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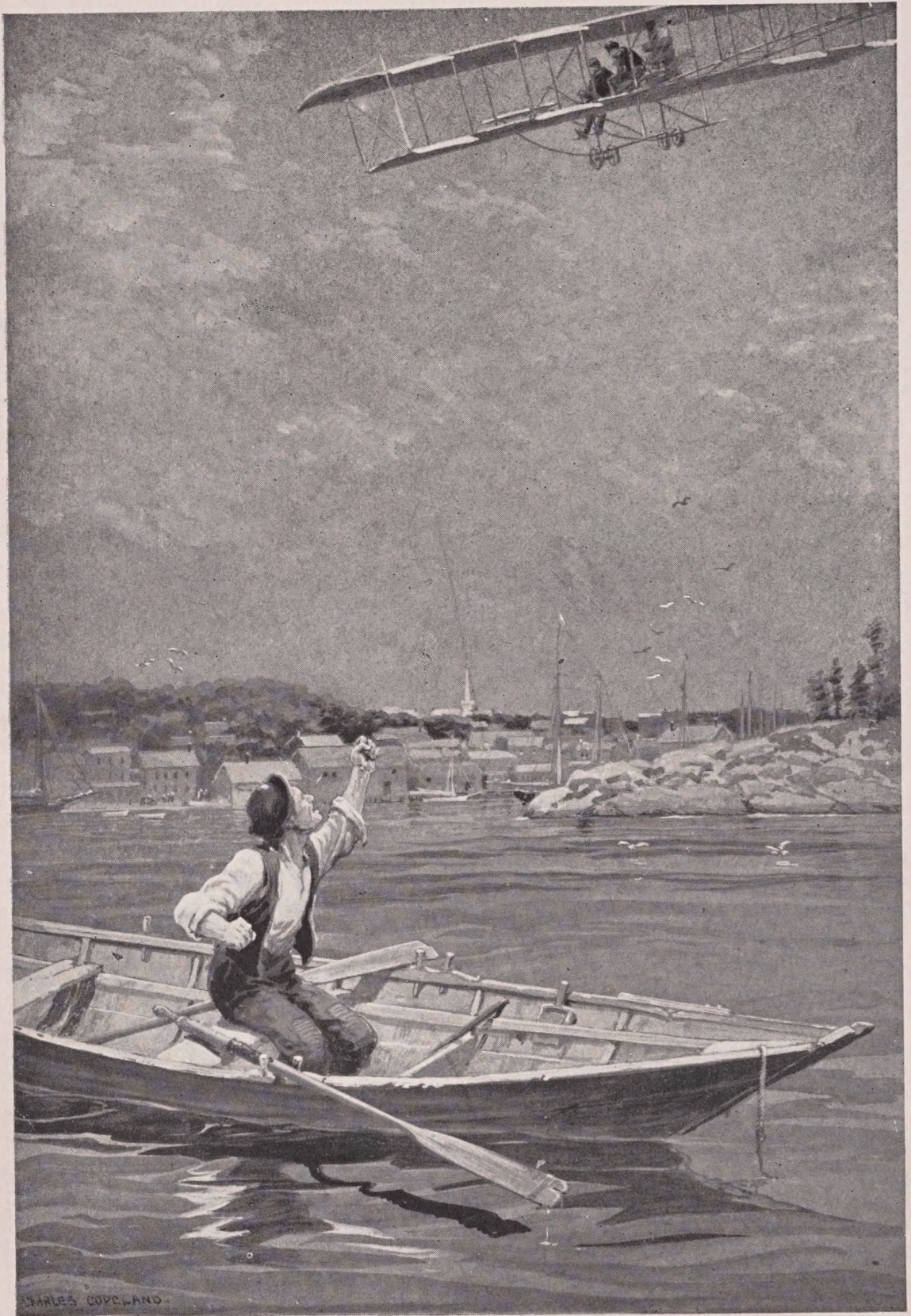
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NEW YORK









See p. 339.

"DON'T CROW TOO SOON!"



# The Aeroplane at Silver Fox Farm

BY

JAMES OTIS *Kaler*

AUTHOR OF "THE WIRELESS STATION AT SILVER FOX  
FARM," "TWO STOWAWAYS," ETC.

*ILLUSTRATIONS BY COPELAND*

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# THE AEROPLANE AT SILVER FOX FARM

## CHAPTER I

### UNWELCOME NEWS

“PARDONED. Yesterday the Governor and Council granted an unconditional pardon to John Edward Bingham, who was convicted last October of a murderous assault upon Zenas Cushing at Barren Island, where is located a farm for the raising of silver foxes. Cushing is an employé of Sawtelle & Simpson’s, owners of the farm, and while engaged in his duties was, so it had been shown, set upon, without provocation, by Bingham, and beaten savagely. At the trial last October the jury, without leaving their seats, found the prisoner guilty, and he was sentenced to a two-years’ term of imprisonment. Bingham’s reputation is none of the best; he has been engaged in many disreputable, if not unlawful, ventures, and the fishermen along the coast claim to have suffered in the past through his disposition to take that which is not his own. It is now claimed that the man cannot live many months, he being a victim of tuberculosis, and the only reason for granting a pardon was that the old man might die at home.”

THE article as it appears here was read aloud from a newspaper by Paul Simpson, a lad of fifteen or sixteen years of age, to his particular friend and partner in a scheme of wireless telegraphy, Ned Bartlett, and Zenas Cushing, the victim of the assault referred to by the reporter.

The two lads and the young man were on what is set down on the maps as Barren Island, better known



to-day as Silver Fox Farm, situated about twenty-two miles from the mainland.

Ned Bartlett had just passed a successful examination at the Seaview Academy, having failed dismally the year previous when Paul was graduated, and the boys had come over to the island to take up their duties for the season, which consisted in operating the wireless apparatus which connected Silver Fox Farm with the little port of Seaview, and acting as assistants to Mr. Sawtelle, one of the owners.

Daniel Downs, the farmer on the island, had just brought to them the last issue of the *Seaview Sentinel*, and the article which appears above, being on the front page in a most conspicuous position, had at once attracted Paul's attention.

"Say, what's tuber—ber—ber— What's that thing the paper says is goin' to kill John Ed Bingham off inside of a few months?" Zenas Cushing asked as Paul ceased reading and looked in amazement at his companions.

"It means that he is afflicted with consumption," Ned replied quickly, and Zenas suddenly lost all control of his temper.

"Consumption? John Ed with consumption? See-in's how that's somethin' he couldn't steal, I'm allowin' the old villain has shut the eyes of the Governor an' his Council, whatever that last may be, for I'll go bail he never come by anythin' honestly, not even the tooth-ache! Let him out so's he can die at home, eh? Why, he never had a home of his own, 'cept it might be that old dory of his'n, an' it was stole from the



schooner *Mary Jane*. Die? Why, lads, John Ed will be dancin' on our graves, an' figgerin' if it would be worth his while to carry off the head-stones, before he dies a nat'ral death. What a thick-head that 'ere Governor must be!"

"Do you suppose he'll be bold enough to show his face on Barren Island?" Paul asked, as if simply giving words to his thoughts, and Zenas cried in a passion:

"He'd show his face anywhere, now that he's got a pardon, an' it stands us in hand to watch out for the old scoundrel. I don't reckon he could do very much harm to the foxes, 'cause they're feelin' at home, as you might say, an' have got a lot of kittens; but what about Mr. Sawtelle's crazy idee of buildin' a flyin' machine? John Ed would soon play hob with sich work, even if it is foolish, in case he got it inter his wicked head that it might go toward payin' off the score that he's worked up against this 'ere farm."

"And we must spend our time this summer as we did last, on guard against John Ed Bingham," Paul said half to himself, and Zenas added:

"I reckon that's the size of it, lad. You can set it down as a fact that John Ed is jest achin' to get even with your father an' us, countin' that we had no right to have him arrested, an' it's as plain as the nose on my face that he'll be snoopin' 'round here inside of a week. Now, as you know, I can't work up any faith in the idee that Mr. Sawtelle can build what he calls an aeroplane—that is, a machine that'll really fly, yet at the same time I'd hate mightily to see him stopped



in his work by sich as John Ed, for the owner of the *Nera* comes precious near bein' what you may call a white man."

And now for a few words in explanation, for the benefit of those who have not read an account of how a wireless station was built on Barren Island for the better protection of the six silver foxes which had been brought to that place from Russia:

Paul's father had come to believe that much money might be made by raising silver foxes for their fur, which is very valuable, and had, one year prior to the publication of the newspaper article concerning the pardon of John Edward Bingham, set free on Barren Island three couples of the rare animals.

This same Bingham so lately given his liberty, had done his best to steal the foxes, and caused Mr. Simpson and those in his employ no little trouble and anxiety, until he was arrested and sent to prison. It was during this season, when Ned Bartlett was working hard to pass the examination he had failed in at the academy the year previous, and at the same time trying to attend to the wireless station he and Paul had built at Seaview, that a message had come through the ether telling of a disabled yacht, the *Nera*, far out to sea.

Paul Simpson and Zenas Cushing had carried to her crew the aid they needed for the saving of their lives, and the result was that the yacht's owner, Chester Sawtelle, a wealthy gentleman, had purchased a half-interest in the odd farm established on Barren Island, for the double purpose of taking part in the experiment



of raising silver foxes, and building one or more types of craft for the navigation of the air.

Barren Island was an ideal place for this last proposition, being twenty-two miles from the mainland, and so small that a few men could successfully patrol the shore for the purpose of preventing a landing by the inquisitive or mischievous. For the better carrying out of both schemes, the wireless stations at Seaview and on the island had been increased in power until it was possible to receive messages from a distance of many hundred miles. A dwelling had been built on the northern end of the island, near what was known as Swallow-tailed Cove, for the accommodation of the partners in the enterprise and certain of their assistants.

The farmer, who was living on the island when Mr. Simpson set the foxes free, still occupied the house on the west side, and in his family were his wife and two sons, Ernest and Sam Downs. The *Nera*, a schooner-rigged yacht of sixty feet in length, which had been saved from wreck through the exertions of Zenas and Paul, was anchored in the one harbor of the island, and near by were a Hampton dory with a 6-horse-power motor, and a smaller craft of less power, both owned by Paul Simpson.

Barren Island rises out of the sea for a length of about three miles, having a width of a mile and a half, and standing, save at the north and south ends, about thirty to forty feet above the ocean level. At the north end is a cove formed by two long reefs, which can be used as a haven when the tide is half-flood; but



after the water falls lower than that the jagged rocks at the entrance form an impassable barrier. At the south end there is little or no possibility of landing even in a small craft, owing to the many reefs, therefore in the small harbor on the west side the only safe anchorage can be found.

All this description of Silver Fox Farm is but a repetition of what has already been told at considerable length in the story of "The Wireless Station," but it is set down here for the benefit of those who may not have read that book.

Ned Bartlett had been graduated from Seaview Academy, and at the beginning of this summer was enrolled as one of the assistants, together with Paul and Zenas, in Mr. Sawtelle's scheme. The silver foxes needed but little care, now that they were domesticated and had begun to breed, and such work in their behalf as might be necessary was to be performed by Farmer Downs and his two sons.

The information gained from the newspaper brought by Daniel Downs, had caused the boys no little anxiety, as has been seen; but they were not so greatly disturbed as was Mr. Downs himself, who had good cause to fear for the result when John Ed Bingham set about paying off old scores.

"It ain't for me to say, after all that's happened, anythin' 'bout the foolishness of a man's tryin' to fly," Mr. Downs interrupted, the expression of fear on his face deepening as he spoke; "but whether I approve of what Mr. Sawtelle is tryin' to do, or whether I



don't, it'll be all the same now John Ed is at liberty to cut up his old capers agin."

"Then you believe he will be bold enough to come to Barren Island?" Paul said questioningly, half to himself; and the old man replied emphatically:

"I'm as certain of it, lad, as if I could see him comin' ashore this blessed minute. John Ed has al-lers claimed that he'd get square with anybody that crossed his path, an' seein's how Mr. Sawtelle had as much to do with his arrest as your father, I'm allowin' that this 'ere island is the first place he'll strike. I shan't lay down in my bed at night without fearin' the house will be burned over my head before mornin', an' as for claimin' that we can prevent him from makin' a landin', it's nothin' more nor less than idle talk. He'll go where he pleases."

"I'm not so certain about that, Mr. Downs," Zenas Cushing said grimly. "We've got quite a crew here, countin' in them as are hired to run the *Nera*, an' if we can't stop one man from comin' ashore, it's time we let ourselves out to some old woman's sewin' circle."

"But if the scheme of building a craft that can be sailed in the air is carried out, we shall have something more to do than stand guard against John Ed Bingham," Paul interrupted, and Ned added:

"Mr. Sawtelle says that from the time we begin work on the craft which he is so certain can be made to fly, no person must be allowed to get a glimpse of what is being done, and unless men are hired from



Seaview whenever the *Nera* is away, as she will be many times this season according to what has been said, we shall be short-handed, what with building aeroplanes by day and watching for John Ed at night."

"That's where you're right," Mr. Downs cried as if the truth of his assertion had been proved by Ned's remark. "You can't keep that old villain from workin' his will, no matter how hard you try."

"We contrived to do that same thing last summer," Zenas said stoutly, "an' I'm allowin' it can be done agin. Say, we're actin' as if we'd lost our senses. Jest think of what has been done. Your father, Paul, set out to raise silver foxes, beginnin' last summer, an' in spite of John Ed an' all the gang he could bring with him, the thing has been done in mighty good shape, if six or eight young ones count for anythin', an' I'll go bail we've got as many as eight, every one in a healthy condition. Last summer all we had was the shanty for the wireless, an' the farmhouse, with one good power boat, an' another that didn't count for much. This year we've got as fine a place to live in as can be found around Seaview, with Mr. Downs's shack to boot, sayin' nothin' 'bout the dandiest yacht that ever cruised on this 'ere coast, an' with a full crew of what might be called able men on board——"

"If it was any other than John Ed, I'd say we could obey orders by keepin' strangers away," Mr. Downs began in a mournful tone, and Zenas interrupted him sharply:



"He's no different from an hundred others than can be found hereabout. The trouble is that he has scared you out'er your boots, an' you've come to believe that the old smuggler is the only thing on earth. To tell the truth, I'm hopin' this *will* be the first place he'll strike for, 'cause I don't allow he has paid up for the clip I got over the head last summer. Let him show his red nose around here once more, an' I'll make him wish his cake was dough."

"Same as you did when he towed you off shore, an' let you set yourself adrift without an oar in the dory," Mr. Downs said in what he intended should be an ironical tone.

"I'm willin' to admit that he did play it on me that time; but I've cut one or two eye teeth since then, an' matters won't go so nearly to his likin'," Zenas replied with a cheery laugh. "I'm hired to hang 'round Barren Island lookin' after silver foxes, or helpin' to build contraptions that may fly or may not, an' in the meanwhile to keep outsiders from comin' ashore. That's what I'm paid good money for, an' you'll see, Daniel Downs, that I'll earn my wages."

"I reckon you will, all right, if you stop John Ed from comin' ashore when his mind is set on makin' a landin'," the old man replied as he wheeled about to show that, so far as he was concerned, the conversation had come to an end.

"Let's get a move on, lads," Zenas said after having watched the old farmer while he went slowly toward his home with bowed head as if fate had dealt him



a heavy blow. "If we're to hear 'bout this 'ere crow-chasin' business, it's time we toddled up to our quarters where, I'm free to say, we're lodged in better shape than if we owned the best house in Seaview. Mr. Sawtelle don't spare the dollars when he starts in to do anythin'; but only think of buildin' such as that 'ere hotel on Barren Island!" and Zenas motioned toward the two-story building with broad verandas running entirely around it, which had been erected as a wireless station and a temporary home for the partners in the scheme of raising silver foxes.

Zenas seldom spoke of the building other than as "the hotel," and when he learned that he and the two boys were to live in it, with the owners of the farm, his happiness was complete. Instead of roaming around the island regardless of the weather or the time, as had been his wont during the first season when there was no work to be done except make certain that strangers did not come ashore, he never seemed to be at ease save when admiring the interior of the house.

Therefore it was that at this moment, when the discussion regarding what it might be possible for John Ed Bingham to accomplish in the way of mischief had come to an end, Zenas bent his steps toward the "hotel," the two boys following close at his heels, and surely it seemed as if they could not have arrived at a more opportune moment had they obeyed the summons of a messenger sent especially to demand their presence.

In that apartment, half library, half drafting-room,



the new-comers found the owners of the island bending over a multiplicity of plans drawn on stout paper, which were spread on a long table used for such purposes, and Mr. Sawtelle said cheerily as they entered:

“You are come in the nick of time. I have proposed to Mr. Simpson that we go briefly into the history of air craft before I explain in details these plans which will be used for our guidance during the summer’s work, and it is well that you should hear what I have to say. Don’t fear that I intend to read a long and musty lecture,” he added laughingly on seeing the look of dismay which overspread the face of Zenas. “It seems necessary you should have a clear understanding of what we count on doing, to the end that you may proceed more intelligently, for the building of such a vessel as these plans represent means careful, painstaking labor, rather than downright hard work.”

“If you can’t drive this business of flying inter my head any better than Paul did his plan of telegraphin’ without wires, then your time will be thrown away, so far as I’m concerned, sir,” Zenas said as if apologizing for not being able to comprehend that which has puzzled many another.

“I shall at least be able to convince you that what we are about to do is no longer an untried experiment; for it is an established fact that men can navigate the air, and have done so even to the extent of carrying passengers from one city to another at specified times and without deviation from a regular course.”



Zenas gave vent to a long-drawn sigh, as if about to submit to some disagreeable operation, and seated himself by the window where he could overlook the West cove; but the lecture on air-ships was not delivered immediately, because Paul believed it necessary to inform his father of John Ed's release from prison.

"The fellow will not attempt to make any more trouble on Barren Island," Mr. Sawtelle said confidently; but Paul's father appeared far from being as positive. "In case he should come here, we will proceed against him for trespass, if no more serious charge can be made, and it is safe to say he will not care to venture on a second visit."

"It will be necessary to keep a strict watch from now on," Mr. Simpson added with a glance at Zenas, who nodded energetically as if to say he fully agreed with such a proposition, and the owner of the *Nera* proceeded without further delay to enlighten his small audience on what had already been done by way of navigating the air.

"In the first place," Mr. Sawtelle began as if to interrupt any further discussion regarding what John Ed Bingham might be able to do, "air craft may properly be divided into three divisions. The first is the aerostat, or in other words, that which we ordinarily call the balloon, and which, as you well know, is not dirigible——"

"That's where you've got me the first pop!" Zenas exclaimed grimly. "I knew it wasn't any use for me to get such things into my mind, 'cause you must



understand that I'm only what you might call one of these ordinary, every-day fishermen."

"What have I said that you fail to comprehend?" Mr. Sawtelle asked in surprise.

"That 'ere thing that you allowed balloons were not—whatever it may be."

"Dirigible," Mr. Sawtelle replied with a smile, "which means, capable of being directed, as for instance, when you and Paul were adrift in the dory, she was not dirigible because you had nothing by which to steer or direct her course."

"If you had said that in the first place, I would have been able to follow the sermon, so to speak," Zenas muttered half to himself, and Mr. Sawtelle continued:

"The first division of air craft then, is the ordinary balloon. In the second class may be included airships such as have been built by Zeppelin, Santos Dumont and those inventors who have been striving, and have succeeded, in constructing a vessel which can be handled in the ether equally as well as we manage a craft on the water. These aerostats follow more the model of a sailing ship, so far as length of hull is concerned, and are provided with small planes and rudders, having also power with which to work a propeller. Then comes the aeroplane of many types, which in the main are provided with a motor, and so designed as to rise or dive in the air at the will of the operator."

"Have we got to learn all this so as to be able to tell him about it afterwards?" Zenas whispered to Ned, and the latter shook his head laughingly with



a gesture toward Mr. Sawtelle, as if to say that the speaker should not be interrupted.

“In order that you may the better understand this last style of air craft, I propose to read from that description which has attracted my attention to the simplicity of certain types of air-ships,” Mr. Sawtelle continued, and then, taking up a magazine, he read the following:

“Broadly speaking, the lines on which experiments with aeroplanes have run seem to divide themselves into two. First, the aeroplane which primarily depends for its successful flight upon the adroitness in manipulation of the operator, who, by an intelligent anticipation of the direction of the diverse air currents or winds encountered, or by a prompt conformation thereto, balances his machine to suit the immediate necessity of the case. Second, the type which endeavors, by a scientific arrangement of planes, tails, etc., to adjust itself automatically to the diverse conditions which arise, thus sparing the manipulator as much as possible.

“It is, of course, and always will be, impossible to make an aeroplane absolutely automatic so long as nature is what it is; and this being so, it will never be possible to travel through the air in any machine without long and careful training, which is a matter I shall refer to later.

“The helicopter, or aeroplane, is at present very much in its infancy, owing to the low efficiency of its propellers; but if we recollect what motor-cars were,



even only ten years ago, the present difficulty as regards helicopters may, in ten years' time, be looked upon with pity and surprise. Certainly of all the classes of flying machines, short of the actual bird, the helicopter offers the greatest potential advantages. It should be able to rise direct from an enclosed space, to hover over any desired spot, at any height desired, to advance, retire, or move to one side without a wide sweeping movement, and descend at any desired place, even if surrounded with high objects.

"The Wright Brothers, I believe, worked for eight years on their machine, and now look at the result; every failure they recorded was an advance in experience.

"The Germans, all honor to them, stimulated by Count Zeppelin's earlier failures and successes, contributed by public subscription in a few weeks nearly \$300,000 to assist him to retrieve his former disasters and push forward with fresh experiments."

"Perhaps it may be as well," Mr. Sawtelle said abruptly as he ceased reading, "for me to tell you somewhat of that which Count Zeppelin has done with his type of air-ship—a very large craft such as doesn't really concern us in our work here on Barren Island, save that it may be interesting."

"If it don't concern us, what's the use of makin' so much talk about it?" Zenas whispered to Paul. "He's got me where I can't understand head or tail of anythin'."

Paul made no reply, for the very good reason that



Mr. Sawtelle, ignorant of the fact that one of his hearers was growing restless, continued his story, or lecture, whichever it may be called.

“It is already a fact that Count Zeppelin has made a successful voyage of nine hundred miles, carrying twenty-six passengers in a ship about four hundred fifty feet long, and fifty feet wide.

“It had a strong aluminum frame of sixteen sides, and of a general cylindrical appearance, with bomb-shaped ends. The interior was divided into seventeen compartments, each holding an ordinary balloon, the whole having a combined volume of three hundred ninety thousand cubic feet. The middle frame was covered with rubber cloth coated with pegamoid, which is a certain preparation of graphite, and this skin not only furnished a smooth surface and protected the gas-bags against damage and the influence of the weather, but the insulating air-space decreased the changes of temperature, which cause a rise and fall of the balloon accordingly as the gas is expanded or contracted. Thirty-three feet below the frame were hung two aluminum boats, each provided with a 16-horse-power motor, harnessed to four-bladed air-propellers, with a diameter of only about four feet, and rotating one thousand times a minute.

