

I believed the battle was at an end, and began to cheer like a crazy lad, when Master Hackett caught me by the shoulder with a jerk that brought me up all standing.

"I reckon the fumes of powder an' blood have gone to your head, lad. Quiet down a bit, or you'll need to be sent into the cockpit."

"We've whipped the Britishers!" I shouted, trying vainly to squirm out of the old sailor's grasp. "They thought to cut us up because we were well-nigh helpless, and it's themselves who've got the worst of it."

"Hold your jaw, you young monkey! This is no time for such crowin' as you're doin'. We've beat 'em off for a time, an' it's allowable we kick up a bit of a shindy over it; but the battle isn't ended by a long shot."

"Not ended?" I cried, coming to my senses in a measure. "Then why have the Britishers crawled away?"

"They've only hauled off for repairs, an' it stands you in hand to help make ready for what's yet to come. Stow your jaw, an' bear a hand with the rest of us!"

I was to "bear a hand" in moving the dead to one side where they would not hamper our movements, and aid in carrying the wounded below, as I soon saw, and straightway it was as if all strength had departed.

Now that the heat and excitement of the action was past for the time being, my stomach revolted at the horrible sights everywhere around, and, leaning out one of the ports, I yielded to the sickness which beset me even as it had when first we put to sea.

That I could have gloried in the terrible carnage; that I had passed the dead bodies of those who that morning had greeted me with a friendly word, and not felt my heart quiver, seemed incredible, and I shed bitter tears because of my hard-heartedness.

It was cruel as it was wicked, and I must have been possessed by a demon to have found a savage pleasure in such sickening work!

Almost without being aware of the fact I listened to a conversation among the men as to the injury we had received.

Eleven men had been killed outright, twenty-one were wounded, and two died after being carried into the cockpit. Our topsail sheets, topsail halliards, jib and foretopmast staysail halliards had been cut away, and almost the only canvas that could have been spread was the flying jib. How many shot had hulled us it was impossible to say; but, looking over the rail, one could see the big splinters sticking up here and there until it seemed that we must have been wounded in every square yard of hull on the stern and starboard side from the water line upward.

It seemed impossible that we could continue the action another moment, and yet our men were cheerily making preparations to renew the fight.

I believe it was the knowledge that we would soon be under fire again which aided me in so far pulling myself together that I could obey orders; and even when I was in the thick of the terrible work the sight of a pool of blood would cause an upheaval of my stomach, although when the wounds were received and I might have said a soothing word to the dying, all this carnage was as nothing.

It is beyond my poor skill with a pen to set down the second portion of this wicked fight into which we had been so cowardly forced, and also because I know very little of it from my own knowledge. When the Britishers came down upon us again the fever of battle took hold of me once more, and I was little less than crazy.

Here is the remainder of the story, at which Britishers should blush, as told by one who quietly pieced together the accounts given him by the survivors:--

"The enemy was not long in making his repairs, and both ships next took a position on the starboard quarter of the *Essex*, where it was not in the power of the latter vessel to bring a single gun to bear upon him, as he was too distant to be reached by carronades. His fire was very galling, and it left no alternative to Captain Porter between submission and running down to assail him. He gallantly decided on the latter. But by this time the *Essex* had received many serious injuries in addition to the loss of her topmast. The only sail that could be got upon the ship to make her head pay off was the flying jib, which was hoisted when the cable was cut, and the vessel edged away with the intention of laying the *Phoebe* aboard.

"The foretopsail and the foresail were not let fall, though for want of tacks and sheets they were nearly useless. Still the *Essex* drove down on her assailants, closing near enough to open with her carronades. For a few minutes the firing on both sides was tremendous, the people of the *Essex* proving their discipline and gallantry at that trying moment in a way to justify all the high expectations that had been formed of them, though their decks were already strewn with killed, and the cockpit was crowded with the wounded. This work proved too hot for the *Cherub*, which hauled off a second time, nor did she come near enough to use her carronades again, during the remainder of the action keeping up a distant fire with her long guns.