“All this, as I have said, has nothing to do with our intended experiment; but serves to show that we’re not searching for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, but working on something already proven practical.”

“It’s no use, I can’t stand this,” Zenas whispered to



Paul with a sigh as Mr. Sawtelle ceased speaking for an instant. "I did think I had some kind of an idee as to what he was drivin' at when this thing was talked about last summer; but now I'm all mixed up, an' the longer I stay here the worse I'll grow."

Then Zenas would have left the room, regardless of the seeming indignity to the speaker, had not Paul forcibly detained him.

"There are many rivals to Count Zeppelin's type of air-ship, and these we will discuss at some later time," Mr. Sawtelle said as, throwing off his air of lecturer, he seated himself at the table as if prepared to carry on a friendly conversation, whereupon Zenas whispered emphatically:

"You can bet he won't find me anywhere 'round when he makes more of sich talk, an' I wouldn't be here now if I'd had an idee of what he was goin' to say."

"Our work here on the island will be what might be called 'fussy' rather than really laborious," and Mr. Sawtelle arranged the plans on the table as if believing the boys might want to study them. "We are counting on building an aeroplane somewhat smaller in general design than that used by the Wright Brothers, and unless the planes, which are really the wings, are set exactly correct, and adjusted to the fraction of an inch—unless every tiny wire takes its due proportion of the strain, our work will have been in vain. The adjustment of a bicycle or an automobile is rough work as compared with that of an aeroplane, and it must be our care to see that every part



of the task is done thoroughly well, with no attempt at haste, but a constant striving after perfection, else it were better we had never begun."

"An' I'm thinkin that it's best to stop before makin' a beginnin'," Zenas muttered so loudly that Mr. Sawtelle could not fail of hearing him, and, regardless alike of Ned's gestures and Paul's attempt at restraint, Master Cushing left the room.



## CHAPTER II

### AIR-SHIP PLANS

NED and Paul expected to hear a sharp comment from Mr. Sawtelle when Zenas so unceremoniously left the room before the owner of the *Nera* had come to an end of his remarks concerning air-ships; but much to their surprise he seemed amused, and said as if he had been expecting some such move on the part of the general assistant:

“He remained even longer than I had anticipated. Zenas has no faith in our ability to build a craft in which one may navigate the air, and, consequently, lacks the necessary patience to master the subject as it should be mastered if we are to work intelligently. I am assuming that you lads, who are willing to admit it may be possible to succeed, even though you are far from being sanguine, would be willing to hear more regarding what has been done.”

“Indeed we would, sir,” Paul made haste to reply, for, as a matter of fact, he had not given any particular attention to the matter before, even though it had been agreed the season previous that an air-ship of some kind was to be built on Barren Island.

The boys had discussed the matter in a perfunctory sort of way, as might have been expected; but not to such an extent as to understand very much regarding Mr. Sawtelle’s plans, except that he hoped to build such a craft as could be sailed in the air, therefore both were deeply interested in his explanations.



Without apparently giving further heed to Zenas, Mr. Sawtelle read the following from a magazine in which the question of practical air-shipping was treated at considerable length:

“Each test of successive air-ships has marked a step nearer the goal. In the spring of 1909 the war air-ship *Zeppelin I* flew to its destination on a forty-mile wind, making seventy miles an hour. Since that time all air currents in Germany have been charted for navigation. From a system of wireless stations, hourly advices of the winds are available by all imperial air-ships. This means that within the coming year, air-ships with passengers and mail may cross the ocean in one and a half to two days.

“It is now known that aerial space will support great weights; clouds carry for long distances enormous loads of rain and snow, before depositing their cargoes. Germany has proved that the ship in air and the ship in water are in many respects identical; an increase in size and in power of the machinery has with each resulted in an increase of speed and endurance. Within two years, the air-ship’s speed has grown from thirty-two to thirty-eight miles an hour.

“The largest German air-ships glide against the air from a quarter to a half-hour after their engines have been stopped, exactly as an ocean vessel moves forward after its speed has been checked. Stronger hulls have made air-ships more airworthy; with tougher gas-chambers, they leak only thirty to forty pounds of gas in twenty-four hours, instead of an hundred, as a year ago. As auxiliary power all air-



ships now carry four instead of two engines, with space for more passengers, now that the problem of controlling gas has been worked out.

“Germany’s greatest achievement is not the technical perfection of the air-going craft; she has learned how to use the air currents, as birds do in traveling. This is a science; the ship only its instrument. Airships will double and treble their speed by acting in harmony with the forces of Nature, the primal speed-maker.”

Then Mr. Sawtelle stopped reading to say with a smile:

“All this concerns a different type of craft from that which we propose to build. I have only referred to these matters that you may the better realize how well begun is the task of navigating the air. Here are the plans for our ship, varying slightly from the aeroplanes used by the Wright Brothers, and I hope you will study them until understanding every detail, to the end that you may be able to work with me intelligently, for he who is ignorant of the end to be attained must of necessity be a bungler in the labor.”

“Then we can set it down as a fact that Zenas will be of little assistance in the building of an aeroplane,” Ned said laughingly. “He not only fails to understand what you would do, but has little faith that it can be accomplished, and is not willing to spend overly much time in gaining the particular knowledge that you require of him.”

“I am not at all surprised because Zenas is a skeptic, and, being so, is not inclined to master the



theory of air navigation," Mr. Sawtelle replied in a matter-of-fact tone. "We shall have the same difficulty, and probably in a greater degree, with Daniel Downs and his two sons, for they utterly scout the idea that anything heavier than air can be made to sail above the ground."

"They were positive it would be impossible to send a message through the air without the aid of wires," Paul added. "After learning that that which they had counted as an impossibility could be accomplished, one would suppose they might be willing to admit that there was a chance of your succeeding in this work."

"It makes very little difference to us whether they have faith in the scheme or not," Mr. Sawtelle replied gravely. "We shall only require of them what you might call the rough portion of the labor, and faith or incredulity will have little to do with their ability to lift and haul."

Then Mr. Sawtelle set about explaining in detail the drawings before him, showing how each wire or bolt should perform its particular duty, and giving illustrations of how an unskilled workman might readily destroy the harmony of the whole, until Paul and Ned had a fairly clear idea, much to their own surprise, of what ought to be done.

And it was indeed astonishing that they finally came to understand so much of Mr. Sawtelle's purpose, for until this day neither had succeeded in mastering the details of the principles involved, although both had striven long and earnestly to do so.



Now, however, it seemed to be what Zenas might have called "plain sailing," and the boys were convinced that they could aid this man in his work fairly well, although it is probable they may have had some misgivings as to whether it would be possible for him to produce a craft, however carefully it might have been constructed, that could navigate the air even so short a distance as from Barren Island to Seaview.

After understanding that he had thoroughly interested the lads in the building of an aeroplane, Mr. Sawtelle left them alone, evidently believing they would work out for themselves such points as he had failed to make perfectly plain, and by so doing have a better mastery of the whole than if he remained to clear away every doubt or perplexity.

And in this he was correct. The lads became as thoroughly engrossed with this study of air navigation as ever they had been in the construction of a wireless telegraph, and two hours or more had passed without their having any definite knowledge of the flight of time, when the door of the room was opened suddenly, admitting a gust of wind which sent the penciled plans flying in every direction, as Zenas Cushing stood before them looking both excited and displeased.

"What's the matter?" Paul asked, noting the expression on the young man's face, and instead of making a reply Zenas asked a question in a tone of irritation:

"What I want to know is whether we are out here to raise silver foxes, or spend our time bothering



'bout sich fool nonsense as Mr. Sawtelle counts on givin' us?"

"Why, Zenas, there's no need of such a question as that," Paul said almost sharply, as he ran here and there to gather up the papers which had been displaced so suddenly. "Of course we are to look after the foxes, although they are not requiring much care just now, and at the same time we are to build an aeroplane, according to the agreement which was made last summer. You understood it then."

"I heard what was said then," Master Cushing replied gruffly; "but didn't take any great amount of stock in it, seein's how I thought the owner of the *Nera* was making a lot of talk jest for the sake of hearin' himself."

"Do you object to helping in the work of building an aeroplane?" Ned asked, and Zenas replied quickly:

"I don't object to doin' any fool thing, seein's how I'm gettin' good money for wastin' the time; but what I'm drivin' at is to find out which is which. If it's silver fox farmin', why then we can putter 'round with this 'ere crazy machine when there's nothin' else to do."

"We are to do both, I tell you," Paul cried.

"Yes; but which is to be looked after first? I mean, what do you count as bein' the most important?"

"I can't say that there's any reason to settle that question now, because the foxes are taking care of themselves, and if we hadn't this work on hand, it would be a case of remaining idle."

"That's where I ain't agreein' with you," and Zenas



brought his fist down upon the table with a resounding thump. "'Cordin' to the way I look at it, an' I reckon I've been knockin' 'round on Barren Island long enough to know what's what, it's a case of our throwin' up one job or the other mighty quick."

Now it was the boys began to understand that Zenas had something on his mind which he believed to be of considerable importance, and as the quickest way of learning what it might be, Paul asked:

"How do you think we should be spending our time to-day?"

"In doin' pretty nigh as we did last summer; meanin' that if we don't get our eyes open mighty quick, there's a chance the crop of silver foxes will be thinned out pretty considerable."

"What has happened?" and now it was evident that Zenas had at least succeeded in alarming Paul, who, as was only natural, had more concern regarding the success of his father's venture in the business of raising fur, than in what appeared to him much like an untried experiment of navigating the air.

"Well, first an' foremost, there's no need for me to tell you that John Ed Bingham is where he can begin to cut capers sich as he did last summer."

"Is that what has sent you here in such a stew?" Ned asked as if displeased because that which Zenas had to tell was not of a more alarming nature. "I thought it was understood that we needn't worry our heads very much about that old smuggler, because of the dose we gave him last year."

"Yes, that's about the way your father and Mr.



Simpson figgered it; but I've got different idees on the subject."

"This morning you said you hoped Barren Island might be the first place he would strike for after getting out of prison," Ned cried with a laugh which had in it quite as much of irritation as of mirth. "You declared that if he did come you would make him wish his cake was dough, which was much the same as allowing that you'd tackle him single-handed."

"Have I taken back anythin' I said then?" Zenas asked sharply. "Am I makin' it appear as if I was hopin' he wouldn't come?"

"I don't know what you're giving us to understand, if it isn't that you're afraid of him."

"Now look here, Ned Bartlett," and Zenas spoke in what he intended should be an impressive tone. "Bein' afraid of a man, an' watchin' out to see he don't do any mischief, is two mighty different things, 'cordin' to my way of thinkin'. I allowed, as did Daniel Downs, that the first place John Ed was sure to strike for, after gettin' out of prison, would be this same island, an' while allowin' that, I was hopin' he'd come so's I could square up with him for last year's work. All that's one thing, an' now comes another, else I wouldn't be here askin' which is the first thing for us to attend to, the fox farm, or foolin' 'round with your make-believe air-ship, as if a man was goin' to spread himself like a crow an' fly from here to Seaview whenever he felt like it!"

"Why do you persist in throwing cold water upon the possibility of navigating the air, when you know



it has been done—that it is successfully accomplished all over this country, and in other parts of the world?” Paul cried. “To my mind it is not as mysterious a thing as the wireless, for by those plans which Mr. Sawtelle has made we can see just how he proposes it shall be put together. But when Ned and I built the telegraph, there was not only considerable which we could not understand, but very much that no one was able to explain.”

“See here, lads, I didn’t come here to make any fool talk. If your father an’ Mr. Sawtelle were not on board the *Nera*, with their heads so close together that a feller like me don’t dare come between ’em, I’d have gone to them, instead of loafin’ ’round here.”

“Will you tell us why you did come?” Paul asked impatiently.

“It’s on account of John Ed Bingham, don’t I tell you?”

“Is the situation any different than it was when we read that article in the newspaper?”

“Different? Well, I allow it is to a considerable extent. Then we knew that the old villain had been pardoned; now we’ve got what you might call decently good proof that he’s within three miles of this ’ere island, countin’ to come ashore, as I make it out, when night shuts in. You believe Daniel Downs got so frightened last summer, on account of what your father said, that he wouldn’t have any dicker with John Ed, not if it was the day of judgment, an’ they had both of ’em got out of their graves at the same time, knowin’ there was nobody else around,



Now I ain't to be taken in so easy—meanin' that I'm not soft enough to believe everythin' I hear. You let John Ed come on to this 'ere island to-night, an' sneak up to Daniel's house without anybody else knowin' he was 'round, an' you'd find the whole Downs family so frightened that they'd fall on their knees an' black his boots, if he'd give the word."

"What do you mean by saying that John Ed is within three or four miles of here?" Ned asked sharply.

"Just what I say, lad. I was loafin' 'round down at the cove, yarnin' with the engineer of the *Nera*, neither of us havin' anythin' very weighty on our minds, when I looks up careless-like in the direction of Seaview, an' there I makes out as plain as could be at sich a distance, that same old dory of John Ed's, with one man in her layin' on his oars as if he was kind 'er idlin' out at sea waitin' for the time to pass."

"How far away was he?" Paul demanded.

"Well, a matter of, say three miles."

"And you claim to be able to tell whether he was rowing or sitting still?"

"I claim that I ain't quite an idjut. If he'd been rowin' I'd have seen the glint of sunlight on his oars. I may not know so very much 'bout these 'ere flyin' machines, an' thankful am I that I don't; but you can't fool me when it comes to seein' a man in a boat, for my eye-sight is pretty tolerably clear yet a while. But there's no need to take my word for anythin'. Get them 'ere marine glasses which



Mr. Sawtelle keeps in the house, an' go inter the room where you an' Ned sleep. After havin' taken a squint across the waters, as if you was tryin' to locate Sea-view, if you don't come to believe all I've said, then I'll agree never to wag my tongue agin where you two boys are."

Both Paul and Ned understood that Zenas would not have made such a statement unless thoroughly well convinced of its truth, and, besides, by this time he showed himself so thoroughly in earnest that without knowing exactly how danger might menace in this coming of the old smuggler, they were seriously disturbed in mind.

When the two boys were in that room of the house which Mr. Sawtelle had built for the better accommodation of himself, his partner and his assistants, where it was possible to have an unobstructed view of the ocean in every direction, but a single glance was needed to show through the powerful glasses that object which had caused Master Cushing so much mental trouble.

The lenses brought close into view a solitary boatman so distinctly that Paul could see in an instant that he who was resting leisurely on his oars in mid-ocean, so to speak, was none other than John Ed Bingham, and the lad need not have been of a suspicious nature in order to guess that Barren Island was the old smuggler's destination.

"Dear, dear!" he exclaimed as he handed the glasses to Ned. "I had thought the only trouble we'd



have this summer would be in keeping inquisitive people away, and now it's certain we'll be in very much the same fix as last year."

"There's no question about that's being Bingham," Ned cried after focusing the glasses upon the battered dory. "But say, Paul, what's the sense in borrowing trouble? You can't be in the same fix you were last summer, because then it was you and Zenas against the Downs family. Now we've got the crew of the *Nera*, Mr. Sawtelle, and your father, to say nothing of myself, to lend a hand, and if John Ed Bingham can stay on this island long enough to make trouble when all of us are on the watch for him, then he is bolder than I have credited him with being."

"It isn't that I'm afraid we can't keep him at a safe distance," Paul replied mournfully. "You haven't had a taste of watching the shore, skulking around in the darkness, and feeling that while you are at one end of the island he is making a landing at the other. Two or three nights of that kind of work, especially in a heavy storm, will give you a pretty clear idea that John Ed Bingham can make trouble for us even though he doesn't disturb either the foxes or the aeroplane."

Ned still held the glasses leveled upon the approaching visitor, and as Paul ceased speaking he exclaimed:

"It looks as if others beside us were concerned in what John Ed Bingham may do, for here's a sloop-rigged boat coming from the direction of Seaview, and heading straight toward him. I wonder if the



officers are after the man on some old charge of smuggling?"

With the naked eye Paul could see only the faintest glimmer of white in the far distance, which might have been the crest of a wave or the tip of a gull's wing; but after taking the glasses from Ned's hand, he made out clearly a small craft, and at the same time that she came plainly into the lenses Bingham must have seen her, for on the instant he bent to the oars, swinging his dory around at an angle with the course he had been pursuing, and rowing vigorously.

"Whether it is someone from Seaview in chase of him or not, he believes in keeping out of the way," Paul said as he explained to his comrade the sudden change in the situation. "He is rowing for all he's worth, that's certain, and unless I'm mistaken the sloop has been hauled up a bit further into the wind to cut him off." Then, raising his voice, Paul cried so that he might be heard in the room below, "Hello! Zenas! Come up here! Quick!"

It seemed as if Master Cushing had started even before Paul spoke, for the words were hardly more than uttered when he was at the door of the room asking anxiously:

"What's the matter? Do you think I didn't know that old smuggler when I saw him, even if I haven't got a swell pair of glasses to squint through?"

"It's John Ed all right; but there's a sloop just beyond his boat that's maneuvering as if to cut him off; at least, he believes as much, for he has taken to the oars and is pulling for all he's worth."



As he spoke Paul handed Zenas the glasses, and after gazing through them while one might have counted twenty, Master Cushing said in a tone of most intense satisfaction:

"I'll eat my head if that 'ere sloop don't belong to Capt'in Tobi Thompson. Yes, an' I'll bet great big dollars against the hole in a doughnut, that the old capt'in is figgerin' that this is his chance to collect the money John Ed owes him on the sale of the *Zoe*."

"Is he overhauling him?" Paul asked eagerly as Zenas continued to peer through the glasses.

"Not to any great extent," and Zenas chuckled as if the old smuggler was his particular friend playing some humorous joke upon an enemy. "When you catch John Ed nappin', come an' tell me all about it, 'cause it ain't more'n once in a life-time, same as when we found him piled up in that 'ere schooner on the reef, that anybody gets the best of the villain. Do you see what he's doin'? He's pullin' right up into the wind, an' before Captain Tobi gets within gunshot, the sloop's canvas will be shakin'. All John Ed's got to do is hold his course for the next ten minutes, an' oh me, oh my! how Captain Tobi is lettin' out, 'cause of course he can't see what the trick is. That 'ere sloop of his won't stand very close to the wind at the best of times, an' he might jest as well give up the chase first as last, instead of hopin' to catch the villain by tackin'."

Then, much against his will, Zenas yielded the



glasses to Paul, and amused himself as best he might by watching the chase with naked eye.

The old smuggler was a good oarsman, and Captain Tobi's boat not the swiftest in her class. Before five minutes had passed it was necessary to bring the sloop about, for the pursued had eaten his way up into the wind so far that a direct course could no longer be maintained by the pursuer, and when the sailing craft jibed Zenas cried as if the matter gave him greatest pleasure:

"Capt'in Tobi won't collect the money that's comin' to him on account of the *Zoe* this trip; but he's done us a good turn without meanin' it, for John Ed ain't likely to get back this way 'twixt now an' nightfall, seein's how he'll stand his course considerable of a spell before allowin' that it's safe to knock off work with the oars. Say, I'll bet the air 'round that 'ere sloop is blue by this time, for Capt'in Tobi ain't anythin' like a lamb when he's crossed same's he's been this time."

"It looks to me as if you might have a chance to hear what he has got to say," Ned cried laughingly. "Instead of putting about to chase John Ed, which wouldn't be of any use I'll allow, it strikes me he's heading for Barren Island."

"An' that's what he is doing," Zenas announced after taking the glasses once more. "He's got so near that I reckon he thinks he may as well pay us a visit, an' 'twixt now an' night Daniel Downs will be out huntin' a fresh rock cod. Never in my life have I



seen a man that's so stuck on fresh fish, no matter how you cook 'em, as Tobi Thompson. I reckon if the truth was known, he's eat nigh as many in the course of his life, as are taken off the Banks in one whole season."

Ten minutes later the three came down from the chamber and made their way toward the cove where was lying at anchor the yacht *Nera*, and the stout Hampton dory. There was no longer any reason why they should remain on watch, because Captain Tobi's intentions were now evident. His sloop was so near the island that the marine glasses were not necessary in order to hold her in view, and since there was no other port on the course he was steering, it became a certainty he would visit Silver Fox Farm.

Hauled up on the shore were Mr. Downs' dory, a jaunty tender belonging to the *Nera*, and the small power dory, which had been used by Paul before his father purchased the larger craft.

"We'll launch Daniel's boat an' go out when he comes to anchor," Zenas said as he set his shoulder against the bow of the dory. "I wouldn't humor the old capt'in so much at any other time, 'cause it's jest as well to let him holler a spell for someone to come out an' take him off; but now I'm wantin' to hear the first blast that he'll fire off agin John Ed, an' it ain't likely to be mild!"

Paul and Ned were not particularly anxious to witness an exhibition of Captain Tobi's rage. It was by no means a rare occurrence for him to fly into a furious temper, and he had given way to wrath so



many times in their presence that it was not a novelty.

However, the boys were ready to aid Zenas in his effort to find amusement, and laid hold of the dory with a will, getting her into the water many a long minute before the bow of Captain Tobi's sloop appeared around the point of the cove.

They had pulled a short distance out from the shore and were laying on their oars, when Mr. Simpson and Mr. Sawtelle came from the deck-house of the *Nera*, and Paul's father hailed:

"Why are you out there, son?"

"Captain Tobi's been chasing John Ed Bingham, and Zenas wants to hear the old man blow off when he first gets here."

"Meaning who, Captain Tobi or John Ed?"

"Capt'in Tobi, of course," Zenas replied with a laugh. "Bingham gave him the slip by pullin' up into the wind. We were watchin' through Mr. Sawtelle's glasses. The sloop ain't a very keen sailer, an' when the capt'in found he couldn't overhaul the smuggler, he headed for this port, fearing most likely he might explode if he stayed outside too long."

"What do you mean by saying he was chasing Bingham?" Mr. Simpson asked sharply.

Then it was that Paul described what they had seen, declaring positively there could have been no mistaking the old smuggler, who, evidently believing he was beyond range of vision from the island, had unquestionably been waiting until night before attempting to make a landing.



This information caused the two men some little uneasiness of mind, as the occupants of the dory could see. Paul noted the fact that his father and Mr. Sawtelle spoke together earnestly, and that there was a look of surprise on both their faces, evidently caused by the fact that, apparently, Bingham's first act after having been released from prison was to make for Barren Island.

Then the two men reëntered the deck-house of the *Nera*, and were hardly more than lost to view before Captain Tobi's sloop poked her nose past the northerly point of the island, when Zenas, who was at the oars, pulled the dory out astern of the yacht where he had reason to believe the visitor would come to anchor.

"What are you people doin' here with your eyes shut?" Captain Tobi roared in a tempest note, as he came within hail, and Zenas replied innocently:

"We saw you makin' for the island, sir, an' allowed that you mightn't have a tender, so pulled out to lend a hand."

"Oh, yes, you could see me plain enough, I'll warrant you! Nothin' else to do but keep your eyes where they weren't needed! Why didn't you watch out for that miserable villain who's gone an' got himself pardoned, when, instead of goin' free, he ought'er have been chucked into the deepest dungeon that was ever made."

"Do they have dungeons nowadays, sir, in state prisons?" Zenas asked, knowing that by thus appearing like a simple he could excite the captain to yet more boisterous rage.



“They don’t have what they ought’er, else mutton-heads like you would be taken care of,” Captain Tobi roared as he let go the jib halyards. “Settin’ here on your haunches while John Ed Bingham’s sneakin’ up to see what he can do to the foxes, an’ you not liftin’ a hand, eh? I allow Simpson pays you to have an eye out, an’ instead of doin’ your duty it’s ten to one you was crawled up alongside of somethin’ asleep! Why don’t you be a man an’ earn money that’s paid you?”

“That’s what I counted I was doing, sir, when I come down to bring you ashore,” Zenas replied, still striving to appear simple.

“It’ll be a long day before I’m needin’ help from sich as you,” the old sailor roared. “’Tend to your own business, leavin’ me alone, an’ then you may get it inter your thick head that that miserable smuggler’s snoopin’ ’round here, layin’ for a chance to come ashore.”

“Are you still meanin’ John Ed Bingham, sir?” Zenas asked, and the boys could see that he was struggling to repress his laughter.

“Of course I’m meanin’ him! If you wasn’t so near dead, you’d know he’s been hangin’ ’round outside here. Wasn’t three miles away when I overhauled him.”

“Oh, you overhauled him, eh? Why, Capt’in Tobi, what a pity we didn’t watch through the glasses longer! The last I saw was John Ed pullin’ up inter the wind, an’ forcin’ you to stand over on the other tack. I thought you’d give up tryin’ to catch him, so run



down here to launch the dory agin you come to anchor."

At that instant the old sailor was making ready to let go the mainsail; but he came to a full stop, still clutching the halyards, as he gazed in mingled anger and perplexity at Zenas, struggling meanwhile to give words to that which was in his mind.

"So—— That's the way—— You're thinking to rub it into me, 'cause I made up my mind the game wasn't worth the candle, an' let that miserable, defaultin' smuggler go his way? You're throwin' it in my teeth that I couldn't have caught him if I'd been so minded, owin' to this sloop's not sailin' as fast as he could pull, eh? That's what you mean to say to me, sir? Do you dare to——"

"Now look here, Capt'in Tobi, don't fly off so at us," Zenas cried imploringly as if the old sailor's wrath terrified him, and at the same time he could see out of the corner of his eye that Mr. Simpson and Mr. Sawtelle were amused by the visitor's display of temper. "We ain't a-sayin' you couldn't have caught him if you'd tried; but when you let him go his way an' stood for the island, we thought it would be a friendly deed to come down here an' take you ashore. Anybody would believe, accordin' to the way you're blowin' off, that we had it in mind to harm you some way."

"Harm me?" Captain Tobi cried, shaking his fist in impotent rage. "Harm me, you witless creetur! I'd take you an' John Ed Bingham an' knock your heads together, if I felt inclined——"

"You'd have to catch John Ed first, sir," Zenas





HE GAZED IN MINGLED ANGER AND PERPLEXITY AT ZENAS.







said meekly. "An' seein's how he ain't likely to come where you are very soon, s'posin' you heave over that anchor, an' let us put you ashore."

The visitor had spoken with such strength of lungs that he would have been indeed deaf who, standing on any portion of Barren Island, could not have heard him, and therefore it was that Daniel Downs, whose home was not far from the head of the cove, had been warned in season that an old friend of his had come into the harbor.

Without loss of time he hurried down to the shore, and while Captain Tobi was vainly endeavoring to think of words suitable as a rebuke to Zenas, the old farmer shouted:

"Ahoy on the sloop! I'm jest goin' to send a boy out for a mess of rock cod, Capt'in Tobi, an' if so be you're agreeable, mother'll make ready as trim a bit of salt pork as you ever clapped eyes on, agin the time they come back."

The master of the sloop turned to look at Daniel Downs, and then wheeled about to face Zenas, seemingly struggling all the while to speak; but instead of doing so he flung out the anchor in a manner expressive of unspoken anger, and, without waiting for a word of command, Master Cushing pulled the dory alongside.

Captain Tobi gave no heed to those who had come to his assistance; but dropped and made snug the mainsail, overhauled the jib, coiled every piece of rope as carefully as if his craft was to go on exhibition before a critical audience, and then, in what



he intended should be a dignified manner, he stepped on board the dory.

Neither Paul nor Ned ventured to speak lest they arouse the wrath which the visitor was keeping in check, because of not being able to find sufficiently explosive words, and Zenas rowed the craft to the shore, where Daniel Downs pulled her bow up on the sand.

“I’m glad to see you, Capt’in Tobi; right glad to see you; but what was that ’ere I heard Zenas sayin’ ’bout your chasin’ John Ed Bingham? Is it true——”

“Don’t be a fool, Daniel Downs. If you are goin’ to get a mess of rock cod for supper, an’ allow that I’m to help eat ’em, it’s time you got about it.”

Then Captain Tobi, seizing his would-be host by the arm, literally dragged him in the direction of the farm-house, as if they two were the only persons on the island.



## CHAPTER III

### THE NIGHT ALARM

THERE was a look of intense satisfaction on Zenas Cushing's face when Captain Tobi and Daniel Downs disappeared from view within the farm-house, and Paul, who had failed to understand very much of what was going on, asked in perplexity:

"Why did you want to work the captain up to such a pitch? It seemed to me that at the start he was about as angry as was necessary."

"I was tryin' to pay off an old score," Zenas replied laughingly. "That man has bullied me whenever he got the chance, an' I've been layin' for him. Besides, it provoked me considerable to have him come in here an' try to vent his spite on us simply because John Ed gave him the slip. The trouble with Capt'in Tobi is that he's got an idee, because of havin' more money than the most of the folks in Seaview, that he can say anythin' he pleases an' everybody's got to bow down an' take it. Now I don't really dare to talk back to him same's I'd like to, so I stirred the old fellow up, to let your father an' Mr. Simpson see jest what kind of a ravin' maniac he is when he lets go of his temper."

"And the result is that you have made an enemy of him," Ned added thoughtfully, whereupon Zenas replied as if it was a matter of little moment:

"Don't let that jar you, 'cause when he cools down he'll forget that he made a howlin' idjut of himself,



an' swell 'round here as if he was the only gentleman in the gang."

Then Zenas, recalling all Captain Tobi had said, and understanding that his own foolish questions and remarks had excited yet further the old sailor's anger, gave vent to noisy mirth until Paul shook him roughly by the shoulder, as he cried imploringly:

"Don't Zenas! Don't make matters worse than they are. He can't fail of hearing you, and we shall have him out here again, roaring in a way that really makes me ashamed because I live in the same town with him."

"He won't show his head," was the confident reply. "By this time he's smackin' his lips over the rock cod Mrs. Downs is goin' to cook for him as soon as the boys can catch 'em. Or else he's got old Daniel propped up in the corner, givin' him fits 'cause John Ed Bingham slipped away so neatly. Here come Sam an' Ernest bound out fishin', an' I'll be pityin' 'em if they don't have a good catch within a mighty short time."

Mr. Downs's sons came from the house slowly, as if not particularly pleased because of the task before them, and Ned asked as if he had no inkling of what they might have in mind:

"What's going on now, boys? We thought you'd stay in the house with the visitor."

"There ain't much comfort in hangin' 'round where Captain Tobi is, when he's on his high horse same's now," Ernest grumbled. "Besides, however much we



might want to stay at home, it couldn't be done after he strikes here, for it's a case of goin' fishin' 'bout as soon as he heaves in sight, an' it seems like the more he eats the more he wants."

"It won't do you any harm to have a little sport, an' there's no reason why you should hurry overly much about it," Zenas said as if striving to excite the boys to anger, even as he had Captain Tobi; but in this he was unsuccessful, for the lads set about their task as if in haste to finish it, and before many minutes had passed they were pulling out of the cove in the direction of the shoal, where the chances of making a good catch in a reasonably short time were known to be good.

The owners of Barren Island had disappeared from view within the deck-house of the *Nera*, as soon as Captain Thompson entered the farm-house. The engineer of the yacht was below, giving no evidence of a desire to enjoy the society of Zenas and the boys, and the three were left comparatively alone on the beach, whereupon Zenas proposed, much to the surprise of Paul and Ned, that they go up to the "hotel" once more.

"What's to be done there?" Ned asked as if he had other plans in view, and Zenas replied with somewhat of shamefacedness:

"The fact of it is, boys, I hate to give in that I'm such a chump as not to be able to make out what Mr. Sawtelle's drivin' at when he talks about this 'ere craft of his what's goin' to sail through the air like



as if it was water. Now you've heard all he had to tell, an' I'm askin' to have it repeated to me in a way that can be understood."

"Why didn't you listen when he was ready to explain everything?" Paul asked.

"Well, to tell the truth, it wasn't any use, lad. He got to slingin' 'round words that I'd never heard about, till I was clean worn out. Now if you boys could put it same as if you was tellin' a reg'lar story, I might contrive to see some sense in the business."

"As you did when I tried my best to explain wireless telegraphy," Paul added with a laugh, whereupon Zenas insisted that while it was not to be expected he would understand that which Paul had admitted no person could explain satisfactorily, he should be able to master the details of a craft which was to be handled much the same as a vessel in the water, and so convincing was his argument that without further delay the boys set off in his company to overhaul once more the plans of the proposed aeroplane.

How it was that Paul and Ned, who had just begun to have a smattering of Mr. Sawtelle's scheme, could explain it better than that gentleman did, it is impossible to say; but certain it is they succeeded so well that by sunset Master Cushing declared he had a fairly good idea of the work to be done.

"I'm not sayin' as how I really believe them 'ere aeroplanes, as you call 'em, will do all you claim when they're shoved this way or that; but I'm bound to believe there must be something in the trick, 'cause it don't stand to reason a man like Mr. Sawtelle would



stand up here givin' out yarns that hadn't any truth in 'em," Zenas said when the night had so nearly come that it was impossible to distinguish the delicate tracings on the paper. "I don't want people to think I'm a stark natural fool who can't get into his head such things as are marked out plain, an' so I'm goin' to spend all my spare time from this out figgerin' it over."

Even though they had been inclined to continue the study of aeroplanes by lamp-light, there was no further opportunity, for at this moment the tooting of a horn at the door of the "hotel" told that supper was ready.

It should be explained here that Mr. Sawtelle, perhaps not quite satisfied with Mrs. Downs's skill in preparing food, had brought ashore the cook of the *Nera*, and the owners of the island, together with Zenas, Paul, Ned and the crew of the yacht, had their meals served in the "hotel." The Downs family, and on this night their guest from Seaview, ate and slept in the farm-house as they had the previous summer.

During supper-time the possibility that the old smuggler whom Captain Tobi had unsuccessfully chased, might attempt to make a landing on the island that night, was discussed, and it appeared to be the opinion of Mr. Simpson and Mr. Sawtelle that he would, if he had had the intention of visiting the place, abandon it after knowing that his purpose might be suspected.

"However, we will run no chances," Mr. Simpson said after considerable discussion, during which his



partner made sport of his fears that John Ed could injure them. "Zenas, Paul and Ned shall patrol the coast from now until half-past ten, when they will waken Mr. Downs and his two boys to take their places. With three on watch, and the moon shedding nearly as much light as the sun, there is no possibility anyone may make a landing without our knowledge."

"But there's a chance that Mr. Downs may be frightened out of his boots again by John Ed, as he was last summer," Zenas ventured to remark, whereupon Mr. Sawtelle laughed derisively as he replied:

"The conditions are entirely different now. We have a considerable force of our own people, and the Downs family will not be able to control matters as they did when you had trouble with them."

Zenas did not venture to make any further remark; but it was evident, at least to Paul and Ned, that he was by no means satisfied with such a conclusion.

As soon as the meal had come to an end, the three who were to go on duty left the "hotel" to begin their task, although even had it been known to a certainty that the old smuggler was hovering close at hand, intending to come ashore that night, there was every reason to believe he would not attempt to carry his plans into execution until a later hour.

"It makes no difference what he may or may not do," Zenas said when Paul suggested that there was little need of their hurrying to the several posts of duty. "We'll do our work in proper shape, lettin' them as come after us shoulder the blame, if any there be. Whether it's late or early, the orders are



to patrol the shore, an' that's what I count we'll do."

Then the three separated, Zenas to pace to and fro on the northerly side of the island, giving due regard to the harbor, even though at that point it was hardly to be supposed the intending mischief-maker would land, because of the crew of the *Nera*.

Ned was to keep his watch from the southerly point where a landing could be effected only with great difficulty, while Paul stood guard over Swallow-tailed Cove and such portion of the eastern shore as he deemed necessary.

From that moment until their time of duty had expired, the three watchers did not have opportunity for conversation one with another, save at such rare intervals as they came together while patrolling their respective beats, and it was not until half-past ten, when Zenas called Paul and Ned to the harbor by whistling shrilly, that they had an opportunity to compare notes.

Nothing suspicious had been seen. Thanks to the moonlight, it was possible to have an unobstructed view of the ocean in every direction as far as eye might reach, and had John Ed Bingham's dory been within a radius of three miles they could not have failed to see it, even though it would appear as a tiny black speck upon the waters.

"I'm allowin' that up to the present time there's no reason why we should bother our heads about that old smuggler," Zenas said as he led the way to the farm-house that they might awaken Mr. Downs and



his sons. "Even if he's countin' on comin' here to-night, it won't be possible for him to strike the place till considerably past midnight, no matter how good an oarsman he may be, so we can settle down to sleep, knowin' that nothin' can happen until after Mr. Simpson turns out, as he said he counted on doin' long 'bout twelve o'clock."

Much to the surprise of the boys, Farmer Downs was not indisposed to perform his share of the watching, and Paul rightly concluded that the old man's willingness arose chiefly from what Captain Tobi might have done in the way of arousing his fears regarding the coming of Bingham.

Ernest and Sam, however, were not as ready to forsake their comfortable beds for a lonely tramp along the shore, as had been their father, and both boys grumbled not a little because Zenas insisted on their showing themselves outside before he would return to the building at the head of Swallow-tailed Cove.

"I s'pose it is going to be the same old thing this summer as it was last; everybody on his ear 'bout John Ed," Ernest grumbled as he rubbed his eyes vigorously to shake off the heaviness of slumber. "No matter whether it rains or blows, we've got to wander 'round every minute of the night, when most likely that old villain hasn't any idee of comin' here 'cause of the state prison dose which he got."

"I reckon you're right, Ernest," Zenas replied laughingly, "an' seein's how you've got the thing down so fine, what's the use of grumblin'? There's no way



out of it, so long's this 'ere Barren Island is a fox farm, an' John Ed Bingham can move around as he pleases. So get a move on; the orders are for your father to look after this side of the island. You are to go 'round Swallow-tailed Cove, an' Sam can 'tend to the southerly end without straining himself very much."

Not until he had seen the members of the Downs family depart upon their several missions did Zenas give the word that, so far as Ned, Paul and himself were concerned, the night's work had come to an end, and ten minutes later the three were sleeping peacefully, although perhaps a trifle noisily, in that room of the "hotel" which had been assigned as their quarters.

Within less than an hour from the time Zenas and his assistants had crossed over into Dreamland, they were suddenly awakened by a vigorous pounding upon the door of the building, and while each fellow sprang to a sitting posture in the bed as if moved by a steel spring, it was possible to hear the voice of Mr. Downs as he shouted shrilly:

"Fire! Fire! My house is afire!"

There is little need to say that Paul and Ned were out of bed in a twinkling, with Zenas no less prompt to move, while the noises from different parts of the building told that all its inmates had been aroused by the farmer's outcry.

"It's Bingham!" Paul muttered, giving words to that fear which was uppermost in his mind when he laid down to sleep, and Zenas cried sharply, even



while doing his best to clothe himself within the shortest possible space of time:

“That’s foolishness! We’ve been asleep about an hour, an’ John Ed couldn’t have pulled the dory over here in that time, seein’s he wasn’t in sight when we turned in.”

In the distance could be heard Mr. Downs shouting, evidently to arouse the crew of the *Nera*:

“Fire! Fire! My house is afire!”

It is safe to say that not more than two minutes elapsed from the time they were awakened, before the two boys and Zenas stood in the open air gazing toward the farm-house, which, even in the short while that had elapsed since the first alarm, appeared to be enveloped in flames.

The owners of the island, followed by the cook, were hurrying toward the scene of the disaster, as if it might be possible for them to do something toward extinguishing the flames, although all must have known beyond a peradventure that they, with no facilities for fighting fire at their disposal, could do little less than watch the devouring element.

“The old house must have been burnin’ half an hour for the flames to get such a headway as this,” Zenas cried as he ran, speaking with difficulty because of his heavy breathing, and Paul, his mind still dwelling upon the fears of the evening, muttered as if simply giving words to the thoughts that had come into his mind:

“How was it possible Bingham could have done this thing so soon after we went off duty?”



“He hasn’t done it, I tell you,” Zenas cried angrily, half turning even as he ran, in order to face the lad. “It is some blunder of old Downs’s; perhaps Captain Tobi went to bed with a lighted pipe. I tell you it’s an accident! Nothin’ that Bingham could have done.”

Surely it seemed as if Zenas was correct, because, unless the old smuggler had been hidden on the island at the very moment when the first watch was set, it would have been difficult for him to have pulled across the moonlit waters without being seen while they were patrolling the coast. If no more than an hour had elapsed since they came off duty, then surely there had not been time for him to have come from out the darkness, rowed across that broad expanse of light, landed, and set fire to the building.

When Zenas and the two boys were come as near the flames as the heat would permit, it was not possible for them to do anything in the way of saving property, for already had the fire fastened upon every portion of the doomed home, and, so far as could be seen, not the smallest article of furniture had been saved.

Mrs. Downs, with Ernest and Sam by her side, stood like one crazed, wringing her hands and repeating again and again in a voice hardly louder than a whisper, the one word “fire,” while Mr. Downs moved to and fro muttering threats against some person unknown.

“How did it happen, Daniel?” Mr. Simpson asked as he forced the old man to cease his feverish walk



by laying a hand on his shoulder. "What do you know about it?"

"Not the first blessed thing, Mr. Simpson. I was down on the southerly point of the cove when some-thin' made me look up toward the house, an' the fire was coming straight through the end window. I might have known that John Ed would pay me off in some way sich as this for what I did agin him last year."

"Now don't be foolish, man!" and Mr. Simpson shook the farmer roughly. "Leave off being such an idiot as to lay everything at John Ed Bingham's door. If you and your sons stood watch as was your duty, neither Bingham nor any other man could have made a landing here without your knowledge."

"I'm ready to swear from now till doomsday, that no man could have kept an eye out better than I did from the time Zenas Cushing knocked off work, until I saw the house blazin'."

"What about Sam and Ernest?"

The boys, who had been standing by the side of their mother, wheeled quickly around, so eager to insist that they had not neglected their task of watching that Paul felt doubtful whether they were speaking the truth.

"After we got awake, sir, it was an easy matter to stand guard, because on such a bright night as this no feller would want'er crawl away into the bushes to sleep," Sam cried earnestly. "When I stood on the high land it was possible to have the whole stretch of the sea before me, an' I'll venture to say there



couldn't have been a floatin' log nearby that I wouldn't have seen."

"There is little need of this cross questioning," Mr. Sawtelle interrupted impatiently. "To my mind it is not possible the smuggler could have come ashore. What say you, Zenas?"

"I'll go bail that up to the time Paul and Ned went off duty with me, Bingham was neither on the island nor in sight, an' I'm claimin' that if at the very minute we turned in he had started, there wouldn't have been time for him to make a landin' an' set the fire, because, mind you, sir, that 'ere blaze must have been begun quite a spell ago to get sich a headway. Where's Captain Tobi? He ought to know something about this thing?"

"Here's where he is," came a gruff voice from the distance; "an' I'd like to have you tell me, Zenas Cushing, how you make out that I ought'er know more'n anybody else?"

"Well, it seems so, seein's how you must have been inside while the old shack was burnin' pretty lively," Zenas replied curtly, and the old man bellowed:

"Aye, so I was, an' it's more by good luck than good wit that I got out alive, which is all you can say about it, seein's how I left my reefin' jacket an' pipe behind me, because there wasn't time to fetch 'em away, or else I was too flustered to remember 'em, one or the other."

"An' it's that same pipe, sir, that came into my mind when I first saw the blaze. Was you smokin' after you went to bed?"



“Well, what if I was?” Captain Tobi roared. “Haven’t I a right to smoke when I please?”

“Aye, sir, that you have, only it came to my mind that perhaps you might have fallen asleep, an’ the fire in the pipe wasn’t wholly out when you dropped off.”

“Do you take me for a fool who don’t know enough to put his pipe out when he’s goin’ to sleep?” the old sailor cried with every evidence that his temper was running away with him once more, and Zenas whispered to Paul:

“I’m bettin’ great big money, lad, that that’s the secret of the whole thing. Captain Tobi’s jest the same as admitted that he was smokin’ in bed, and if the truth’s ever known, you’ll find out it’s at his door, and not at John Ed Bingham’s, that you can lay the blame of this ’ere night’s work.”

“What wakened you, Mrs. Downs?” Mr. Simpson asked, forcing the good woman to give her attention to the question by gripping her arm firmly. “What did you see when you first opened your eyes?”

“Just the fire, sir. It was all around me, an’ goodness knows what it was roused me, except it might’er been the heat.”

“But all four sides of the room couldn’t have been afire,” Zenas interrupted, “else there wouldn’t have been a chance for you to get out.”

“I don’t suppose they were,” was the meek reply, and Mrs. Downs clasped her hands tightly together as if to prevent herself from giving way to noisy grief once more. “I know that the end of the room over the kitchen was all afire, an’ I had just time



enough to pick up my clothes an' run before the window curtain flamed up."

"Where was Captain Tobi?" Zenas asked.

"In the spare room, of course, an' that is at the very end of the house, as you know."

"Still tryin' to make out that I was such an idiot as to set the bed-clothes afire with my pipe, eh?" the old sailor roared; but Zenas gave no heed to his question, while Mr. Simpson changed the subject of conversation by saying inquiringly:

"Then you haven't saved any of your property?"

"I haven't so much left as a rollin' pin," Mrs. Downs wailed, and being thus reminded of her great loss she no longer strove to control her grief, but gave way to weeping, while Mr. Downs paced nervously to and fro muttering unintelligible words which sounded very like threats.

There was nothing to be done save make arrangements for sheltering the family which had been thus suddenly rendered homeless. The farm buildings, dry as tinder, burned rapidly, and it was to Ned and Paul as if within ten minutes from the time of their having been aroused by the alarm of fire, the house was in ashes.

"Whether such an arrangement pleases us, or not, Mr. Downs and his family must be brought into our quarters," Paul heard his father say to Mr. Sawtelle, and the latter nodded his head in a way which told that he was not overjoyed at having such an addition to his household.

"I shall never be able to eat what she cooks," he



muttered under his breath, and Mr. Simpson replied cheerily:

“There will be no need of it. Send the cook back to the yacht, and we can take our meals there, leaving to Mrs. Downs the exclusive use of the kitchen.”

“But we haven’t chambers enough to accommodate all hands,” Mr. Sawtelle objected, hoping that by finding difficulties he might in some way prevent this change of quarters.