"The *Phoebe* discovered no disposition to throw away the immense advantage she possessed in her long eighteens; and when she found the *Essex's* fire becoming warm she kept edging off, throwing her shot at the same time with fatal effect, cutting down the people of her antagonist almost with impunity to herself. By this time many of the guns of the American ship were disabled, and the crews of several had been swept away. One particular gun was a scene of carnage that is seldom witnessed in a naval combat, nearly three entire crews falling at it in the course of the action. Its captain alone escaped with a slight wound.

"This scene of almost unresisting carnage had now lasted nearly two hours, and finding it impossible to close with his adversary, who chose his distance at pleasure, Captain Porter felt the necessity of taking some prompt measure if he would prevent the enemy from getting possession of his ship. The wind had hauled to the westward, and he saw a hope of running her ashore at a spot where he might land his people and set her on fire. For a few minutes everything appeared to favor this design, and the *Essex* had drifted within musket-shot of the beach when the wind suddenly shifted from the land, paying the ship's head off in a way to leave her exposed to a dreadful raking fire. Still, as she was again closing with the *Phoebe*, Captain Porter indulged a hope of finally laying that ship aboard.

"At this moment Lieutenant Commandant Downes came alongside the *Essex* in order to receive the orders of his commanding officer, having pulled through all the fire in order to effect this object. He could be of no use, for the enemy again put his helm up and kept away, when Mr. Downes, after remaining in the *Essex* ten minutes, was directed to return to his own ship and make preparations to defend, or, at need, to destroy her. On going away he carried off several of the *Essex's* wounded, leaving three of his own men behind him in order to make room in the boat.

"The slaughter in the *Essex* having got to be too horrible, the enemy firing with deliberation and hulling her at almost every shot, Captain Porter, as a last resort, ordered a hawser to be bent to the sheet anchor, and the latter let go in order to bring the head of the ship around. This effected the object, and once more the Americans got their broadside to bear, remaining stationary themselves, while their enemy, a good deal crippled, was drifting slowly to leeward. Even in these desperate circumstances a ray of hope gleamed through this little advantage, and Captain Porter was beginning to believe that the *Phoebe* would drift out of gun-shot before she discovered his expedient, when the hawser parted with the strain.

"There was no longer any chance of saving the ship. To add to his distress she was on fire, the flames coming up both the main and forward hatchways; and for a few moments it was thought she would thus be destroyed. An explosion of powder also occurred below, to add to the horrors of the scene, and Captain Porter told his people that, in preference to being blown up, all who chose to incur the risk might attempt to reach the shore by swimming. Many availed themselves of this permission, and some succeeded in effecting their escape. Others perished, while a few, after drifting about on bits of spars, were picked up by the boats of the enemy. Much the greater part of the crew, however, remained in the ship, and they set about an attempt to extinguish the flames, although the shot of the enemy was committing its havoc the whole time. Fortunately, the fire was got under, when the few brave men who were left went again to the long guns.

"The moment had now arrived when Captain Porter was to decide between submission or the destruction of the remainder of his people. In the midst of this scene of slaughter he had himself been untouched, and it would seem that he felt himself called upon to resist as long as his own strength allowed. But his remaining people entreated him to remember his wounded, and he at last consented to summon his officers. Only one, Lieutenant McKnight, could join him on the quarter-deck! The first lieutenant, Mr. Wilmer, had been knocked overboard by a splinter and drowned, while getting the sheet anchor from the bows; Lieutenant Cowell, the next in rank, was mortally wounded; Lieutenant

Odenheimer had just been knocked overboard from the quarter, and did not regain the vessel for several moments. The reports of the state of the ship were fearful. A large portion of the guns were disabled, even had there been men left to fight them. The berth-deck, steerage, wardroom, and cockpit were full of wounded, and the latter were even killed by shot while under the surgeon's hands. The carpenter was sent for, and he stated that of his crew, he alone could perform any duty. He had been over the side to stop shot-holes, when his slings were cut away and he narrowly escaped drowning. In short, seventy-five men, officers included, were all that remained for duty, and the enemy, in perfectly smooth water, was firing his long eighteens at a nearly unresisting ship, with as much precision as he could have discharged them at a target. It became an imperative duty to strike, and the colors were accordingly hauled down after one of the most remarkable combats to be found in the history of naval warfare.