“Send Paul and Ned aboard the yacht to sleep. Mr. and Mrs. Downs can use their chamber, while Sam and Ernest must get along as best they can in the shanty which was used last season for the wireless station.”

Before daylight the change as suggested by Mr. Simpson had been made. Zenas, with the two lads, found comfortable quarters in a couple of small state-rooms aboard the *Nera*, after having been called upon to row Captain Tobi out to his sloop before they turned in to get such rest as might be possible during the remainder of the night.

The old sailor was yet angry because Zenas had intimated that the fire might have been caused by his carelessness, and for the time refused to enter into conversation with either Master Cushing or the boys; but before having gotten aboard his craft Captain Tobi’s tongue was loosened.

“You may say what you’ve a mind to about John Ed’s not havin’ had time to get on to this ’ere island so’s to set a fire,” he burst out while he was being taken to the sloop. “I hold to it that that ’ere house



never went up in smoke owin' to anythin' which was done fairly, although we can't put it directly on the shoulders of the miserable smuggler."

"Do you allow, Capt'in Tobi, that he might have been layin' plans to get even with Daniel Downs?" Zenas asked as if in surprise, and the old sailor replied in a confidential tone:

"While you foolish people have been figgerin' it out so's to lay all the blame on my shoulders, I've kind'er biled the thing down in a way to suit myself, an' this 'ere's pretty near how it stands, 'cordin' to my belief: John Ed Bingham must have known that he was goin' to be pardoned some time before the thing really happened, an' I'm reckonin' he laid plans with his cronies—perhaps the very crew that manned the schooner what went ashore on Beekman's Ledge,—to meet him here on Barren Island. You people haven't been keeping watch in the night because of allowin' that all you had to guard against were curious summer visitors, so what hindered two or three men from comin' ashore twenty-four or forty-eight hours ago?"

"If anythin' like that had been done we must have seen their boat, 'cause it don't stand to reason they could have walked here," Zenas replied impatiently, and Captain Tobi asked with a grin:

"Have you hunted 'round to find it?"

"Well, now, we haven't, an' that's a fact. Such an idee never come into my mind," and Zenas began to look perplexed. "Of course I ain't sayin' but that there might be one hidden somewhere on the island,



though it stands to reason it couldn't be. Anyhow, I'll have a look after daylight."

"An' by that time, if it so be any of John Ed's friends fired the house, they'll have got clear, for the moon is nigh to settin', an' it won't be such a very hard matter, now all hands of us are mixed up, as you might say, for 'em to get away without bein' seen."

Paul was actually sorry that Captain Tobi had suggested such a possibility. While guessing at the cause of the fire, he had come to believe without a question that the conflagration was the result of an accident on the part of some inmate of the house, and allowed himself to be convinced that the old smuggler could have had no hand in it, all of which was satisfactory, since it served to allay any fears as to the future.

Now, however, he had ample cause for dismal forebodings. Captain Tobi's supposititious explanation might readily be true, and Paul understood full well that those who had done the mischief would have every opportunity of leaving the island, regardless of what might be done to prevent them, between now and the setting of the moon.

"It is too bad!" he exclaimed just as the dory came alongside the sloop.

"What's too bad?" Captain Tobi asked as he fended the bow of the clumsy craft off lest the paint of his boat should be marred.

"That we've got to be standing guard all the time because of that miserable Bingham, believing it is in his power to make mischief for us. If they had only



let him stay in prison we would have had a pleasant summer, even though it may not be possible to make an aeroplane that will navigate the air."

"I'd sooner take my chances agin John Ed Bingham than in one of them pesky contraptions sich as Sawtelle allows to build," the old sailor said angrily as he stepped aboard his sloop, at the same time pushing off the dory regardless of the wishes of her crew, as if to say that he had no further need of them. "You can talk until you're black in the face about buildin' somethin' that'll fly the same as a bird; but Captain Tobi ain't puttin' any faith in such fool business. Yes, yes, I know what they say," he added when Paul would have interrupted. "You can hear a lot of yarns about what's been done in Germany, or England, or away off in the furthestmost corners of this country; but we've never seen any of 'em 'round Seaview, an' until the day when they show themselves, there's no man livin' who can stuff that kind of nonsense down my throat. What John Ed may do won't be a marker alongside the happenin's after Sawtelle gets his contrivance rigged, an' starts out chasin' crows."

Then Captain Tobi disappeared down the companion-way of the small cabin, bringing the interview to an abrupt close, and Zenas with his companions went on board the *Nera*, not to sleep, because there was too much of excitement in the air to permit of closing their eyes in slumber; but to discuss the possible correctness of the old sailor's guess-work regarding the mischief which had been done that night.

Before they had been on board the yacht ten min-



utes, Paul suddenly remembered that no one had been assigned to guard duty from that time until sunrise, and he would have gone on shore again to remind his father that it was necessary close watch be maintained, but that Zenas prevented him by saying grimly:

“I’m allowin’, lad, that your father and Mr. Sawtelle come mighty nigh knowin’ as much about this thing as you do, an’ there’s no need of tryin’ to tell ’em their business. Then ag’in, they’re the bosses, an’ if so be they’ve decided that there’s no need of keepin’ watch, which is my belief to a dot, why it ain’t for us to butt in with cheap advice! The proper thing for you is to get what sleep you can ’twixt now an’ sunrise, for I’m allowin’ that then, what with this shiftin’ ’round in the way of leavin’ the buildin’, an’ the air-ship scheme, an’ standin’ lookout against John Ed Bingham, we’ll have about as much to do as is needed to keep us out of mischief.”



## CHAPTER IV

### AT WORK

BEFORE sunrise Paul and Ned succeeded in closing their eyes in sleep, but Zenas made no attempt at gaining any rest. Captain Tobi's suggestion that friends of John Ed Bingham's might be responsible for the destruction of the farm-house, had alarmed him more than he was willing to admit while talking with the boys.

When their heavy breathing told that they had finally journeyed into the land of Nod, Cushing slipped softly out on deck, and a few minutes later pulled ashore, after which he made as thorough a search of the coast as was possible in the darkness, with a view to learning whether or no a landing had been effected at any point.

In this, as a matter of course, he was unsuccessful. On the south end of the island only with exceeding difficulty could a boat approach the shore. In case, however, one was thoroughly familiar with the coast, he would come upon a reef extending close to the line of foliage, and, consequently, any craft as small as an ordinary dory might have been hauled up amid the thicket without leaving any traces which could be perceived, save by a skillful woodsman, such as Zenas was not.

Until nearly an hour after sunrise he continued this useless and fatiguing labor, when, convinced against



his will that there could be no hope of accomplishing his purpose, he retraced his steps to the harbor, intending to go on board the yacht, and arriving there just as Captain Tobi came ashore.

“Well, what are you pokin’ ’round for at this time of the day?” the old sailor asked as if it angered him to see Zenas abroad so early.

“To tell the truth, Captain Tobi, you kind’er stirred me up with what you said when we put you aboard the sloop, an’ I was snoopin’ ’round with the idee that it might be possible to find out if anybody had landed here within the past four an’ twenty hours.”

“An’ that’s where you’re makin’ a fool of yourself, Zenas Cushing. If so be Bingham’s friends set fire to Daniel Downs’s house, they took good care to get clear away before this. I’m allowin’ that unless they were the veriest kind of fools, they put off from this ’ere island as soon as the mischief had been done, an’ were most like out of sight before the alarm was given. But say, how about grub now that Daniel’s place has gone up in smoke?”

“I heard Mr. Simpson and Mr. Sawtelle saying that Mrs. Downs could go into the hotel, an’ they would get their meals on board the yacht.”

“Then I reckon I’ll take pot-luck with Daniel,” Captain Tobi said decidedly. “I ain’t sayin’ that Mr. Sawtelle’s cook can’t dish up food in great shape; but somehow or other it’s too finicky for me. Now, Daniel will most like have a bit of fried pork for breakfast, an’ if there’s been anything in the way of potatoes saved from the fire, why I’ll be better satis-



fied with that kind of fare than with all the gimcracks that could be mixed up aboard the yacht."

"You've got a good stout breeze if you count to make Seaview this mornin'," Zenas suggested, wondering why it was the old sailor delayed at the island now that the facilities for housekeeping had been so decidedly curtailed.

"Want to get rid of me, eh?" Captain Tobi roared. "Allowin' that you can't keep visitors 'round 'cause there's so much of secrecy everywhere; is that it?"

"I wasn't allowin' anythin', Captain Tobi. My one idee was that you counted on goin' to Seaview, an' you know that the mornin' breeze is like to peter out before noon. It only struck me that if I was goin' across, I should take advantage of what wind was blowin' at the present time."

"Well, I'm not goin' across, leastways not for quite a spell," the old sailor said very decidedly, and Zenas looked at him in open-mouthed astonishment.

"Count on hangin' 'round here to see how they build the air-ship, eh?"

"I don't admit to bein' quite such an idjut as that, Zenas Cushing; but I've had considerable truck with Mr. Sawtelle an' Simpson, since I took the *Nera* in hand for repairs, an' it strikes me that now is the time when I can do 'em a friendly turn by hangin' on."

"In what way, sir?" Zenas asked, surprised that the old captain should show a willingness to do anything, however slight, when there was no reasonable expectation he could earn a dollar by it.

"I suppose your folks count on gettin' to work with



that fool scheme of Sawtelle's pretty soon, eh?" Captain Tobi asked abruptly, as if not having heard Master Cushing's question.

"I allow that's the idee, seein's how we had to set still yesterday, an' listen to a lot of dumb talk about what had been done in the way of flyin'."

"Well, that bein' the case, an' allowin' that all you people, with the exception of Daniel an' the boys, of course, will be foolin' away your time on wild goose hunts, I've figgered it up with myself to take command here, so to speak. Now don't get so wild eyed, Zenas Cushing, for I ain't allowin' to boss the work you've been hired to do; but just to keep a watch out agin John Ed an' his friends. Daniel hasn't got what you might call the back-bone to tackle such a job, because he's too easy scared out of his wits; but if I hang 'round to brace him up an' see that he don't get frightened by anythin' that may be said, I reckon, 'twixt his boys, himself an' me, we can come pretty near bein' certain that that miserable old smuggler an' his gang don't do any mischief hereabout."

"Have you said anythin' to the owners of the island about it?" Zenas asked carelessly.

"No, because the idee didn't strike me till I turned in this mornin'; but that's neither here nor there. I allow I'm neighborly enough to do a good turn when I can, seein's how business is slack over to Seaview, an' I've got nothin' special to do. I shan't be mixed up with any air-ship capers, or any silver fox cod-dlin', that you can go bail on; but set it right down in your book, Zenas Cushing, that so long as I stay on



this 'ere island, havin' an eye out on Daniel an' the boys, there won't be any foolin' 'round done by John Ed, though I'm hopin' he'll try right soon. 'Cause why? 'Cause there's a bit of a settlement comin' 'twixt him an' me regardin' the *Zoe*, an' now is my chance to collect the money due."

"How are you countin' on anythin' of that kind, sir?" Zenas asked meekly.

"First an' foremost we'll allow, as I reckon is reasonable, that sooner or later John Ed will try to make a landin' here unbeknownst to anybody, an' if so be I'm in charge of what you might call the defenses of the island, there's mighty little show of his doin' much without I get my hands on him. After that it's plain sailin'."

"I can't say as I follow you, Capt'in."

"No? Well, that's 'cause you're dumber than you ought'er be, Zenas Cushing. S'posen I once get my hands on John Ed, when he's stuck his nose in where it don't belong, it will be a case of my sayin' to him: 'Here, you smugglin' scoundrel, pay what you owe for the *Zoe*, givin' an imitation of an honest man for once in your life, or else back you go to jail!'"

Then, as if matters had been settled to his entire satisfaction, Captain Tobi rolled along on his way to the "hotel," and surely from the distance it did appear as if he was really rolling, owing to his superfluous flesh and peculiar gait.

The tooting of a horn from the deck of the *Nera* at this moment gave Zenas to understand that breakfast was ready, and he lost no time in going on board, find-



ing there the owners of the island, as well as Paul and Ned, already at table.

As a matter of course he gave a detailed account of his interview with Captain Tobi, concluding by saying:

“The old fellow really believes he can take care of us all in great shape, an’ has got an idee in his mind that you’ll be tickled way down to the ground to have him here.”

“I am not certain but that it will be a good scheme, providing he doesn’t count on being paid for his services,” Mr. Sawtelle said thoughtfully, and Paul’s father added:

“It is positive that he can keep Daniel Downs an’ his sons up to the mark better than any other man I know of, and if we are to begin work this morning on the aeroplane, there will be no reason why we should devote any of our time to guarding against visitors, for surely Captain Tobi and the Downs family can act the part of watchmen during the day-time.”

“Are we really to begin on the flying machine, sir?” Paul asked of Mr. Sawtelle, and the latter replied with a smile:

“I think it is high time, lad, and it was because of such idea that I inflicted the lecture upon you which Zenas was unable to stand.”

“I’d have stood it all right, sir, if I could have got any sense in it at the start; but you had no sooner begun than you threw me clean off the track by usin’ a lot of words I’d never heard before, an’ what was the sense of listenin’ when I was all at sea?” Master Cushing said in an apologetic tone.



“Perhaps you will get the idea in your mind better after we have begun the task,” Mr. Sawtelle replied with a smile. “Once we have given shape to the machine, it will be indeed a dull man who cannot understand the whys and wherefores of it all, owing to the simplicity of construction. Mr. Simpson and I have decided that the real work shall commence this morning, and from now on, unless it so be the worthy Mr. Bingham causes more trouble, there will be no loitering.”

“Are we three to live aboard the yacht entirely, sir?” Paul asked as he motioned toward Ned and Zenas.

“That is the present intention. If Captain Tobi remains on the island he can find quarters with the Downs family, so that he does not interfere with our plans.”

“You may set it down as a fact, sir, that whether it’s a church fair or a dog fight that’s goin’ on, where Captain Tobi is he’ll be bound to have a finger in the pie,” Zenas said laughingly, and Mr. Simpson replied sharply:

“When he attempts anything of the kind, the old fellow will find very suddenly that his presence here is not needed. Now if you have finished your breakfast we will go up to the work-shop, where I count on showing some photographs which will make more plain the plans I have drawn, for my proposed aeroplane is to be built on somewhat similar lines as those constructed by the Wright Brothers.”

Paul and Ned were at a loss to understand what Mr.



Sawtelle meant by the "work-shop," for to their knowledge there was no building on the island which could be so designated.

They followed him over the rail, however, without questioning, and when the little party arrived at the shore they saw the engineer, his assistant, and the one man who aided in working the *Nera*, coming from the direction of the "hotel."

"Have you done the work?" Mr. Sawtelle asked of the engineer, and the latter replied cheerily:

"Aye, aye, sir, she's all up; but I'm thinkin' we'd best put on a few more guy ropes after we've had a bite to eat, for if the wind comes 'round from the north, as it's like to do in case of a storm, something will be needed to stiffen her a bit."

"Very well, attend to the matter as soon as you have had breakfast," the owner of the *Nera* replied, and the boys were yet more perplexed because of not understanding what the "she" referred to might be.

It was all made plain, however, when they arrived at the "hotel," for on the westerly side of the building had been erected a huge canvas tent no less than fifty feet long, and more than half as wide, with sides that could be raised or lowered at will.

"Where did that come from?" Zenas asked in surprise.

"It has been stowed away aboard the *Nera*, and I had it taken out before daylight this morning, for all hands were so excited by what occurred during the night that there was no inclination to sleep," Mr. Sawtelle replied, and Paul asked:



“Why didn't you build a log house for the work-room, sir?”

“It struck me that this would be more convenient, for once our machine is finished we have only to remove the canvas covering in order to get it out, and then, by raising it again, have our work-shop as before.”

Instead of going directly into the tent, Mr. Sawtelle led the way to that apartment where the plans were yet lying upon the table, and, after arranging them in due order, he brought out from the locker a photograph of the Wright aeroplane.

“You see, lads, ours will be something after the pattern of the French machines, having those planes which might be called the upper and lower decks, made of a wooden frame-work covered with cloth, which gives us a surface of somewhere about five thousand square feet, since each deck is perhaps forty feet long and seven wide.”

“What's that 'ere little contrivance on the side?” Zenas asked, now showing decided interest such as he had never displayed since the scheme of building the aeroplane had been broached.

“That's the rudder,” Mr. Sawtelle explained. “The two plane surfaces, meaning the small upper and lower decks, are fifteen feet long and three wide. Between them is, as you see, a vertical, half-circle five and a half feet long and about a foot wide, of wood, trussed together. Now here,” and he pointed to the center of the larger structure, “is the motor, and opposite it, as shown, is the propeller of wood. I intend that there



shall be two of these propellers, driven by a four-cylinder, 24-horse-power motor, which should give us at least four hundred revolutions per minute. Now to come back to the larger structure: The rear portion of these two main decks, as we will call them, can be warped by the mechanism—that is to say, one raised while the other is lowered, which serves to direct the flight. All the levers and transmission rods are of wood; the only metal about the machine being the shafts, and supports for the screw propellers, of small wires, which unite and stiffen the different portions. Have you now a fair idea of what we count on building?" he asked abruptly, turning toward Zenas, and the latter replied with a long-drawn sigh of relief:

"Aye, sir, I'm gettin' into it as I never did before, and it's all owin' to them pictures. If you'd shown 'em in the first place, I believe I might have had wit enough to understand what you was sayin', even though I did get tangled up with some of the big words."

"Very well. It now remains for us to set up the frame. The lumber for the construction of the machine is, as you know, stored in the building here, and our first act must be to make ready for the carpenters' job."

There was no further need for Mr. Simpson to urge that either of his assistants study the mechanism of the aeroplane, for after being able to understand the plans by aid of the photograph, even Zenas was feverishly eager to begin the task, having come to believe,



as never before, that there was a possibility of navigating the air.

During four days the building of the craft was carried on industriously, and to such effect that by the end of that time the frame-work was so nearly in shape one could see what the builders were aiming at. Instead of being forced to excite Zenas to labor, it became really a difficult task to make him cease when night had come.

“It didn’t seem reasonable that we could build anythin’ which would sail in the air; but yet I declare if it don’t begin to look as though there was something in it after all,” he repeated again and again, and if this particular craft failed of being a success, no blame could attach to Master Cushing, for a more careful workman it would be difficult to find. Every joint must be made exactly, in order to suit him; every bit of wood used in the construction was examined with extraordinary care, and if he had been allowed his own way, only a small portion of the material which Mr. Simpson had brought to the island would have been utilized, because of his insisting that something better be procured.

During all this time that the two boys, Zenas, and Mr. Sawtelle labored earnestly and faithfully, Captain Tobi had full command of the island, at least in his own opinion, and it is safe to say that Daniel Downs and his two sons were never more active in all their lives. At almost any hour in the day or night could the captain’s tempestuous voice be heard, urging one or another to this task or that, all of which was con-



nected with guarding against inquisitive visitors, until even Mrs. Downs herself was heard by Ned to declare that she "had never been driven at such a rate before, and she would be thankful indeed when Captain Tobi went back to Seaview so she might draw a long breath."

It is true that no token of John Ed Bingham or any other evil-disposed person had been seen. It was as if the old smuggler yet remained closely confined in prison so far as the inhabitants of Barren Island were concerned, and more than once Ned declared it was his belief that, knowing his first intentions had been discovered, the man did not dare carry into execution any scheme for revenge.

Captain Tobi, however, would not admit for a single instant that there was any possibility John Ed Bingham would forego, or even postpone, his plans for paying off old scores.

"He'll come sooner or later," the hot-tempered captain said again and again to one or the other of the boys. "He's just idjut enough to believe he can break up this whole bloomin' show, an' he'll try for it as sure as my name's Tobias. That's all I'm askin' for, is to have him try, an' then I'll get my hands on him in such a way that he won't give me the slip."

Finally came the day when it was necessary to procure certain materials which had been left in storage at Seaview, and because the engineer of the *Nera* was doing good service in the work on the aeroplane, Mr. Sawtelle decided that it would be as well for Zenas and Paul to run over in the Hampton boat, more par-



ticularly since that craft was sufficiently large to bring back all the goods which would be required.

"Of course we'll go, an' feel kind'er glad to be afloat once more," Zenas said when the subject was brought up at the breakfast table, speaking as if Mr. Sawtelle desired to know if it would be perfectly agreeable to these employés of his to undertake the voyage. "The Hampton boat will be handier than the *Nera*, an' won't use up half so much gasoline, although it may take us an hour or so longer on the round trip, which don't count for very much."

"Then you and Paul may set off at once," Mr. Simpson said, and Zenas added in almost a mournful tone as he rose from the table:

"It seems kind'er funny for me, who didn't have any faith in flying machines, to say this; but it's a fact just the same: I'm sorry to knock off work even for two or three hours, for that 'ere aeroplane is comin' along in fine shape, an' I'm mighty anxious to see how she's goin' to work."

"In about two weeks from now, if nothing goes wrong meanwhile, you will have a chance to take passage in her, for I'm counting that the first flight shall be to Seaview," Mr. Simpson said laughingly, and Zenas replied in something very like alarm:

"It ain't that I'm achin' for a chance to break my neck; but I want to see what she will do while I'm standin' on the land where I can't tumble out."

"I thought you had become convinced that we would be able to handle the aeroplane in the air as we would a vessel on the water?" Mr. Simpson said laughingly.



“Well, sir, I’ve got some such idee, seein’s how the thing looks likely so far’s we’ve gone; but I ain’t quite fool enough to risk myself on her, not at any very great distance from the ground.”

Then Zenas hurried out from the cabin, and ten minutes later he and Paul were on board the Hampton boat, while Ned shouted as he stood on the shore:

“Now would be a good time to try the wireless; we haven’t used it for a couple of months, and are likely to get rusty in the work unless we have a little practice now and then.”

“You be at the instrument two hours from now, and I’ll talk with you,” Paul replied as he took his station at the helm, and Zenas started the motor, the staunch little craft darting forward under the impulse of the screw.

Half an hour later the owners of Barren Island, together with the engineer of the *Nera* and Ned Bartlett, were in the canvas work-shop busily engaged upon what Daniel Downs still persisted in calling “the funniest contraption ever put together,” when Captain Tobi entered, making his first visit since the aeroplane had been begun.

Up to this moment he had claimed that it was not his purpose to make any attempt at “flying in the face of Providence” by trying to go where only birds are allowed, and therefore it was he had refused even to take heed as to what the laborers were doing, going so far in his prejudices as to give a wide berth to the work-shop when he entered or came out of the “hotel.”

Because of his persistent shunning of the scene of



labor, all beneath the canvas roof were surprised at seeing him enter with the air of one to whom such things are familiar, and Mr. Simpson said laughingly:

“Have a care of yourself, Captain Tobi, or you may fall into a streak of bad luck by coming where we are tempting Providence.”

“I allow that I’m willin’ to go wherever I’m needed,” the old sailor said gruffly, and Mr. Sawtelle asked with a smile:

“What has happened to prove that you are needed here just now?”

“It is all very well for you to poke fun at a man who is doin’ his best to help along in this fool play when he has neither faith nor interest in it,” Captain Tobi began, his voice growing louder with each word until it seemed as if the tent was filled with a tempest of noise. “I’ve took it on myself to see that no harm comes to the foxes while you are a-wastin’ of your time on this crazy contraption, as Daniel calls it, an’ I allow he’s given the thing the right name.”

“Well, Captain Tobi, whether it’s owing to your vigilance, or Mr. Bingham’s indifference, I am unable to say; but certain it is that during the past four days we have been unmolested even by rumors,” Mr. Sawtelle said laughingly as he continued his work on one of the rudder planes.

“Very well, then it’s allowed that I haven’t failed in my part of the contract——”

“I am not aware that there was any contract, sir,” Mr. Simpson interrupted. “You took it upon yourself to keep Daniel and his sons up to the work of



guarding against inquisitive visitors, and that's about as near as you can come to a bargain between us."

"Have it any way you please, if you are so mighty careful to make out that there was no trade in this 'ere work of my takin' charge as I have done. I'm an old fool, I know, for spendin' my time here; but howsomever I've done my duty by you, an' have come to say that to the best of my belief you're likely to need me more'n you'll need any other man from this out."

"What do you mean, Captain?" Mr. Sawtelle asked in surprise, for by this time the old sailor was speaking in a solemn tone, as if he had upon his mind matters of the greatest importance.

"Meanin' that it looks to me mightily as if John Ed Bingham, or some of his gang, was hoverin' 'round here waitin' for a chance to sneak ashore when we haven't got our eyes peeled. If any of you will take the trouble to go down to the southerly pint, you'll see a little fore-an'-aft schooner which has to me the look of the craft that went ashore on Beekman's Ledge, hove to four or five miles away."

"A fisherman?" Mr. Sawtelle asked with seeming indifference.

"Fisherman nothin'! You couldn't catch a flounder where she's layin', not if you kept your lines out from now till the day of doom."

"Why is she hove to there?"

"That's jest what I've come to tell you about," and now the old man gave token of losing his temper. "How long must I stand here talkin' in order to make



you see what's as plain as the nose on your face? Yonder is a fore-an'-after hove to. Why? There's only one reason, 'cause there's a free wind whichever way she wanted to go. The answer is that she's got somebody aboard as counts on landin' here, an' I've come up to see if you'd be willin' to have me use them 'ere marine glasses of your'n?"

"I can't believe that anyone who intended to work us mischief would set about it in such a clumsy fashion," Mr. Simpson said as he went back to his work with the air of one who dismisses from his mind everything annoying. "There's no reason, however, why you shouldn't have the glasses, and without spending so much breath in the asking. Take them at any time you choose, Captain Tobi; they will always be found in the library, except when in your possession."

The old sailor made no further delay; but rolled away as if in haste, and Mr. Sawtelle asked of his partner, as if it was a matter of very little moment:

"Do you fancy there's even the possibility of a chance that your smuggler would be so foolish as to advertise his coming by leaving a craft in full view of us?"

"He has done that same thing before," Mr. Simpson replied, "and must have learned the folly of it, therefore I can't believe Captain Tobi's suspicions have any foundation; but it is well to know that the old sailor is keeping such a sharp watch."

Then the subject was dropped for the time being, as the two discussed the proper method of making a joint, and Ned, realizing that the time had come



when he agreed to be at the wireless to answer Paul's signal, hurried away to the instrument without acquainting either of the gentlemen with his purpose.

When he entered the room which Mr. Sawtelle had finished with a view to every comfort and convenience, Ned could not but ask himself why it was that he and Paul had neglected their work with the wireless so long simply because a novel scheme had presented itself.

"When it comes right down to dots, the aeroplane isn't in it compared with this," the lad said as he seated himself at the instrument and began testing it. "Here's something we boys worked out by ourselves, and yet seem to have forgotten it simply because someone comes along with a scheme for building an air-ship, and that somebody wouldn't be here if it hadn't been for this same wireless telegraph which Paul and I installed. The *Nera* must have gone to the bottom of the sea; the silver foxes might have been killed or stolen before they began to feel at home, and no one knows what other damage would have been done if we lads hadn't been able to send a message, as Daniel Downs said, on 'nothin' but air.'"

Ned was not anticipating any news of a startling or even entertaining nature from Paul. The idea simply had been to make a test of the instruments, and therefore it was that, outside of a certain professional pride in what was much the same as his own handiwork, he had no interest in the message which he expected to receive.



When, after waiting half an hour, the call p—l was clicked out as clearly as could have been produced by a higher-powered instrument, he answered it in a leisurely way, writing slowly the words:

“All right, old man; I got you in first-class shape.”

“Where’s father?” came the words from Seaview, and by the manner in which the letters were formed Ned instinctively understood that Paul was laboring under no little excitement.

“Out in the tent with Mr. Sawtelle, of course,” Ned answered.

“I just came from Mansfield’s store,” Paul wrote rapidly as if believing the time was precious. “He says John Ed Bingham put in here yesterday with the same schooner that went on Beekman’s Ledge—had five men with him. Bought stores of Mansfield—when he left this harbor stood straight off to the westward as if heading for Barren Island.”

“Jiminy!” Ned exclaimed when he had written the last word. “Captain Tobi didn’t make such a howling idiot of himself when he told about the fore-an’-after being hove to down here. Five men with John Ed, and acting as if they didn’t care whether we saw them or not.”

He was so excited as to forget that Paul was waiting for some reply, until the call p—l, p—l, was sounded, one might almost say in a peremptory manner.

“What’s the matter?” he asked.

“Didn’t you get the message just sent?”

“Of course I did,” was the reply.



“Why didn't you reply?”

“You knocked me silly. Captain Tobi reported half an hour ago a fore-and-after hove to four or five miles away.”

“That's the old smuggler!” Paul replied. “Tell father we've got the material aboard, and ask if we shall do anything more. I'll wait until you speak with him.”

As Ned afterward said, in telling the story to Zenas, the owners of Barren Island “stood up and took notice” when he repeated to them the message which had been sent from Seaview.

If he had counted on creating a sensation by reporting the doings of the old smuggler, he was not disappointed.

While one might have counted twenty the two men gazed at each other in silence, and then Mr. Simpson said, speaking deliberately as if to give due emphasis to every word:

“There is no question but that Bingham counts on working a mischief, and the fact of his being so careless convinces me he is ready to use force instead of cunning, as when he landed here last summer.”



## CHAPTER V

### CAPTAIN TOBI IN COMMAND

NED waited a full minute for some further command from Mr. Simpson, and, since the two men stood gazing at each other in silence, apparently giving no heed to him, he asked timidly:

“Shall I send any word to Paul, sir?”

It was Mr. Sawtelle who made reply, by saying hurriedly:

“Ask him to try to find out who the men are Bingham has with him on board the schooner; but tell him not to spend very much time on what is really of little consequence. He and Zenas are to come back as soon as possible,” and the gentleman added to his partner, “I have been thinking that it would be a good idea to have the Hampton boat patrol the coast to-night, in addition to our force on shore.”

Mr. Simpson nodded; but did not speak, and Ned hurried back to the room in which was the telegraph instrument, when he sent to Seaview a condensed report of the command which Mr. Sawtelle had given.

“There is no sense in our spending very much time trying to get the names of the men,” Paul telegraphed. “Mr. Mansfield said they were strangers, and it is certain if he doesn't know them, we cannot find anyone here who does.”

“Then the word is for you to come back at once.”

“Anything particular to be done?” Paul asked, and Ned could fancy he was surprised at being ordered



to return in haste when it must have seemed to him as if there was already on the island a force sufficient to cope with any party, however desperate, which John Ed Bingham might bring.

"The Hampton boat is to be used in patrolling the coast, and I reckon it will be an all-night job for some of us."

"We will start at once. Good-by."

There was no reason why Ned should linger longer at the instrument, for he understood that his friend had left the station in haste, and he was disconnecting the motor when Captain Tobi entered in what might truthfully be called an excited manner.

"So that 'ere fore-an'-after down yonder has been into Seaview, has she?" the old sailor roared, and Ned wheeled about in astonishment as he asked:

"How did you know?"

"Simpson was jest tellin' me of the word Paul sent. I reckon these 'ere silver fox farmers will be willin' to agree now that Tobi Thompson ain't more'n half as big a fool as he looks. The idee of my not knowin' whether that fore-an'-after was hove to for business or mischief! The miserable scoundrel's plan couldn't have been plainer to my eye if he had writ it all out in so many words."

"And you think he will come on the island to-night, sir?" Ned asked, not because he was eager to have a reply to the question, but because it seemed necessary to make some rejoinder to the old sailor's remark.

"That's what he'll try to do," Captain Tobi roared,



“an’ I’m only prayin’ an’ hopin’ he will come, ’cause then is my turn, and when I get a twist on that scoundrel’s neck he’ll be mighty glad to pay his honest debts, if no more.”

Then the captain literally rushed into that room which was called the “library,” where the partners yet remained, and since he had nothing better with which to occupy his attention, Ned followed to learn the cause of the old sailor’s haste.

“I want you to give me full charge in this ’ere matter, Simpson. Let me have free swing for the next four an’ twenty hours, an’ I guarantee to lay John Ed Bingham by the heels, or give you my head for a foot-ball.”

“Why is it necessary you should be in command?” Mr. Simpson asked laughingly. “Do you fancy Mr. Sawtelle and I might be in the way, or that you wouldn’t need the crew of the *Nera* in order to capture the smuggler?”

“Too many cooks spoil the broth,” Captain Tobi roared, “an’ that you had good proof of last summer, when he gave all hands of you the slip at a time you were certain he was here on the island without means of gettin’ away. Now what I’m after is to catch the villain, an’ hold him fast until we can settle this matter for good an’ all. So I’m askin’ that you give me full charge here for four an’ twenty hours. I’ll take Daniel Downs and his two sons; the rest of the crew go on board an’ snore till daylight, when you shall say to me, ‘Captain Tobi,’ says you, ‘where is John Ed Bingham?’ an’ I’ll say to you, says I, ‘Simp-



son, I've got him trussed up down here by the ruins of Daniel's house, an' am ready to bring him off to the yacht, or take him to your quarters, jest as you choose.' I'm tellin' you the work will be *done*, an' in proper shape, if I can have full swing here with nobody to interfere. Daniel an' the boys will walk a chalk line when I say the word, which is more'n I'd be able to say for the rest of the crew."

"You remember, Captain Tobi, that according to word received from Seaview, John Ed has five men with him," Mr. Simpson suggested, and the old sailor replied:

"I don't care if he's got five times five men; I'll lay him by the heels. When it comes to that, he can't bring ashore more'n three, 'cause two will have to be left to handle the schooner. That will make four of them, and here's four of us. I'd undertake to catch the villains single-handed, if it wasn't that I might need somebody to keep 'em from runnin' away. You see I ain't what might be called a lean man, an' consequently, can't be depended upon for much of a race. Now Daniel an' his boys ain't given to too much flesh, an' they'll 'round 'em up for me."

Mr. Simpson looked at his partner with a question in his eyes, and the latter nodded as if to say he was willing Captain Tobi should have the opportunity he so ardently desired, therefore Paul's father said after a brief pause:

"Go your own gait, Captain Tobi, and with the understanding that you are confident of being able to



capture Bingham. There must be no mistake about this matter. I do not intend that we shall waste our time guarding the island against him, and want everything settled as soon as he makes his venture."

"The first time he steps his foot on Barren Island shall be his last, an' I'll take my 'davy on that, Simpson," the old sailor roared. "I'm rememberin' how he turned up his nose at me after you had him arrested, jest 'cause I hinted that he'd better pay for the *Zoe* before he went into prison. If so be he lands on this 'ere farm to-night, there won't be a sicker man in the state than that same Bingham, cause I'll have him in my clutches makin' him walk Spanish."

"Very well, captain, it shall be as you wish; but don't you think it will be prudent to take Zenas and our two boys to help you out?"

"With Daniel an' his sons I'll have all the force that's needed, an' I'm mighty sorry, owin' to not bein' able to run as fast as I could when I weighed less, that I'm obleeged to call in so many, for I'd rather do the job up with my own two hands."

"What are we to do?" Mr. Sawtelle asked, and Captain Tobi roared as if in a rage:

"Do? Why, keep on about your work here, tryin' to make somethin' that will flock with the crows. Do anythin' you please so you keep out'er sight. I don't want anybody 'round except Daniel an' his boys. When it comes time to knock off in this crazy business, go aboard the yacht an' stay below, an' after sunrise,



if you're ready to say how John Ed shall be served out, call for me, when I'll fetch him up to you with his wings clipped."

Then the captain, as if fearing the agreement to give him full charge of the island during the coming night might be broken if he lingered, hurried out of the building, and those who remained in the library could hear him shouting with tempest note:

"Daniel! Ernest! Sam! Get a move on! What are you sogerin' there for when there's work on hand? Ahoy, you lubberly farmers! I'm needin' you down at the cove."

And Mr. Sawtelle said laughingly as he gave his attention once more to the work before him:

"Whether Captain Tobi catches Bingham or not, the Downs family are likely to work harder this night than they ever did before, and I'll venture to say that neither the old man nor the boys will have an opportunity of sleeping 'twixt now and sunrise."

Ned tried to follow the example of the two gentlemen by continuing that portion of the work which he had been doing when it became necessary to go into the wireless station; but his fingers refused to obey the commands of his brain. There was no doubt but that the old smuggler was near at hand, and inclined for mischief; it seemed positive there would be a small-sized battle on the island before morning, and he was so thoroughly excited that it was an impossibility to fix his attention upon anything which required skill or patience.

Mr. Sawtelle, who overlooked jealously everything



done by his assistants, quickly noted the fact that the lad was not in condition to do such work as was required, and said in a kindly tone:

"I fancy, my boy, that it will be just as well if you occupy your time with whatsoever is most agreeable. You are not working that stay as skillfully as it should be done, because your mind is elsewhere, so loaf around outside until Zenas and Paul come."

"I am sorry if I have been careless," Ned said contritely. "It has mixed me up to think of what may happen to-night; but I will try to do better work."

"There's no great need for haste in the building of this craft, and it is just as well that you lay still a while."

So far as calming his nerves was concerned, Ned might as well have remained in the work-tent. He went from the "hotel" to the harbor and back again, walking swiftly as if the time which hung so heavily on his hands was very precious, and each moment he grew more disturbed in mind, not from fear that John Ed Bingham might be able to work his will; but because of the possibility that Captain Tobi would not succeed in his purpose.

Once on board the *Nera* he found her crew twisting the small wire ropes which were to be used in the construction of the aeroplane, with never a care as to what might occur on Barren Island during the coming night.

He saw the Downs boys hurrying to and fro from the harbor to the southerly point, and thence to Swallow-tailed Cove, without apparent aim, and under-



stood that they were striving to appear exceedingly busy in order to satisfy their task master who was in temporary command of the island.

Then, when it seemed as if a full half-day had been spent, the Hampton boat came around the point swiftly, and he hurried out in the old dory to meet Paul, as if expecting to receive from the lad later intelligence than that which had been flashed across the waters by the wireless telegraph.

“How does it happen you are loafin’?” Zenas asked with a grin as Ned came alongside. “Knocked off buildin’ air-ships because John Ed is on the war path?”

“Did you hear anything more from Mr. Mansfield?” Ned asked, ignoring Zenas’s question, and Paul shook his head.

“He had told us all he knew at the start, and we didn’t spend our time running around Seaview when there wasn’t one chance in a thousand that we could pick up anything more. Is the schooner hove to off there where she was when you telegraphed?”

“Yes; at least she was a half hour ago. Captain Tobi has got charge of things now, and it seems as though your father and Mr. Sawtelle don’t care what happens.”

“Captain Tobi got charge? What do you mean?” Zenas asked sharply, whereupon Ned repeated as nearly as possible the conversation which had been held in the work-tent, and when he was come to the end of his story Master Cushing cried in a tone of discontent:



"It beats all how foolish some men can be! The idee of lettin' that crazy-headed sailor run things just because he's bent on gettin' what money John Ed owes him! Now you listen to me. It ain't any two to one that Captain Tobi, smart as he thinks he is, won't be laid by the heels 'twixt now an' mornin', if so be Bingham comes ashore. Why don't they go to work an' let Mother Downs take charge of the business? I'll go bail she could have done it as well as that wild capt'in can."

"But surely he ought to be able to catch John Ed, with Daniel Downs and the two boys to help him."

"Yes, he ought'er," Zenas sneered. "That's what I should call the blind leadin' the blind. So far's Sam and Ernest are concerned, I'd rather have 'em in bed than 'round where I was tryin' to do anythin' very nifty, for they've got no more back-bone than a flea. An' dumb? Why, they don't know enough to go in when it rains! A fine gang it'll be to catch an old weasel like John Ed."

"Well, that's what they count on trying to do," Ned said, feeling decidedly uncomfortable in mind after hearing Zenas's opinion. "Paul's father and Mr. Sawtelle seemed willing enough to have the thing go that way, and I don't know as it's any of our business. According to the captain's orders we are to stay under cover. He gave out that we were to remain below after going to supper on the yacht, so that no one could see us."

"So that's the way he's beginnin', eh?" Zenas said in a contemptuous tone. "We are to keep out of



sight, and he's to run the thing, with Daniel and them two imitation boys of his to help him. Oh, well, I'll stay below all right; I won't worry my head; but I'll bet great big dollars against the hole in a doughnut that Tobi Thompson will wish he had somebody at his back besides the Downs family, if he comes face to face with Bingham."

"But why should you get so excited about it?" Paul asked laughingly. "If Captain Tobi falls into trouble, it won't hurt you any."

"It won't so far as skin is concerned; but the idee is that we've most likely got a chance to catch Bingham foul, an' it's all to be muddled by Captain Tobi."

"How would you change things if you could?" Ned asked with a laugh that had in it little of mirth.

"I'd call out every man on the island to 'round the old smuggler up, so's to make certain he didn't give us the slip. Who wants to stay here all summer, same's we did last season, on the lookout for him, when by doin' things as we ought'er we could wind up his career with a sharp turn? Stay below? You bet I will, an' that's where I'm goin' now," Zenas added as he leaped into the dory, and if the boys had not followed him at their best speed he would have pulled across to the *Nera* alone, leaving them aboard the Hampton boat to get ashore as best they might.

"Ain't you going to take our cargo out?" Paul asked when Zenas took up the oars and began rowing vigorously.

"Didn't Ned say we were to keep out of sight?"

"But that was after we went on board the yacht



for supper," Master Bartlett replied curtly. "Just because you don't like the arrangement of matters, there's no reason why you should neglect work."

"I ain't neglectin' it," Zenas said surlily. "I'm waitin' till I get orders, and if that crazy-headed capt'in is in charge of the island, I s'pose they'll have to come from him. Anyhow, I'm going to have a talk with the engineer, an' you can do as you please."

Then Zenas clambered over the *Nera's* rail, and Paul, knowing full well it was necessary to report that the Hampton boat had arrived, went ashore in the dory with Ned, the two hurrying at once to the "hotel" without discussing the situation of affairs which had so disgruntled Zenas.

"It will be as well if you bring the lumber ashore in the morning," Mr. Sawtelle said when the boys had made their report; but the fact that just then his attention was fully occupied with testing the supports of the main planes, explained why he did not give detailed instructions as to what should be done with the material.

"Anyhow, it is too late to get all the stuff ashore before dark, because it's so near night now, and I suppose it is just as well to let things remain as they are," Paul said as he followed Ned out of the work-room, and Master Bartlett said despondently:

"I wish Zenas hadn't been so certain about Captain Tobi's failing to catch Bingham."

"Don't be foolish," Paul cried laughingly. "Simply because Zenas does or does not believe a thing, won't make it so. Of course it's possible Captain Tobi may



blunder; but he's so eager to get the money due him on account of the *Zoe* that I believe he will carry on the work properly. At all events we are out of it, so let's go aboard the *Nera* and take things as comfortably as possible."

Nothing was to be seen of the old sea captain or any of his assistants as the boys went from the "hotel" to the harbor, nor did Zenas put in an appearance when they clambered over the *Nera's* rail, making sufficient noise in so doing to warn anyone aboard that visitors had arrived.

"He's most likely stewing over this thing with the engineer; finding fault with Captain Tobi, and complaining because father and Mr. Sawtelle don't do exactly as he thinks is right," Paul said with a laugh. "Let's go into the wireless room, and make ourselves comfortable."

The boys set about striving to pick up some message from across the waters, and although unsuccessful in such efforts, they spent the time very happily, if not profitably, according to their own opinion, until the owners of Barren Island came aboard in response to the cook's warning that supper was served.

Zenas showed himself at the table that evening, for, except when he had important business on hand, Master Cushing delighted in satisfying the cravings of hunger; but he took no part in the conversation even though it had reference almost exclusively to John Ed Bingham.

Mr. Simpson amused himself with speculating as to how Captain Tobi intended to draw his net around the



old smuggler beyond the possibility of failure, and Mr. Sawtelle repeated the promises and threats which the owner of the sloop had made, declaring that it was a most novel method of collecting a debt.

Zenas remained as dumb as any fish, and his employers must finally have suspected that he was out of humor, for Mr. Sawtelle said laughingly, when the meal was come to an end:

“I suppose it would have pleased you better to have made the capture yourself, in order to pay off the old scores, eh, Zenas?”

“I don’t care whether it’s me or somebody else, so the job is done,” Master Cushing said gruffly, and again Mr. Sawtelle laughed as he asked:

“Do you mean to insinuate that Captain Tobi can’t do it in the most approved fashion?”

“I ain’t insinuating nothin’; but I’m sayin’ right up an’ down as a fact, that if that crazy old sailor can muddle things he will, an’ I allow he won’t have any great amount of trouble in doin’ it to-night when he bucks up against John Ed.”

“But we have his positive pledge that he will deliver the smuggler to us at sunrise to-morrow morning.”

“Well, there’s no need of my believin’ it until I see it, is there?” and Zenas rose from the table abruptly, going at once on deck despite Captain Tobi’s orders that all hands should remain below, and neither Paul nor Ned saw him again until after they had retired.

The silver fox farmers and the air-ship builders were accustomed to go to bed early, and it was not yet nine o’clock when the two lads were sleeping peacefully



in their bunks aboard the *Nera*, forgetting alike the chances that John Ed Bingham might succeed in working mischief, and the possibility that the aeroplane could be made to sail through the air once it was completed.

Neither of the lads knew at what time Zenas retired, although he had the cabin next to theirs; but certain it was he turned in before daylight, for it was yet dark when he aroused them by crying:

“Ahoy in there! The sun ought to rise, if he’s on time, in less than an hour, so s’posen we three go ashore an’ see what Captain Tobi’s done with the smuggler?”

“Haven’t you been to sleep yet?” Ned grumbled, not inclined to turn out before daylight.

“Of course I have; an’ seein’s you turned in pretty early in the afternoon, there’s no reason why you haven’t had sleep enough.”

Both the boys knew it would be useless to make any attempt at closing their eyes again in slumber while Zenas was bent on arousing them, and although not quite certain that Captain Tobi would be pleased to have them come ashore before he had given the signal, they followed Zenas within as short a time after having been awakened as it was possible to make a hurried toilet.

Even though the yacht lay at anchor where there seemed to be little chance any harm could come to her, Mr. Sawtelle had insisted that watch be kept during each night, and he who chanced to be on duty at that time hailed Zenas when he would have gone



over the rail into the dory which was moored alongside, by asking:

“What’s going on now? Where are you bound?”