"In this bloody contest the *Essex* had fifty-eight men killed, including those who soon died of their hurts, and sixty-six wounded, making a total of one hundred and twenty-four, or nearly half of all who were on board at the commencement of the action. Of the missing there were thirty-one, most of whom were probably drowned, either in attempting to swim ashore when the ship was on fire, or by being knocked overboard by splinters or pieces of rigging. Including the missing, the entire loss was one hundred and fifty-two out of two hundred and fifty-five.

"The *Essex*, with a very trifling exception while closing, fought this battle with her six long twelves, opposed by fifteen long eighteens in broadside, the long guns of the *Cherub*, and, a good deal of the time, while they lay on her quarter, by the carronades of both the enemy's ships. Captain Hillyar's published official letter makes the loss of the *Phoebe* four killed and seven wounded; that of the *Cherub* one killed and three wounded. Captain Tucker of the *Cherub* was wounded, and the first lieutenant of the *Phoebe* was killed.

"The English ships were cut up more than could have been expected under the circumstances, the latter having received no less than eighteen 12-pound shots below the water line. It would seem that the smoothness of the water rendered the fire very certain on both sides, and it is only to be regretted that the *Essex* could not have engaged under her three topsails from the commencement.

"The engagement lasted nearly two hours and a half, the long guns of the *Essex*, it is said, having been fired no less than seventy-five times, each, in broadside. The enemy must have thrown, agreeably to the statements made at the time, not less than seven hundred 18-pound shot at the *Essex*."



CHAPTER XV. ON PAROLE.

During the greater portion of that terrible time which has been so vividly described by one who afterward became familiar with all the horrible details, I had but little idea of what was going on, save among us on the gun-deck.

We had nothing to do with the poor efforts at handling the sorely wounded ship, and could only load and fire so long as a gun's crew remained alive.

When one fell dead or wounded at his task another was called to fill his place, and speedily the deck was so littered with the lifeless or the dying that some of us would be summoned to aid the surgeon's force in dragging them out of the way.

As during the first portion of the engagement, I was burning with the fever of battle, and had so little knowledge of what was being done that I could not have said whether one hour or ten had elapsed since the action was begun. It seemed to me as if we had been half an ordinary lifetime at this business, and I had stood so long beneath the shadow of the death angel's wings that I took it for granted I should be numbered with the slain when the conflict ceased, but gave no heed to such possibility.

Phil and I knew vaguely, because of the dreadful slaughter which followed, when the frigate's bow payed off while Captain Porter was trying to beach her, and we came to realize dimly--as though it was something which did not concern us personally--that we were being so badly cut to pieces as to make it certain our people must finally yield to the enemy; but above all was the one thought, a single desire, to do as much damage as possible to the Britishers before our ship went down.

Then, when we were in position where we could fire a broadside, we began to cheer once more, believing that after all our disadvantages we might compel the foe to retire; but our hearts did not sink, perhaps because we were too much excited to realize it, when the hawser of the sheet anchor parted, leaving us once again where we could be raked.

When the ship was on fire we ran to the spar-deck, yet fighting the flames, and neither Phil nor I knew until afterward that permission had been given the men to leap overboard and save themselves.

We would not have deserted the ship, however, because both of us were following Master Hackett very closely; it seemed much as though he had become a part of us, and we could do nothing save by his side or under his direction.