“The boys an’ I are goin’ ashore to see what kind of a fist Captain Tobi has made at catchin’ Bingham,” Master Cushing replied meekly, for he understood that this man was but obeying orders when he insisted on knowing who came on board, or departed from, the craft, at such an hour. “How long have you been on watch?”

“Nigh to two hours.”

“Have you heard anythin’ from the shore?”

“Not a hooter. I reckon if that ’ere fat sailor did any business last night, he wound it up pretty early, else I’d have heard something even if it was no more than a sneeze.”

“It would be kind of funny if Tobi Thompson had done just as he agreed on, an’ got hold of John Ed without any trouble,” Zenas muttered as he went over the rail, and the boys followed at his heels, not inclined to conversation because of their sleepiness; but with never a question as to the possibility that the captain had failed in his purpose.

“We won’t make overly much noise,” Zenas said as he pulled carefully, taking due heed lest the oars click in the row-locks, “because there’s no reason why we should let Captain Tobi know we’re tryin’ to sneak up on him. Now I’m allowin’, if so be he did get John Ed, that he’s carried him where he agreed, an’ there’s where we’ll go. I’ll toddle along ahead, an’ you fellers come close behind without speakin’,”



As Zenas had proposed so the little party did, and stealthily, as if bent on some unlawful business, they crept along the sandy shore; then across the grassward until having come to the ruins of the farmhouse, which they circled completely without seeing or hearing anything of those whom they sought.

"If he got his hands on John Ed this night, it's certain Capt'in Tobi didn't carry out the whole plan, 'cordin' as he first figgered," Zenas said after making certain that neither the would-be captor, nor the hoped-for prisoner, was in the vicinity. "I'm tellin' you, lads, that we've got to hunt for Captain Tobi, an' it wouldn't surprise me into any very serious fit, if he was needin' us 'bout this time."

At that instant they were startled by hearing the watch aboard the *Nera* cry sharply:

"Ahoy! What are you doing here?"

Paul clutched Ned by the arm as he whispered triumphantly:

"That's Captain Tobi coming with John Ed," and an instant later, while they waited for a reply to the watchman's hail, he added, "But where did he get a boat? Every craft that belongs to the island was in the harbor when we came ashore."

Then the watchman shouted again, and this time it was possible to hear the sound of his hurried footsteps on the deck:

"Ahoy there! Sheer off! Tell me who you are."

"What's goin' on down there?" Zenas said half to himself. "Somethin' is wrong," and he started at full speed for the harbor, arriving there just in time



to see a boat, in which were three or four men, pulling seaward.

Day was just breaking, rendering it possible for the boys to see objects indistinctly, and therefore while there could be no question but that the dark mass which showed on the waters between the two points was a boat containing at least three persons, they were unable to determine anything beyond this bare fact.

“Is it Captain Tobi?” Paul asked eagerly, clutching Zenas’s arm to hold his attention.

“It can’t be him, else why would he run away when the watchman hailed?” and on the instant Zenas raised his voice as he shouted:

“It is Bingham! Ahoy on the *Nera!* Bingham is givin’ us the slip!”

“Why do you yell to them when they can’t lend a hand?” Paul cried excitedly. “What’s the matter with the Hampton boat?”

“The very thing, lad! Quick! Don’t lose a minute now, an’ we’ll catch ’em!” Zenas cried, as he ran swiftly toward the dory, shoving her across the sands unaided, the excitement of the moment lending a fictitious strength to his arms, and before the dark blur in the distance, which they knew to be a boat, had disappeared around the northern point, the three were working in hot haste to gain the Hampton boat, Master Cushing and Paul rowing, while Ned used the spare oar as a paddle.

Zenas did not speak during the two or three minutes which passed while they were making their way to the power boat; but bent his back to the oars, straining



every muscle as if believing that by wasting a single second those who were evidently in flight might succeed in making their escape.

Never did Paul realize so keenly the truth of the old adage that "haste makes waste." It seemed as if everything he attempted to do was bungled. He who prided himself on being an expert oarsman, was so clumsy as to "catch a crab," with the result that he was thrown back into the bottom of the boat, interfering with Zenas, and nearly tumbling Ned overboard. Having recovered himself in silence, for no one spoke during the mishap, so overpowering was the excitement of the moment, he failed to keep stroke, or Master Cushing was clumsy in getting into swing, whichever it may be, and twenty or thirty seconds were spent before the dory was sent ahead once more as she should have been under the impulse of five oars.

Then, on coming alongside the boat, it appeared to Paul as if not only he, but his companions, scrambled over the rail in a snail-like manner, and Zenas and Ned were seemingly a very long time hauling in the short scope of cable, while he fumbled with the crank, missing his hold two or three times, until an exclamation of anger and impatience from his lips caused Master Cushing to say:

"Quiet down there a bit, lad. You're too excited to know just what's what, an' there's no need of our rushin' our heads off. Those fellows yonder will find no harbor this side of Seaview, an' we'll catch 'em



within a mile of the cove. Take it fair an' easy, an' we'll make better speed."

These words served to quiet Paul in a certain degree, and gave him opportunity to gain better control of himself until he realized that they could not have wasted very many seconds, although it had seemed to him an almost interminable time before they were ready to get under way.

Then the throbbing of the motor came like music to his ears. He saw Zenas at the wheel, with Ned amidships on the alert to do whatsoever might be required of him, and the chase had begun.

"Your blessed Captain Tobi let Bingham slip through his fingers, an' now we'll show that fat, crazy old sailor how to lay the smugglin' villain by the heels!" Zenas said triumphantly. "We don't need to run half a mile before coming alongside of their boat, no matter how hard they pull, an' I'm allowin' that it wouldn't be a bad idee if we looked about for somethin' with which to fight, for I'm allowin' they won't give in without a bit of a struggle."

Ned considered this as a command intended for him, and began looking about for the most effective weapons that could be had where there were none of a deadly nature, when the Hampton boat rounded the northerly point and an exclamation of bewilderment burst from Zenas's lips, followed by the words:

"I'm blessed if they haven't disappeared!"

It was as he said. The strangers had disappeared from view. No sign of any craft could be seen, and



now the new day was coming on so swiftly that anything half the size of a dory must have shown up distinctly.

It was Paul who first had a clear understanding of the situation, and he shouted hoarsely:

“They’ve gone ashore! They’ve gone ashore! It don’t seem possible Bingham would dare do such a thing, and yet he has done it! What are you doing?” he added as Zenas swung the helm hard down, bringing the Hampton boat around in a short circle.

“We’ll run back off the mouth of the harbor to let them aboard the *Nera* know that Bingham is on the island, an’ then skin down to get his boat so’s he can’t give us the slip.”

Ten seconds later Zenas was crying at the full strength of his lungs, as he brought the little craft around once more in a sharp turn on her former course:

“Ahoy on the *Nera*! Bingham has landed just above the northerly point. Turn out everybody! We are goin’ to get his boat, so’s there’ll be no chance of his sneakin’ off!”



## CHAPTER VI

### CAPTAIN TOBI'S PLIGHT

THE occupants of the Hampton boat had no doubt but that a battle was near at hand, and Ned had done his best toward arming himself and his comrades for the fray.

Two wrenches and a boat-hook made up the list of available weapons, which would indeed be ineffective in case those who sought to work mischief on Barren Island were prepared for the encounter, as it was reasonable to suppose they were.

"There are only three of 'em anyhow," Zenas said grimly as he stood at the wheel striving to determine at what point the intruders had made a landing, "an' it won't be any imitation of a row when we come together, for whether John Ed was in that boat or not, those who came with him will put up considerable of a fight rather than allow themselves to be made prisoners. It's up to us, lads, to finish the job Capt'in Tobi failed at, no matter how hard the tussle may be."

Just at that moment it seemed to Paul as if he could, single-handed, cope with almost any number of such men as the old smuggler had brought with him, so great was the anger in his heart that this man but lately released from prison should set at defiance the owners of the island.

"I don't claim to be any prize fighter," he said grimly, swinging the wrench to and fro as if striking at



an enemy; "but I'll agree to answer for one of them, unless they are armed with revolvers."

"An' even though they have come outfitted in such a way, I'm doubtin' if they'd dare to use 'em," Zenas added in a business-like tone. "It's one thing to stand up in a fist fight, even when men are trespassin', but a mighty serious matter to use deadly weapons. Anyhow I'll give 'em a chance to shoot at me if they want to take the risk."

Then Master Cushing swung the Hampton boat close inshore, as near the rocky coast as he dared put her, while Paul shut the motor down to half-speed that they might have ample opportunity to scrutinize every possible landing-place.

By this time the new day had so nearly come that the boys could distinguish surrounding objects almost as clearly as if the sun was shining, and Ned and Paul were literally quivering with excitement as they passed slowly along the shore without finding that for which they sought.

Not until the Hampton boat had covered more than half the distance from the northern point of the harbor to the outermost extremity of Swallow-tailed Cove, did Zenas begin to realize the possibility that matters might not shape themselves exactly as he had believed would be the case, and he cried in a tone of perplexity as he swung the little craft around to return over the same course:

"There's no sense in our runnin' any further to the nor'ard, 'cause those fellows couldn't have got so far as this from the time of roundin' the point until



we were where a full view might be had of the coast. It must be they went ashore immediately after comin' out of the cove, an' we were so blind as not to see their craft."

The Hampton boat was skirting along just outside where the waves broke into foam against the rocks, and with speed reduced until she was moving no faster than a man could walk, her crew searching eagerly with their eyes every tiny opening that might shelter a dory.

"I hope I may never see the back of my head if that ain't the oddest piece of business that ever come my way!" Zenas exclaimed when they were arrived again at the northerly point of the harbor without having found that for which they sought, and he turned to face Paul in what was very like bewilderment. "Do you reckon, lad, it was possible we dreamed of seein' a boat with three men in it?"

"Of course we didn't," was the emphatic reply. "I was as wide awake as at this minute, and couldn't have been mistaken."

"Then where is she?"

"They must have hauled her up on shore," Ned suggested, and Zenas replied with the air of one who is confident that he speaks truly:

"They didn't have time to do that. A fourteen-foot dory ain't any toy to be tossed 'round like an egg-shell, an' it would take three men quite a spell to work her through the surf an' over the rocks. I'm beginnin'——"

"Ahoy on the Hampton! Ahoy on the Hampton!"



came from the harbor, and looking up quickly the boys saw the owners of Barren Island pulling in the *Nera's* tender from the yacht toward the northern point.

It was Mr. Simpson who had hailed, and Paul shouted:

"Three men have landed somewhere near this point, and although we have run nearly to Swallow-tailed Cove and back, nothing can be seen of their craft."

"Are you certain you really saw three men?" Mr. Simpson asked, and Zenas muttered so that none save his companions might hear the words:

"That's the way we'll get it from now out; every blessed one of 'em will swear it was only a dream."

"There can be no question, sir," Paul replied. "All of us saw them as they left the *Nera* after the watchman hailed. Ask him about it."

"He tells the same story you do—that he made out a dory in which were three men, close under the *Nera's* stern," Mr. Simpson replied, and Zenas cried triumphantly:

"Then surely you can't accuse us of dreamin' when we claim to have seen the same thing."

"Yet you say you have been along the shore, and cannot find the boat?" Mr. Simpson asked, as if such fact was sufficient proof that the watchman, the two boys, and Zenas, were all mistaken, or had been dreaming.

"That is the fact, sir, and yet they pulled out of this harbor, with us not four minutes behind them. Even though they had been using three pairs of oars it would have been impossible to have got half a mile



away before we should have come alongside, for our craft was put at her best speed."

"Where's Captain Tobi?" Mr. Simpson asked after a brief pause, and Zenas replied contemptuously:

"I ain't worryin' my head about that crazy old sailor. Most like he's down to the southern point, believin' he's cuttin' ice to beat the band."

Then, as if he had finished the matter with his employer, Zenas wheeled about once more to face Paul, as he said sharply:

"We three know that John Ed's gang are on the island somewhere near about, an' if we land now they won't have time to launch their boat before it'll be possible to rout them out, so send the Hampton boat ahead, lad, an' let us strike down through the bushes. If Mr. Sawtelle can satisfy himself with believin' all of us, an' the watchman, have been dreamin', why let him do it, an' while he's gettin' what satisfaction he can out of such a game we'll nab John Ed."

The Hampton boat dashed into the little harbor, throwing the water in tiny jets before her bow, and almost as soon as Paul had shut off the power, the anchor was dropped. Then Zenas pulled the tender alongside, working as if every minute was precious, and indeed it was if they counted on overtaking the would-be mischief-makers before they had time to launch their dory again.

Even while they were sending the small boat shoreward at the best possible speed, Paul noted the singular fact that Captain Tobi, Daniel Downs and his sons were not to be seen.



The engineer and his assistant were on the deck of the *Nera*, unable to go ashore because the owners of the island had taken the yacht's tender, and coming hurriedly from the "hotel" was Mrs. Downs, the fact of her having heard the alarm being sufficient proof that the old sailor and those whom he had elected to aid him in capturing John Ed, were too far away to have been warned by the outcries.

"Where *can* Captain Tobi be?" Paul muttered, hardly conscious that he spoke the words aloud, and Zenas replied impatiently:

"A little thing like that ain't fussin' me, for we'll finish this 'ere job without any help from that old crazy-headed capt'in."

As he ceased speaking the bow of the dory grated on the sand, and without stopping to moor the craft Master Cushing leaped on shore, running at full speed northward as he shouted for his companions to follow him.

The three went swiftly along the coast, making their way with no little difficulty among the stunted bushes as they followed the shore-line just within the screen of foliage, and no halt was made until they were arrived at that point where the ledge ran inland, where all vestige of shrubbery came to an abrupt end.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" Zenas exclaimed as he halted to rub his nose reflectively. "At this rate it won't take such a dreadful while for me to get the idee that Sawtelle was right about our dreamin'. Those villains couldn't have carried that heavy dory very far inland, an' even if they had, she's so big



that we ought'er been able to see where she was dragged along, or forced through the bushes."

Then he wheeled about, after one searching glance seaward to make certain the intruders had not already taken to the water again, and directed his course toward the harbor, this time twenty or thirty feet further inland.

The three arrived once more on the shore of the cove without having seen any token of that which they were so eager to find. The owners of the island were standing on the northern point, from which place could be had a fairly good view as far across the island as the ruins of Mr. Downs's house, as well as over the waters to the westward, and Zenas cried breathlessly:

"Have you seen anybody, sir?"

Mr. Simpson shook his head, as he replied:

"If you haven't found a boat, then it is certain there was some mistake made, or, possibly, instead of pulling around to the northward, they went in a southerly direction after leaving here."

"I'll swear they rounded the northern point," Zenas said slowly, and as if striving to persuade himself that he might possibly have made a mistake. "It was light enough for me to see them fairly well, although of course I couldn't make out whether John Ed was one of the gang or not. Do you——"

"If you haven't found their boat either while running along the shore in the Hampton, or going through the bushes, then it's certain there has been a mistake somewhere," Mr. Sawtelle said decidedly. "It is folly



to think for a moment that three men and a dory could be hidden so completely in this scrub growth that they couldn't be found while going through it twice. Even suppose they had sufficient time, and were able to drag their craft entirely across the island, you should have seen some signs of where they passed."

"Aye, sir, I'm obliged to say that's the truth, an' yet it's impossible to persuade myself that they went other than around the northern point," Zenas replied earnestly, but there was the slightest inflection of his voice which told of doubt, since he had seemingly proven to himself that the men must have fled in some other direction.

Then it was that Mr. Sawtelle hailed the *Nera*, asking who was on watch at daybreak, and the engineer's assistant stepped forward quickly as he said:

"I was, sir, and had been talking with Zenas Cushing and the two lads when I saw a dory, with three men in her, just under the stern of the yacht. I can't say where they came from; but there they were, and when I hailed, the craft was put about suddenly, while her crew pulled for the mouth of the harbor."

"Did you see which way they went from there?"

"That I didn't, sir. I was watching Zenas and the boys get the Hampton boat under way. I had an idea, from where the craft was when I saw her last, that she was making around the northerly point; but of that I couldn't be certain."

"You are willing to admit, Zenas, that it is impossible for three men to hide themselves and a dory



in the bushes without your having found them?" Mr. Sawtelle asked, and Master Cushing replied, as if unwilling to admit such a fact:

"I can't rightly say anythin' else, sir; but yet it's mighty hard to figger how all three of us could have made such a mistake."

"As I look at the matter, believing that Zenas and the boys would have seen some trace of the intruders if they had really landed above here, our course now should be toward the south," Mr. Simpson said thoughtfully. "It might well chance that while the Hampton boat was being gotten under way, the fellows, in order to bewilder their pursuers, made as if to go northward, and then suddenly pulled about in the opposite direction. In such case they worked skillfully, for while the Hampton boat ran up the coast there was time for them to pull down beyond the southern point, and the probabilities are they're heading for the schooner which we saw hove to last night."

"I only wish that may be so, though I can't understand how it could have been brought about," Zenas cried vehemently, as he ran swiftly toward the dory, beckoning for the two lads to follow him, and Mr. Sawtelle asked sharply:

"Now what are you about?"

"I am countin' to take a cruise in the Hampton down to the south'ard, an' if so be you've figgered rightly, I'll come up with the scoundrels before they get very far away, even though we have wasted so much time."



"But suppose you laid that craft alongside their dory, what then?" Mr. Sawtelle asked sharply. "Do you fancy it would be possible, without weapons, to bring those men back?"

"They'll come back, or I'll stay with 'em," Zenas cried angrily, as he laid his shoulder against the bow of the dory to launch her, whereupon Mr. Simpson said peremptorily:

"You are to stay on the island, Zenas. I am not so eager to capture those men as to let you take the chances of an encounter with desperate villains. Pull straight across the harbor, and we will follow the coast down. After gaining the bluffs at the southerly end it will be possible to see the dory, if she's running down to where the schooner was seen last night."

Zenas half-turned with a gesture of defiance, as if it was in his mind to declare that he would not obey orders even though his employer had spoken so peremptorily, and Ned whispered warningly:

"Be careful; there is no reason why you should stir up a row with Mr. Simpson just because you want to get hold of John Ed. Besides, it is true, when you come to think of it, that we three would stand little chance of bringing John Ed's gang back to the island, even if we should put the Hampton boat alongside the dory."

"All the same, it's dead wrong to give in just now," Zenas muttered. "If Paul's father thinks three of us can't do the job, why don't he an' Mr. Sawtelle come aboard, an' let us run that smuggler down, if



so be he can be found, before more of our time has been wasted."

"It is for Mr. Simpson and Mr. Sawtelle to say what shall be done," Ned continued in a low tone as he aided Zenas in launching the dory.

"I ain't certain of that, if somebody else knows better than they what should be done," Master Cushing grumbled, and then, the dory being water-borne, he leaped on board, followed by the two boys.

The owners of the island pulled across the harbor in the *Nera's* tender, and a few moments later all the party were walking rapidly along the coast, keeping a sharp lookout to seaward, but seeing nothing of the craft which they sought.

About midway from the harbor to the southerly point of the island was a small clump of scrub oaks, the tops of which had been bowed by the winds until they presented a most grotesque appearance. Because it was possible that the enemy might have landed after rounding the point, doubling back on their course, and seeking a hiding-place near the water, Zenas led the way into this odd grove, being a dozen paces or more in advance of his companions, so eager was he to settle the question as to whether he had been mistaken in believing the strangers had gone in the opposite direction.

Paul and Ned were behind him, while bringing up the rear were the owners of the island, and the two lads were startled almost into an exclamation of fear, when Zenas uttered a cry which might have been one of warning, or surprise, or of alarm.



“What have you found?” Mr. Simpson shouted as he quickened his pace, while Ned and Paul ran at full speed to where Master Cushing was standing like a statue, gazing with staring eyes at some object in front of him.

When the boys were where they could make out that which had caused Zenas to come to such a sudden stop, they also exclaimed in surprise or fear, causing the owners of the island to come forward at a swift pace until it was possible for them to see, bound securely, each to one of the stunted oaks, Captain Tobi, Daniel Downs, Ernest and Sam.

In addition to being fettered in such a manner that it was impossible for the prisoners to move hand or foot, the four were gagged by having what appeared to be pieces of a woolen shirt stuffed into their mouths until their jaws were spread wide apart, the gags being held in place by strips of the same material.

“In the name of goodness what has happened to you, Capt’in Tobi?” Zenas cried when he had partially recovered from the bewilderment which came upon him with a view of this strange scene. “How *did* you get into such a plight as this?” he continued, heeding not the fact that the unfortunate captain was unable to make reply.

“I fancy these gentlemen have met with Bingham and his friends,” Mr. Sawtelle said, striving in vain to repress a smile, and there was in Captain Tobi’s eyes so much of anger and a desire to give words to the rage which beset him, that even though they knew full well he must be suffering severely, Paul and Ned





"THESE GENTLEMEN HAVE MET WITH BINGHAM AND HIS FRIENDS."







were forced to turn away in order to hide their mirth.

"I don't reckon there's any need of their explainin' matters," Zenas said grimly as he stood with his hands on his hips surveying the helpless men. "Captain Tobi didn't want anyone to butt in for fear the whole thing would be muddled, so he took charge of the island, and this is as far as he's got."

The old sailor looked imploringly from one to the other, striving in vain to make some gesture which should serve as a prayer that he be released from his painful position, and Mr. Simpson hurriedly began to cut the bonds which bound him to the stunted oak, Mr. Sawtelle and the two boys working in the same manner over the other prisoners, while Master Cushing stood at a distance as if thoroughly enjoying the scene.

Immediately the gag was removed from his mouth, Captain Tobi strove to utter those words of rage which could have been read in his eyes a few seconds before, but his jaws were so stiff and his tongue so nearly paralyzed, that it was impossible for him to do more than give vent to inarticulate sounds, causing Zenas to say jeeringly:

"That's right, Captain! Let 'em out! I reckon your ideas have kind'er got choked up against the gag, an' the old words must tumble out before you can do real justice to the subject in a way that we'll understand."

"For two cents I'd twist your neck!" Captain Tobi roared in a fury, suddenly finding control of his tongue, and Zenas cried laughingly:



"I'm reckonin' you'd do it about the same as when you laid John Ed by the heels. I thought you was goin' to have him trussed up ready to be delivered by sunrise, wherever the boss wanted him?"

"Hold your tongue, Zenas," Mr. Simpson said sharply. "Captain Tobi has had good cause for anger, and there is no reason why you should rough into him. If I remember rightly, it's less than a year since Bingham caught you and Paul foul, and if the captain had attempted to make sport immediately after you were rescued from the dory, I'm inclined to believe that you wouldn't have held your temper in any better control than he's doing."

This remark reduced Zenas to silence. He had forgotten, for the moment, that night when Bingham had turned the tables so completely on him that he and Paul were set adrift in a boat without rudder or oars, and being thus reminded that his own plans of capturing the old smuggler had gone awry, an expression very much like that of shame overspread his face.

Neither Mr. Downs nor his two sons made any attempt to speak after their mouths were freed from the gags, and, in fact, there was little opportunity to do so, when Mr. Simpson had silenced Zenas, for the old captain burst into a flood of invectives against those who had trussed him up in so ignominious a fashion, until it would have been absolutely impossible for any other to have been heard.

Captain Tobi threatened the direst vengeance against the man who had made him a prisoner, striding to and



fro with clenched fists as if it were possible for him to carry into execution on the instant all his threats, and entirely losing sight of the fact that he had failed signally to do that which he had previously treated as a simple matter, if he might be entrusted with the care of the island for one night.

He stammered and raved alternately, shaking his clenched fists to seaward as if believing in that direction John Ed would be found, and kicking the bundles of rags which had served as gags to and fro, as though by such act he was inflicting punishment upon the enemy.

It was fully five minutes before the old sailor had calmed down sufficiently to make any reply to the questions which the owners of the island were eager to ask, and during all this time never a word of explanation as to how his discomfiture had been brought about.

Despairing of getting information from Captain Tobi, Mr. Simpson turned to Daniel Downs when the old sailor had so nearly checked his torrent of wrath that it was possible to make one's self heard, and said in a tone of command:

"Now, then, Daniel, tell me how this thing happened? You should be in condition to explain it, and we can't afford to wait until the captain has come to the end of vain threatenings."

"It ain't much that I can tell, sir," Mr. Downs said with a gesture of helplessness. "To speak the truth, I don't rightly understand how it all came about. Captain Tobi, he allowed that John Ed would land



down on the southerly point, nigh to where he went ashore on the night he got the best of Zenas——”

“Of course I allowed it,” the old sailor roared. “It didn’t stand to reason he’d dare come inter the harbor where all hands of us were on watch, an’ he surely wouldn’t have gone to Swallow-tailed Cove, so here was the only spot to look for him.”

“Never mind, Captain Tobi, about trying to prove that you took the proper course. Let Daniel tell the story if he can, for we are wasting time which had better be employed in chasing Bingham, if so be he is yet anywhere near the island.”

“Near here?” the captain shrieked. “The villain left us at midnight, tied up so we couldn’t wink, an’ he’s had time to pull to Seaview, if he wanted to get there instead of boardin’ his schooner.”

“He was in the harbor just at daybreak, so we believe,” Mr. Simpson said, and turning to the farmer he added, “Now, Daniel, go on with the story.”

“It ain’t in any ways a story, sir. We come down here under command of Captain Tobi, the boys an’ me, an’ he said as how we should snoop along the shore, keepin’ watch for John Ed’s boat; but circlin’ all around the p’int. I was right here; the boys were on the other side, an’ the capt’in, I reckon, was down near the rocks—leastways that’s where I had an idee he was goin’.”

“An’ that’s where I did go,” the old sailor cried furiously. “It was my station, of course, an’ I counted on nabbin’ the first man that stepped out of the boat, thinkin’ to take ’em by surprise. As it was——”



"Let Daniel tell the story," Mr. Simpson said sternly, and the farmer continued meekly, as if fearing he might say something which would offend the captain:

"It must have been that John Ed an' his gang landed before we got down here, 'cause it seemed as if I hadn't any more'n settled myself to watch, when somethin' hit me a clip over the head, knockin' the senses clean out'er me. When next I knew anythin' at all, I was tied to that 'ere tree with my m'outh full of rags, same's you found me."

Mr. Downs gave vent to a long-drawn sigh as he concluded his short story, and seated himself in an attitude of deepest dejection upon, as Paul afterward said laughingly, the sharpest rock that could have been found on Barren Island.

"What have you got to say about it, Sam?" Mr. Sawtelle asked of Master Downs, and the latter replied gruffly:

"They didn't take the trouble to knock me in the head, 'cause two of 'em come up behind, an' the first I knew one of 'em had a grip 'round my neck that precious near took the life out of me. They didn't spend any time talkin'; but tied me up as you saw, an' one villain dragged me over here while the other went off somewhere else, I s'pose to hunt for the capt'in."

Ernest told a similar story; his capture had been effected in almost the same way, and when he had ceased speaking Zenas cried, as if it gave him the greatest pleasure to make such a remark:



“Now, I reckon Captain Tobi’s cooled off enough, so’s he can tell his part of the yarn. It must have been that two or three of the men tackled *him*, ’cause he’s such a dreadful fighter that one wouldn’t have stood any chance.”

“Never you mind, Zenas Cushing, what kind of a fighter I am, an’ I want you to be mighty careful of your tongue, or you’ll find out in a way that won’t please you,” the old sailor roared. “I’m bound to admit that they got the best of me as you’ve seen; but don’t run away with the idee that I’m goin’ to tell any hard-luck story, ’cause I ain’t. If I’d carried out my plan of catchin’ John Ed, he’d have been trussed up in good shape; but the trouble was that the villain got ashore before I knew it, an’ was here layin’ for us when we come down on the p’int.”

“Then you must admit that you were in the fault,” Mr. Simpson said laughingly, “for it was agreed reasonably early in the afternoon that you should have full command of everything on the island, and if the smuggler came ashore secretly, you were neglectful of your duty.”

“I had no reason to believe John Ed would have the nerve to land here in broad daylight,” Captain Tobi began, and Mr. Simpson interrupted him by saying:

“You know what that man has done, better, perhaps, than any of us, and it would seem to me to have been no more than an act of common prudence, for you or your assistants to have kept strict watch from the



time you took upon yourself the duty of guarding us against him."

Captain Tobi half-turned as if to make some intemperate reply, and then, perhaps, realizing how poor words were at such a time, he shut his mouth tightly, walking swiftly away in the direction of the harbor without waiting to learn what it might be possible for the owners of the island to tell him.

"When you boil it all down it amounts to only one thing: that Capt'in Tobi wasn't more'n a quarter part so smart as he allowed," Zenas said, and then he hurried away in the opposite direction to that taken by the old sailor, making no halt until he was come to the bluff, where he stood gazing seaward a moment or two, after which he retraced his steps, saying as he came back to the little group that awaited him, understanding what had been his purpose:

"I can just make out a fore-an'-after still hove to where we saw her yesterday, an' pretty nigh alongside is what I count to be John Ed's dory. He's given us the slip, an' that's a fact. Now what puzzles me is, how he got down to this end of the island, when I'm as sure as a man can be that he started the other way."

"There's no good reason why we should spend our time speculating upon anything of that kind," Mr. Sawtelle said as if the whole incident had caused him amusement rather than anger. "It is clear that your smuggler has gone scot free, after having given Captain Tobi and the Downs family such a lesson as



they are not likely to forget for many a day. Inasmuch as we have not yet had breakfast, and there is no hope of catching the enemy, I propose that we get back to the yacht. Perhaps Mr. Downs and his sons will be well pleased at meeting Mrs. Downs again."

Then the owner of the *Nera*, linking his arm in that of Mr. Simpson to make certain his partner would accompany him, set off toward the harbor, Zenas and the boys following him, while Mr. Downs and his sons made a wide circle to the eastward, as if ashamed to be seen by those aboard the yacht while on their way to the "hotel."

Master Cushing was in high glee. He had forgotten for the moment how completely Mr. Bingham had thwarted their attempts to make him prisoner, and was thinking only of Captain Tobi's discomfiture.

"I'm allowin' that crazy-headed sailor will go aboard his sloop about as quick as he knows how, an' it'll surprise me a good deal if he don't set sail for Sea-view before we come in sight of the cove," Zenas said as he walked by the side of Paul; but this prediction was not to be verified, for when they were come to the shore of the harbor the sloop still remained at anchor, while on the *Nera's* deck could be seen Captain Tobi and the engineer, leaning over the stern as if something of serious moment had occurred.

"Does it strike you that the yacht is deeper in the water than she was last night?" Paul asked, coming to a sudden stop, and Zenas forced him on swiftly as he cried:



“She has settled! The watchman didn’t see John Ed quickly enough this mornin’, an’ I’m allowin’ somethin’ in the way of mischief was done before that scoundrel left the harbor!”



## CHAPTER VII

### MALICIOUS MISCHIEF

ZENAS was so excited that it seemed impossible for him to wait until after boarding the yacht in order to learn what had gone wrong with her, for by the time he and the two lads arrived at the shore opposite the *Nera's* anchorage, it could plainly be seen that she was not in her usual condition.

"What's the matter?" Master Cushing shouted at the full strength of his lungs; but Captain Tobi gave no more heed to the question than he would have done to the buzzing of a bee, and the engineer took it upon himself to impart the desired information.

"Those scoundrels who were seen under the stern this morning have bored a hole through the yacht's hull, thinking we on board were so dumb that she'd sink at her moorings before any of us understood what had been done."

"Is she sinking now?" Paul asked in alarm, and the engineer replied with a laugh which had in it more of anger than of mirth:

"Not to any great extent, else I'm allowing that we'd get a wiggling from the owner. If the villains had wanted to do us a real injury, and trust to the chances of our not discovering it until it was too late, they should have wrapped a bit of chain around the propeller shaft. But instead of that they have done mischief that can readily be repaired by the aid of a pine plug and a spell at pumping."



"Bored a hole in the hull of the yacht, eh?" Ned repeated as if simply giving words to his thoughts. "That's even worse than trying to kill the foxes, for then something might have been realized in the way of money for the hides, whereas this is a labor expended simply for the purpose of injuring us."

"I didn't give John Ed credit for bein' sich a fool," Zenas muttered as he set about launching the dory. "It must have been quite a bit of work to put a hole through them 'ere planks, an' he should have known that the crew of the *Nera* were sailors enough to stop such a leak in a twinklin'."

Then he and the boys pulled out to the yacht, where Captain Tobi stood leaning outboard over the stern rail, and Paul asked innocently, not understanding why the old sailor should be looking down into the water so intently if the hole had been plugged:

"Are you watching to see if she sinks any deeper, Captain Tobi?"

"What do you take me for? A bloomin' idjut?" the old man roared in a rage. "How's she goin' to settle any if the hole is plugged?"

"I didn't suppose she could; but was curious to know what you were looking at."

"It's got so a man can't have a chance to think on this bloomin' island without a lot of thick-heads have got to come up an' ask him what's the trouble," and Captain Tobi went forward surlily, much to the amusement of the engineer, who asked Zenas in a whisper what had occurred to so disturb the old sailor's temper.



It pleased Master Cushing right well to give a detailed account of what had been done by John Ed Bingham and his friends to those who would have made them prisoners, and while he and the engineer were laughing over the matter, the owners of Barren Island came from the deck-house, Mr. Sawtelle saying in a business-like tone, as if he saw nothing out of the ordinary course of events in this attempted sinking of the yacht:

“You three had better get your breakfast, and then join us at the work-tent. I am not disposed to let whatever has been done in the way of mischief interfere with our task, and therefore you young gentlemen will kindly waste no more time than may be absolutely necessary.”

To Paul it seemed much like a reproof that the owner of the yacht should speak in such a manner, as if he, with Ned and Zenas, had really been wasting time.

Not five minutes had elapsed since they came on board the *Nera*, and before then they had been doing all in their power to protect the interests of the owners of Barren Island.

Zenas led the way below hurriedly, thus showing that he also fancied a reproof was intended, and the morning meal was eaten quickly.

When the three came on deck again, Captain Tobi was in the bow of the yacht, still gazing into the water, which seemed to be sufficient token that he did not care to enter into conversation with anyone, and Zenas went over the rail, followed by Paul and Ned.



When the lads arrived at the tent, Mr. Simpson and Mr. Sawtelle were busily engaged on the framework of the aeroplane, and the latter said curtly:

"If there's nothing more for you young gentlemen to do in the way of chasing that will-o'-wisp Bingham, it would be well you brought ashore the lumber taken on board the Hampton boat at Sea-view."

"I'm allowin' you two lads can attend to that job, an' I'll try to make myself of some service here," Zenas said with an attempt at cheerfulness which was not particularly successful. He felt that Mr. Sawtelle had been unjust in much the same as accusing him of wasting time, and went to work with a certain doggedness which did not set well on one who was so habitually in a good humor.

Paul and Ned hurried back toward the harbor, feeling very much as did Zenas, and had walked no more than an hundred paces before they were stopped by Mr. Downs, who was evidently waiting to speak with them.

"How do them two take things?" the old farmer asked, motioning with his thumb toward the work-tent, thus giving the boys to understand that he referred to the owners of the island.

"I don't know what you mean by that, sir," Paul replied without coming to a halt. "Mr. Sawtelle seems to be in a great hurry to get on with the building of the aeroplane."

"But what did he say 'bout the way he found Captain Tobi an' the rest of us?" Mr. Downs persisted,



trotting along by the side of the boys much as a dog follows his master.

"I haven't heard him speak of it. After you went away he and father started off by themselves, and when we reached the *Nera* they came up from below, just having had breakfast. He didn't even say anything in my hearing about the attempt to sink the yacht."

"Sink the yacht?" Mr. Downs repeated in astonishment. "What do you mean by that?"

In the fewest possible words Paul told of Bingham's latest mischief, and the old farmer exclaimed in a tone of apprehension:

"It's no use talkin', boys, John Ed Bingham's bound to get the best of anybody he comes up against, an' the man don't live that can stop him. He's bearin' a grudge for all of us 'cause of havin' been sent to prison, an' mark my words, before this summer comes to an end he'll make your father and Mr. Sawtelle sorry that they went down to Beekman's Ledge with the sheriff to land him in jail!"

"Now don't be foolish, Mr. Downs," Ned exclaimed impatiently. "There's enough of us on the island to prevent him from going very far with plans for revenge."

"I notice there wasn't much headway made to stop him from trussin' four of us up in a mighty disagreeable way."

"You wouldn't have come to grief if Captain Tobi hadn't been so anxious to take the matter in his own hands, with the understanding that no one should in-



terfere," Paul replied warmly. "We were almost the same as certain John Ed would come ashore here, and instead of letting you four set out to make him prisoner simply because Captain Tobi wanted to collect an old debt, every one of us should have been on the watch. Then you wouldn't have suffered as I fancied you did."

"Wa'al, say, boys," and the old man sighed deeply, "you can't have any idee of my feelin's while I was lashed to that tree with my mouth full of rags! It seemed like I was the biggest fool that ever lived for gettin' inter sich a scrape, an' twice as much of an idjut as John Ed. Now Captain Tobi is an old friend of mine; many is the mess of fried cod he's had in my house, an' many the pipe of tobacco we've smoked together, consequently it ain't for me to say anythin' very brash against what he does; but I'm free to confess to you here, an' privately, that he come within a hair's breadth of makin' a bloomin' ass of himself last night—some folks would say he'd done the job up brown; but I ain't goin' to rough into him quite so bad as that. I'm wonderin' if your father's feelin' pretty hot agin me, 'cause I let myself be took so easy."

"Of course he isn't, Mr. Downs. I don't fancy he's feeling hard against anyone; but if he is, it can only be toward Captain Thompson, who had charge of affairs last night."

"'Twixt you an' me, Tobi is gettin' to be real kind'er big-headed. Now I don't plume myself on makin' much of a fist at what we started in on; but



I says to him long early in the afternoon, says I, 'Tobi, we want'er make certain John Ed Bingham don't sneak up on this 'ere island in the day-time, 'cause he's such a darin' man that there's no tellin' what kind of a cahoot he'll start in on.' But Captain Tobi, he says lofty-like, an' a roarin' it out like a bull of Bashan, 'I'll 'tend to commandin' this 'ere expedition, Daniel Downs, an' you stand by lively to obey orders; that's all I'm askin' of you. The idee that John Ed, knowin' I'm here, would even dream of tryin' to land in the day-time is folderol, to say nothin' of its bein' foolishness.' After that what was there for me to do but hold my tongue? I'm givin' you my solemn word, lads, that I did it until my mouth was stuffed so full of rags I couldn't even yip. Where you boys bound?"

By this time they had come to the shore of the harbor and were launching the dory, when Ned explained what task had been set them, whereupon the old man said, as if it gave him decided relief to be busy with something in the way of work:

"I reckon I'll go with you an' bear a hand, 'cause there don't seem to be much of anythin' 'round here for me to do jest now. There's Tobi leanin' over the yacht's rail like a bear with a sore head, an' it would be pretty nigh as much as my life's worth to try to company-up with him. Ernest an' Sam have gone to bed; they didn't sleep a wink last night, an' so far's that goes neither did I, 'cause how could it be done when I was tied up like a pig in a poke? Mother, she's 'round with the boys, takin' on at a



terrible rate 'cause they had such a hard time, an' I don't seem to fit in anywhere."

"There's no reason why you shouldn't come with us, Mr. Downs," Paul said cheerily, striving to repress a smile, for the old man in his trouble was really comical. "I don't fancy there will be any need of watching out against Bingham this day, because he won't be likely to show his head around here for quite a spell, after what he did to the yacht."

"Well, I don't know about that," Mr. Downs said as he waded aboard the dory and took up the oars to show his willingness to perform more than his due share of the labor. "John Ed's slipperier than an eel, an' when you make up your mind there's no need of watchin' out agin him, that's jest the time he'll make his jump. Of course it don't stand to reason that he'd come right back here, knowin' all hands of us must be kind of keepin' our eyes open, an' still there's no tellin'. I'm gettin' clean discouraged. You see when he was sent to prison we all allowed we were clear of him for quite a spell, an' what on earth possessed that 'ere governor to pardon him is what I can't understand."

It really seemed as if Mr. Downs found a certain relief in talking of what the old smuggler might be able to do, and bemoaning the fact that much time must be spent in guarding against it, for he continued in the same strain while helping take the lumber from the Hampton boat into the dory, and from the dory to the beach, until, when they were ready to carry the cargo to the work-tent, Ned said laughingly:



“Why not come up with us, and tell Mr. Sawtelle that you despair of our being able to hold the island against Bingham?”

“Tell Mr. Sawtelle!” the old farmer exclaimed as if in alarm. “Why I wouldn’t any more dare let my tongue run where he was, same’s it’s been goin’ with you boys, than nothin’ at all. I can talk to Paul’s father now an’ then; but somehow Sawtelle has got a way of chokin’ a feller off quicker’n any other man I ever run across. He’s bound to have things his way, an’ he’s goin’ to let you know it. If he was poor somebody’d knock the head clean off his shoulders when he got to carryin’ on so kind’er high an’ mighty; but seein’s he’s rich, other folks are a good deal like me—feel as if it wasn’t just the thing to bruise the golden calf. Howsomever, I’m goin’ to help you carry this stuff up to the tent, an’ then I’ll see what mother’s doin’. In case you should want me for anythin’, I’ll be right in the kitchen until Tobi gets so it’s safe to be ’round where he is.”

During the remainder of the forenoon the work of building the aeroplane was carried on rapidly, if not pleasantly. Zenas was still hurt in mind because of the manner in which Mr. Sawtelle had spoken, while Ned and Paul did their best to show that there was no intention on their part of wasting time, as the owner of the *Nera* had intimated.

Mr. Simpson gave little heed to anything save the task in hand: he appeared to be in a brown study, and Paul believed his father was striving to devise some means by which Bingham could be prevented



from working further mischief, without the necessity of keeping all on the island doing guard duty.

When the laborers went to dinner on board the yacht, Captain Tobi's sloop was nowhere to be seen, and the engineer of the *Nera* told Paul and Ned that the old sailor had got his craft under way without a word to any one regarding his purpose. That he had gone back to Seaview there was no question in the minds of the boys; but, later in the day, Daniel Downs told them confidentially that it was his belief Captain Tobi had started out single-handed with the intention of bringing back Bingham bound hand and foot, as token that the unpleasant incident of the previous night was due to his misfortune rather than his fault.

Matters between the aeroplane builders were much improved during the afternoon. Mr. Sawtelle had recovered his usual good humor, and laughed and chatted as he worked, now and then telling a story of some unfortunate aeronaut who had come to grief in a craft of his own devising, and again picturing what would be done before the summer had come to an end, in the way of excursions through the air to and from Seaview, if no further.

With this last proposition, or prediction, Zenas was not in sympathy, nor did he hesitate to give his opinion in plain words.

"I'm not goin' so far as to say you can't build one of those 'ere things that'll stay in the air a spell, 'cause I'm bound to believe that what you've told us about others havin' done it, is true. But this I'll hold to,



that there won't be any high air Seaview excursions from this 'ere island inside of the next hundred years."

"Then you do not believe we can do what many another has done before us?" Mr. Sawtelle asked laughingly, and Zenas replied with a grin:

"When you talk about what's been done in Germany, an' in France, an' in England, an' way down south in Florida, it's all so far away that you can kind'er allow the yarn got stretched before it reached us. Now I ain't a doubtin', Mr. Sawtelle, but that you believe all you've said, yet at the same time I claim the right to allow that somebody has been stuffin' you."

"And what about these photographs I've shown you? After seein' them, can't you believe that there must have been some kind of a craft in the air, at least, for a certain time?"

"There's so many things cooked up nowadays that I don't take any great stock in pictures nor printed yarns," Zenas replied thoughtfully. "When I see this 'ere craft that we're buildin' sail from one end of the island to the other—an' you can bet all you're worth that I wouldn't be in it,—then I'll say, perhaps, in the course of ten or fifteen years, we'll be able to chase crows, providin' they don't fly too high."

"You are a doubting Thomas, Zenas," Mr. Sawtelle said with a hearty laugh, "and I'm going to make you this proposition, which won't involve any outlay of money or strength on your part: If, before the snow flies, one or more of us have not sailed in this aero-



plane, providing of course that no such accident as fire interrupts our labor, as far as Seaview, then the *Nera* with all her equipment shall be your personal property."

"Now look here, Mr. Sawtelle, you don't mean anythin' like that!" Zenas exclaimed as if he believed the gentleman had suddenly taken leave of his senses. "When you talk as if you *knew* this thing could be done, an' are willin' to put up such a valuable piece of property as the yacht to back your opinion, why it's all out of reason. I can't have it in my heart to take the *Nera* away from you."

"No, Zenas, you can't, and for the very good reason that you won't have the opportunity. It is true that in this model of an aeroplane I propose to depart somewhat from such machines as have been shown capable of navigating the air; but there will be time, during this coming season, to change my plans, if I find they are not practical, so far as to convert this model into one that has already been proven successful. Therefore it is that I am as positive of being able to do what I say, as you would be if, with the proper material, you set about building a dory. There would be no question in your mind but that such a craft as you could put together would swim, and I know beyond a peradventure that this aeroplane which we are assembling, will swim in the ether."

Mr. Sawtelle spoke so positively, with the air of one who knows that under certain limitations there can be no mistake in what he is doing, as to literally bewilder Master Cushing, who bent his head over the



task before him in silence; but Paul fancied there was yet an expression of incredulity upon his face.

When night had come Mr. Downs remained hidden from view, and Paul's father asked, as he made ready to go aboard the yacht for supper, if anyone had seen the old farmer.

Ned proposed that search be made for him in the kitchen of the "hotel," and Paul was sent to notify him that his employers had some orders to give concerning the work of the night.

Mr. Downs was prompt in replying to the summons, saying in a half apologetic tone as he entered the tent:

"I was kind'er allowin' you'd want me before dark, so I hung 'round to be on hand when you give the word."

"Where are your sons?" Mr. Sawtelle asked.