Why we three, when all those brave hearts were sent into eternity on that 28th day of March, should have escaped a wound I am unable to say; it must have been, as my mother said, that God was not yet ready to receive us into that portion of his kingdom that had been allotted us.

The old man took us lads by the hand when finally Captain Porter gave orders that the colors be hauled down in token of surrender, and there we stood as if unable to move or speak, when the Britishers came on board.

The living were allowed to bury the dead; the wounded were taken on shore, and then we were, with many others, sent on board the *Cherub*, where we were by no means badly treated. More than one Britisher on board that ship was ashamed, as I myself heard them say, at our having been attacked while disabled, and nearly all did whatsoever they might to ease the burden of grief and disappointment.

There is no good reason why I should set down here what we did or said during such time as we remained in the harbor of Valparaiso, for it would be sad reading. It can well be supposed that we mourned for our brave fellows who had been killed, and our hearts went out in sympathy to those wounded ashore; but as for ourselves, we could do nothing save exist.

Then came the day when it was made known that Captain Hillyar had decided it would be quite out of the question to hamper himself with so many prisoners, and the *Essex Junior* was to be converted into a cartel^[5] to take us home after we had given our paroles.

It seemed most wonderful that after passing through so many dangers we were really to see our native country once more. I wept tears of joy when the news came to me, and was not ashamed of so doing. During the fight, and for many a long day afterward, I thought of myself as so nearly in the clutches of death that I was already done with the things of this world.

When the arrangements had finally been made, however, we learned that my cousin, Lieutenant McKnight, Mr. Adams, the chaplain, Mr. Lyman, a master's mate, and eleven of our sailors had already been exchanged for some prisoners

taken from the *Sir Andrew Hammond*, and were then on board the *Essex Junior*.

Later, after we had sailed for the United States, my cousin and Mr. Lyman went to Rio de Janeiro in the *Phoebe* in order to give some testimony in behalf of the captors. From that port they sailed in a Swedish brig bound to England, and since that moment it has been impossible to learn aught concerning their fate. The captain of the brig declares that his passengers were sent on board the British sloop-of-war *Wasp*, at their own request. The *Wasp* was never heard from after she parted company with the brig; but it is my opinion, and shared by many, that Lieutenant McKnight and his companion were foully murdered by the Swede.

We left the port of Valparaiso with our papers in good order, and all on board rejoicing at the prospect of seeing their loved ones once more. At that time I believed nothing could tempt me to leave my mother again; but "once a sailor always a sailor" is the proverb, and I am inclined to think it has in it much truth.

The voyage was a prosperous one; we doubled Cape Horn without difficulty or incident, and had we but been in the good ship *Essex*, returning home after a successful cruise, the days would not have been long enough for all our happiness. As it was, however, we lived over and over again the past, discussing the battle which had cost us so dearly and left the poor old frigate a wreck in the harbor of Valparaiso, and speaking tenderly with many a choking sob of the shipmates who stood gallantly to their posts of duty until death struck them down.

Now we were returning on parole, the survivors of a ship's company which had struck their colors to the enemy, and it weighed us down, even though we knew full well that the cruise of the *Essex* had been of greatest value to our country.

We talked of the old ship as if she had once been a living thing, and regretted most deeply that we had not succeeded in beaching her, or that we had extinguished the flames when her hold was apparently a mass of fire.

In fact, we went over all the details of our voyage which was ending so sadly, never tiring during all the long weeks, and many times did we conjure up pictures of our shipmates who had been left behind on Nukuheva, wondering what they would do after months had passed and we failed to return, or speculating upon the possibility that they would attempt the homeward cruise in one of the prizes.

Poor fellows! While we spoke of them as living happily and amid plenty, they were battling for life, as I may one day set down in detail, if it so be that this feeble apology for a landsman's yarn finds favor with those who may read it.

The voyage on the cartel was a prosperous one, as I have already said, and in due time we were off the port of New York, believing that within a few hours, at the longest, we would be at liberty to go wheresoever it pleased us. The *Essex Junior* was no more than thirty miles from land when we sighted a Britisher who speedily gave us to understand that we must heave to and show our papers.

The stranger proved to be the *Saturn*, a razee (meaning a ship-of-war cut down to a smaller size by reducing the number of decks), commanded by Captain Nash.

We had not supposed there might be any question of our detention, for we had a passport in due form from Captain Hillyar; but this Britisher took it into his head that there must be something wrong with our craft; he even questioned the right of Captain Hillyar to parole us, and ended by giving the order that we lay by him during the night.

Immediately visions of a British prison danced before our eyes. We had been forced into a fight when our ship was little better than a wreck, by one Englishman, and now here was another who proposed to take in charge a lot of paroled men who were free to sail to their port of destination according to the usages of war among all nations.

After a time of jawing and tongue wagging among our sailors, we came to believe that Captain Porter was the one whom the Britisher particularly desired to hold; for surely he could have no wish to hamper himself with a lot of seamen whom he must, beyond a peradventure, set at liberty when his government learned the facts in the case.

What they would do with our captain no one seemed to so much as guess; we had decided among ourselves that some indignity would be put upon him, and when the word was passed from one to another that Captain Porter was inclined to make his escape in one of the small boats, every man jack volunteered to pull him ashore.

To row a ship's boat thirty miles, with the chances of being lost in the fog which was even then creeping over the waters, seemed like a desperate undertaking; but when Master Hackett, who had been selected by the crew as their spokesman, went aft and made known to Captain Porter what they desired to do, he accepted the offer without hesitation.

One of our boats was launched to leeward, where she might not be seen by those on the razee, and our commander, with little Midshipman Farragut by his side, lowered himself into the stern-sheets after the crew were at their stations.

Six hardy seamen gave way at the oars, and Phil and I waved our hats in parting at Master Hackett, whom we did not see again until many a long day had passed.

The Britisher caught a glimpse of the small boat as she pulled out past our ship, and he pitched a shot after her as a signal to heave to; but the old shellbacks who sat at the oars were not the kind to be frightened by the burning of British powder. They had sniffed the odor many times before, and if they would voluntarily remain on a burning ship while the enemy was plugging ball after ball into her as if she had been no more than a target, they could be depended upon to hold their course regardless of Captain Nash and the raze *Saturn*.

Before the Britishers could fire at them again they were lost to view in the fog, and, as we learned two days afterward, landed in safety on Long Island.

Next morning Captain Nash, after examining our papers once more, gave us permission to continue the voyage, and before nightfall we were lying in the harbor of New York, rejoicing at having escaped death or a British prison.

Yes, we were made much of, once it was known in the city who we were, but of that there is no reason why I should speak at any length.

I should add, however, that after sailing and rowing sixty miles or more, the boat in which was our commander arrived at Babylon, on the south side of Long Island, and even then her occupants were not free from trouble. Captain Porter was suspected by the citizens of being a British officer, and but for the fact that he had his commission from Congress in his pocket, he might have been detained.

He made his way to New York, where he was received with demonstrations of most profound respect; and when the exploits of the *Essex* had been told, every city, village, and hamlet in the country sung the praises of the frigate and those who manned her.

Phil and I went home as soon as it was possible to escape from those who were eager to show their admiration of what had been done by the *Essex*, and I carried in my pocket a song which was made especially for the frigate. It was printed and sold on the streets; there was in the verses no little praise for all hands; but the lines I set down here pleased me more than all the rest, since they referred to that gallant sailor who by his skill and courage had made it possible for any of us to see home again.

"From the laurel's fairest bough
Let the muse her garland twine,
To adorn our Porter's brow,
Who, beyond the burning line,
Led his caravan of tars o'er the tide.
To the pilgrims fill the bowl,
Who, around the southern pole,
Saw new constellations roll,
For their guide."

FOOTNOTE:

[5] A ship employed in the exchange of prisoners, or in communicating with the enemy.

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