"Wa'al, you see, they've been in bed all day, owin' to not gettin' any sleep last night, an' their mother would have it that they should stay there. Was you wanting 'em, sir?"

"If they have slept all day, there's no reason why they can't work during a certain portion of the night. From now until midnight one must patrol the easterly, and the other the westerly side of the island. You are to move about and see that they keep watch against intruders, until perhaps nine o'clock, when I will send one of the men from the *Nera* to spell you. At twelve o'clock the boys may go to bed again."

"Are you lookin' to see John Ed pretty soon, sir?"



Mr. Downs asked hesitatingly, and Mr. Sawtelle replied:

“No, not immediately, and yet I do not propose to run any risks. Strict watch must be kept during every hour of darkness, not only with the idea that he may pay us another visit, but that some other evil-disposed persons might come. You will see to it, Daniel, that the boys attend sharply to their portion of the work.”

“You can count on their doin’ so, sir, an’ all the more after what they went through with last night. Twenty-four hours ago they was afraid of John Ed, so to speak; but didn’t have an idee he’d do ’em any bodily harm. Now they know what may be expected if he comes across ’em, and will yell like hot-heads if they see so much as the tip of his nose.”

Then the owners of Barren Island led the way to the *Nera*, and immediately after supper had been eaten Zenas, Paul and Ned went to bed in order not only to make up for the sleep lost the previous night, but because they knew full well that after midnight they would be forced to stand guard.

It seemed to Paul as if he had hardly more than fallen asleep, although as a matter of fact he had been in Dreamland three hours or more, when he was aroused by the watchman on the yacht, who shouted apparently at the full strength of his lungs:

“Ahoy there! Hold on where you are till you give an account of yourself!”

Paul and Zenas were on their feet by the time the



last word had been spoken, and before the reply came both were outside their cabins hurrying on deck.

"What's the matter? You ain't afraid we'll do you any harm, are you?" came distinctly from the direction of the mouth of the harbor, and then Master Cushing and Paul were on deck where they could see distinctly in the gloom the outlines of a small boat, from which came the chug-chug-chugging that told she was propelled by a motor of some kind.

"We ain't afraid; but don't count on lettin' strangers in here until we know their business," the watchman shouted so fiercely that instantly the power was shut off from the little craft, and a voice cried:

"I have come to see the man who owns that yacht, and can't afford to wait many minutes."

"You may have to wait many hours," the watchman replied with a laugh. "I don't allow Mr. Sawtelle turns out at this time of night for any Tom, Dick or Harry that's in a hurry. What do you want of him?"

"I'll explain that when he allows me to come alongside."

"I'll tell him after he turns out for breakfast, an' maybe he'll agree to your rubbin' the paint off this 'ere craft, an' maybe he won't."

"But listen, man," the voice from out the darkness cried imploringly. "This is a case of life or death, and if your owner is anywhere near like what I've been told, he'll at least hear my story."

Before the watchman could make reply, Mr. Saw-



telle himself, aroused by the noise, as had been Zenas and the boys, came on deck, as he asked sharply:

“What’s wanted there?”

“I would like to speak to the owner of the yacht, and know he wouldn’t begrudge turning out of his bed if you could make him understand how important it is that I see him.”

“I am the owner of this yacht, my man. What business have you which is so urgent?”

“May I come alongside, sir, and tell you?”

“Certainly.”

Paul could hear the noise of the motor as the boat was sent forward, and Zenas stood by to take the line which he had every reason to believe would be passed over the rail.

Once the stranger craft had been made fast, Paul could see that she had on board two men, one who acted as helmsman and also as spokesman, and the other a native of Seaview, whom the lad knew right well.

“Hello, Nate Sawyer!” he cried softly, and the man addressed replied:

“Oh, that’s you, eh, Paul Simpson? It seems to me you’re kind’er scary of people out this way. I’ve heard tell that your father kept a mighty snug watch over his foxes; but didn’t reckon he allowed it would hurt ’em if a boat as small as this sailed into the cove.”

“You may come on board, sir,” Mr. Sawtelle said as the man at the helm stepped on the rail of the power boat, evidently fearing to approach nearer.



The invitation was accepted in a twinkling, and although neither Paul nor Ned deliberately intended to listen to the conversation, it was impossible for them to avoid hearing what was said.

“My wife and baby went on board the tramp steamer *Glendower*, at Quebec, counting to land in Halifax, or some one of the eastern ports in the States,” the man began hurriedly as if afraid Mr. Sawtelle might interrupt him before his story was told. “Two days out the baby was taken sick—there’s no doctor aboard—the craft didn’t make Halifax—I don’t know why, and there’s no show of her touching anywhere until arriving at New Orleans, which is her destination. If I can get them off that ship, my baby’s life may be saved. Unless you are willing to help me, the little thing will die.”

“In what way can I help you?” Mr. Sawtelle asked, and by the tone of his voice Paul could understand that this fragmentary story had aroused all his sympathy and interest.

“I am told you have a wireless telegraph here. With the best of luck the steamer cannot be in this vicinity until morning, perhaps to-morrow noon. You could send a message for me, and I will run out in the boat I’ve got here, to take my chance of getting them ashore.”

“But how did you know all this, if your baby was taken sick after the steamer left port, and you say she hasn’t made harbor since?”

“My wife, almost crazy as I can well fancy, and ready to jump at any possible chance of getting word to



me, wrote half a dozen lines on the poor hope of being able to send them into a port from which they could be telegraphed. How she succeeded I have no idea; but certain it is I got the message five hours ago. Your father knows me, Paul Simpson," he added turning toward the lad. "I live in Enfield; my name is Henry Barton."

"And you are asking that we try to pick up the steamer *Glendower* by the wireless?" Mr. Sawtelle said in a questioning tone.

"It is a poor chance for me, I know, sir, even if you can succeed in finding her; but it is the only hope I've got. I'm not a rich man; but will pay every cent I can raise now, and mortgage my home for as much more as may be needed, if you will do me this turn."

"Are you counting to lay here until we find this steamer by wireless, if so be we can?" the owner of the *Nera* asked.

"No, sir. The boat I have is a small one, and slow. I hired her at Seaview. My idea was that if you would telegraph, doing all you could to-night to find her, I would start now with the hope of picking up the *Glendower*."

"Have you any idea what course she would take?"

"No, sir."

"And you would put to sea in a fifteen-foot boat to hunt for a steamer in the night? Why, man, looking for a needle in a hay-stack isn't to be compared with such a search."

"But I must do something, sir! If there is one



chance in a thousand that I can get my baby off the vessel, I will strive for that one."

"But there isn't one chance in ten thousand, Barton, that you could do anything of the kind. Besides, your boat isn't fit for such a voyage. I'll admit you have come from Seaview, a matter of twenty miles; but it is a calm night. By morning we may have half a gale of wind blowing, and then she would founder without a question."

"It would be better she did, so I went down with her, sir, than for me to remain idle, without trying to do something toward saving my baby's life."

"But suppose the improbable: That you set off now on a blind search over the broad ocean; that we succeed in finding the steamer by wireless; that you get your baby on board that cockle-shell of a power boat. Do you think you could bring the child ashore?"

"I would try it, sir, and I'll stake my life that Mary had rather drown with the baby and me, than keep on to New Orleans, arriving there childless."

There was a big lump in Paul's throat as he listened to this man pleading for help when it seemed well-nigh impossible any aid could be rendered him. Zenas was furtively wiping his eyes as he peered out into the darkness lest anyone should see that he was affected by the pitiful story, while Ned was not ashamed to let the tears which trickled down his cheeks, be brought into view by the reflection from the riding-lights.

Mr. Sawtelle remained silent while one might have counted ten, and then asked abruptly:



“Do you know whether this steamer *Glendower* has a wireless apparatus aboard?”

“No, sir.”

“It seems to me, Barton, that there’s precious little chance of your succeeding, however well you may be equipped. I do not fancy that ten per cent. of the tramp steamers carry the wireless, and we may work at our instruments here all night without the possibility of sending a message to her, even though she might be within a distance of twenty miles.”

“But, Mr. Sawtelle, there is a chance, even though, as you say, it is only one in ten thousand, and——”

“Don’t think, Barton, that I am turning a deaf ear to your story. I want you, however, to understand how slight is the possibility that it’s within the power of anyone to aid you. We will act as if we knew the *Glendower* was equipped with a wireless, and you shall put to sea in a craft that, under ordinary circumstances and conditions of weather, will bear you safely. Send that cockle-shell back to Seaview. We will get the *Nera* under way, and work the telegraph as we put to sea.”



## CHAPTER VIII

### A FORLORN HOPE

THE man who had come to Barren Island in the hope of persuading the silver fox farmers to send a message out over the waters with the chance of its being heard by the commander of the *Glendower*, actually looked bewildered when Mr. Sawtelle announced his intention of aiding in every possible way.

There would have been hardly a hope that the little power boat in which Barton had come from Seaview, could swim long enough to go in search of the tramp steamer and return, and it seemed almost positive that the quest for her, even in the larger vessel, would be abortive. With the *Nera*, however, there was some slight ground for the believing that the attempt might be successful.

Barton strove earnestly to make Mr. Sawtelle understand how grateful he was; but at such a time words are all too poor a medium to convey a debt of gratitude which is really felt, and he stammered and hesitated in his speech until the owner of the *Nera* said in a friendly tone:

“I can well understand that you are thankful because I am willing to send out my yacht on what I consider a forlorn hope, and there is no need, Barton, for you to try to put the matter into words. You believe that the life of your baby depends upon taking her off the *Glendower* before that steamer proceeds further on the voyage. I have very little faith



in our being able to pick up the steamer, even if she hasn't already passed further down the coast; but at the same time intend to put forth every effort, as if believing the task may be accomplished."

Again Barton tried to voice his thanks, and again he was prevented by Mr. Sawtelle, who set about arranging for the proposed rescue in a business-like manner.

Paul and Ned were literally astounded when the owner of the *Nera* proposed to employ her on Mr. Barton's business. The same thought had been in the minds of both the lads: That they might run out in the Hampton boat. If, however, the *Nera* was to be sent for that purpose, then did it seem as if more than half the battle had been fought, for with her standing straight away from the coast, sending messages by wireless all the while, it surely seemed as if the sick baby might be rescued.

While their sympathies had been aroused, the boys were disappointed because of not, as they believed, being able to have a hand in this charitable work. To their minds it was a fact that Mr. Sawtelle would take entire command of the expedition, and there was every reason why one or the other of them should remain on the island in order to be able to answer any call that might come from the apparatus on the *Nera*.

Therefore it was that the two lads literally gasped with astonishment when Mr. Sawtelle wheeled suddenly about to face Master Cushing, and said curtly:

"Zenas, I have good reason to know that you're enough of a sailor to take charge of a blind hunt such



as this is likely to be. You are to go in command of the yacht," and without waiting for reply he turned toward Paul, continuing, "Either you or your mate will remain continuously at the wireless instrument, sending out a call for the *Glendower*, and reporting now and then to us here how the search has progressed. Begin the work as soon as the *Nera* has run around the island, and do not be discouraged if twenty-four hours pass without your receiving any reply from the craft you are trying to find."

"Are we to go in the yacht, sir?" Paul asked in astonishment, and there was the lightest suspicion of irony in Mr. Sawtelle's tone as he replied:

"It would be fair for you to assume as much, otherwise you would not be able to do as I have requested. Have you any objection to aiding in this work?"

"Certainly not," Paul said emphatically. "I was surprised because we were to have the chance. It seemed reasonable you would take charge of the entire matter, and we be cut out in order to work the wireless here."

"While Mr. Barton has all my sympathy, and I am ready to do everything in my power to aid him, I have no intention of discontinuing the work on the aeroplane, even for a short time. Therefore it is I shall remain, and you may count on my being within hearing whenever you call Barren Island. I believe Zenas can handle the *Nera* as well as I could, and am certain, because of what has been done, that he will conduct the search in better fashion, therefore have I given him command of the yacht. If you are so



fortunate as to succeed in your purpose, carry Mr. Barton's wife and child wherever he may desire, first notifying me of the port you intend to make. That done, you will, of course, return here as soon as may be safely possible."

While Mr. Sawtelle was thus making arrangements for the search, Barton held a brief conversation with the man who had brought him out from Seaview, and when it was come to an end the latter gave the word for the hawser to be cast off, immediately standing out of the cove as if in such haste to return home that he could not afford to loiter until the *Nera* was got under way.

Mr. Simpson had come on deck while his partner was giving command of the *Nera* over to Zenas, and when Mr. Sawtelle stood silent and motionless a moment, as if turning over in his own mind further details which should be attended to by him, Paul's father said laughingly:

"Since you do not fully enjoy such meals as are served by Mrs. Downs, wouldn't it be a good idea for you to send ashore some of your private stores, in order to guard against possible starvation?"

"There isn't time for that," the owner of the *Nera* replied quickly. "We have no means of knowing where this tramp steamer may be now, and it strikes me that Barton can't afford to loiter here." Then, raising his voice, he cried, "Pass the word to the engineer, Zenas, and get your anchor. The yacht must be under way as soon as we can leave her."

"Aye, aye, sir," came from out the darkness, fol-



lowed by the hurried tramp of feet, which told that the crew of the *Nera* already understood what was required of them.

“Do you think that by our going away at such a time there will be any danger Bingham can work mischief?” Paul asked of his father in a whisper, and the latter replied confidently:

“Not a bit of it, lad. With the Downs family, there are five of us, and I’m willing to guarantee that there’ll be less possibility of that old smuggler’s gaining a foothold on this island, than when Captain Tobi was on the alert with every preparation made for capturing him. Don’t let your mind be disturbed about us here; but think only of that which you are striving to accomplish. It is generous in Sawtelle to do all within his power for Barton, while the man is in such trouble, yet I fail to see how he could have offered less.”

The owner of the *Nera* had already brought the old dory up to the accommodation ladder, and Mr. Simpson had hardly more than ceased speaking before he cried sharply:

“Now then, partner, there is no time to be lost, and we must not be the ones to delay matters. See to it, Paul, that you or Ned remain at the instrument all the time, and make a thorough job of it, even though you remain outside two or three days.”

“But how are we to call the *Glendower*, sir?”

“I declare I had forgotten to look at the code which I bought last year,” and Mr. Sawtelle hurried toward the deck-house. “If she has a wireless aboard we shall



find her call. Don't forget that the signal for help is now s-o-s, instead of c-d-q."

Then the gentleman disappeared from view within the deck-house, and Zenas called from the bow:

"The anchor is hove short, an' we'll be under way as soon as you give the word, sir."

"Have patience a moment, Cushing, for we'll soon be ready to go ashore," Mr. Simpson replied, and then his partner came on deck once more.

"I don't find any such steamer set down as having a wireless; but that is no proof she hasn't one, for it may have been installed since the code was printed, or might readily have been left out owing to the neglect of her owners. However, Paul, send out your call of s-o-s, following it by the name *Glendower*. If she is within hearing, the cry for help should be answered, even though her name is not given. If you receive replies from any other craft, explain your purpose, and thus be spreading abroad in this vicinity the information that you are in search of the tramp."

Then Mr. Sawtelle went over the rail, followed by his partner, and the dory had no more than been headed for the shore when Zenas took his station in the wheel-house, as he shouted to the two men forward:

"All ready there! Get your anchor!"

Then came the jingle of bells from the motor-room, and the churning of water told that the *Nera* was under way on her mission of mercy.

During all this time no attention had been paid to Mr. Barton, who was standing almost exactly where



he had first come aboard, as if not daring to move in either direction, and Paul, whose heart warmed toward the man because of his mental suffering, said as he touched him lightly on the arm:

"You had better come into the deck-house, Mr. Barton. There's nothing to be done for a long time yet, and we'll find quite a sea running outside."

"It seems as if my place was here," the sorrowing father exclaimed. "I couldn't go below when we are starting in the hope of rescuing my baby, for it will be a rescue to take her from that steamer, even as if she was on a sinking vessel. Her mother would never have sent such a message if she had not been convinced that the child's life depended upon her getting ashore."

"It seems like a poor chance, as Mr. Sawtelle has said, for us to attract the attention of a steamer without knowing anything whatsoever of her whereabouts," Paul said, hoping to cheer in some slight degree the distressed man, "and yet two of us, meaning Zenas and me, had a more difficult task, and one which seemed less likely of accomplishment, when we gave aid to this very yacht."

"I am praying to God that you may succeed this time," Barton said fervently, and then went into the very bow of the *Nera*, where he stood peering out into the gloom, as if he had reason to believe that within a few seconds the steamer he was so anxious to come up with, would heave in sight.

The little yacht sailed out of the harbor fairly fast; but not until she had passed around the northern end



of the island, and was headed straight across the mighty world of waters, did the engineer let her out at full speed, and then it seemed to Paul and Ned as if she literally flew over the waves, beating down the heavy surges with her sharp prow, or flinging the white spray fore and aft as she sheered her way through the curling crests.

“My, but this boat can go!” Ned exclaimed. “I had an idea she might be speedy; but never fancied it would be possible to strike it up at this gait.”

It was the first time the boys had been on board the *Nera* when she was under way, and the two stood near the wheel-house thrilled by the “feel” of the swift craft beneath their feet, until Zenas cried sharply:

“I thought the orders were for you lads to get that wireless arrangement into working order as soon as we left the island; or have the plans been changed, and you two are passengers out for your health?”

Paul started as if someone had dealt him a heavy blow, and in less than five minutes he was sending across the waters that call which would be answered on the instant by every wireless operator who heard it.

“There’s no need of both staying here,” Ned said after his comrade had begun that task which was to be continued throughout the night. “I’ll go into the wheel-house, and when you want me to spell you, pass the word.”

“Well, what about it?” Zenas asked as Ned came into the helmsman’s narrow quarters. “Got the wireless working?”



“Paul’s tending to that, and I fancy he will get a good many replies before any word comes from the *Glendower*. To tell the truth, Zenas,” he added, lowering his voice lest Barton should overhear him, “there’s precious little hope of our striking the tramp steamer, because, as Mr. Sawtelle said, there are few of such craft that have a wireless aboard, and if this one on which are Barton’s wife and child, hasn’t anything of the kind, all our labor will be in vain.”

“Yes,” Zenas said thoughtfully, as he peered ahead into the gloom. “I reckon it’s a pretty slim show; but if I could know what time that ’ere steamer was off any place along the Nova Scotia coast, I wouldn’t be worryin’ but that I’d pick her up without any wireless. There’s no disputin’ the fact that it would be a blind chase; but bless you, Ned, if we could have an idee just how far she ought to be off Barren Island, why then give us daylight, an’ there’s more chance of doing the job than there would be of catching a greased pig, I’ll tell you that. But say, what about this yacht? Ain’t she a bird?”

“She can sail, and that’s a fact.”

“Sail!” Zenas cried enthusiastically. “Why bless your heart, lad, she’s skimmin’ right over the tops of these ’ere waves. We don’t touch ’em, either. Talk about your flyin’ machines! Mr. Sawtelle would have a better chance, ’cordin’ to my way of thinkin’, to rig up an air-ship, if he’d put wings on this blessed little yacht. She’s a dandy if there ever was one! I’ve heard a good deal about these ’ere fancy yachts; but



this daisy goes ahead of anythin'. I don't believe there's a craft afloat that can touch her."

"Oh now, Zenas, you're getting way off. Mr. Sawtelle doesn't claim that she's the greatest boat ever built."

"I don't care what he claims; feel of her now! Why that 'ere Hampton boat, an' you've got to admit she's about as good a sea-goin' craft as you ever stepped aboard, would be wallowin' into these 'ere surges makin' heavy weather of what's no more'n a moonlight excursion for this little beauty."

Then Zenas must needs go into all the details of that which he and Paul had done the summer previous, when they saved the lives of all on board the *Nera*, and towed the little craft into port, a story which Ned had heard at least a dozen times before.

He took advantage of the opportunity to leave the wheel-house when Zenas had for the moment ceased speaking in order to assure himself that the white crest of a huge wave in the distance was not the canvas of some sailing craft, and went into the motor-room, where the engineer was watching the delicate machinery almost as a cat watches a mouse.

"Going fast enough to suit you?" the man asked cheerily.

"She's making altogether better time than I had believed possible."

"Oh, the *Nera* can hump herself when she's needed. Where's that poor man what's looking for his baby?"



"Well up in the bow, as if he believed we might miss the steamer in case he didn't stay on the lookout."

"I'm sorry for him, sorry indeed," the engineer said as he carefully oiled a bearing which gave signs of going dry. "There's this much about it: All hands of us, including the little yacht herself, are doing our level best, and if we can't help him, nor your wireless don't get the steamer, then I'll say nobody on this earth could have done it. Has he any grounds for believing the tramp should be off here about this time?"

"That's the worst part of the whole business," Ned replied sadly. "He doesn't know anything of her movements. She may be half way to New Orleans by this time. All he counts on is that the message his wife gave the fisherman to deliver, was sent immediately, in which case, of course, the steamer should be off here sometime to-morrow."

"It looks hopeless; but if you find that he needs perkin' up, an' I daresay he will 'twixt this and twenty-four hours, tell him every man jack aboard is just as eager on the hunt as he is. I would feel a little better if Mr. Sawtelle was here, because, you see, Zenas don't strike me as being very much of a sailor, even though he did pick us up when we were needing him woefully bad."

"Zenas doesn't claim to know much of seamanship, although he has knocked around in boats and vessels all his life," Ned said, at the same time wondering whether it was not his duty to give Master Cushing



more than his full due of praise, in order that the engineer might cease regretting the absence of the owner. "Mr. Sawtelle must have thought Zenas could handle the craft as well as himself, otherwise he wouldn't have sent him."

"True for you, lad, and at the same time I can't help saying to myself that I would be better pleased if an older man was in command."

Ned was not inclined to discuss Zenas's qualifications for running the yacht, and more particularly because he himself had greater faith in Mr. Sawtelle's ability. The voyage had been begun, however, and under the direction of the owner, therefore it was not for those who were taking part in the search to criticize what had been done; but rather to do their utmost toward using to the best advantage the tools which had been given them.

Partly because of wishing to avoid any discussion, and partly owing to the fact that it was time he should ascertain whether Paul needed to be relieved from duty, Ned went into the room on deck where stood the instruments of the wireless apparatus, finding his comrade industriously sending out over the waters the call for aid.

"Have you got anything?" he asked, and Paul replied mournfully:

"No, nothing to speak of. Somebody tried to pick me up two or three minutes ago; but I couldn't make out anything definite. I don't believe it was an answer to our signal; but a case of another fool's butting in where he didn't know his business." Then he



added with a nervous laugh, almost immediately, "Perhaps I am the ignorant one, and wasn't operator enough to take his message."

"I'll answer for it that you were not the one to blame," was the hearty reply. "You're the best operator I know of around here."

"That's because I'm the only one, with the exception of yourself, therefore a fellow needn't plume himself very much over such praise as that," and Paul ceased working the key in order to listen for an answer.

"What about Mr. Sawtelle? He claims to be a wireless operator."

"But you've never seen him at work."

"There's no need of it in order to be certain that you lay way over him. Say, you're getting tired. Let me spell you a while, so that you may get a whiff of fresh air and have some idea of how this yacht is moving."

Paul rose from his chair at once, thus showing that he was in need of a rest, and Ned set about sending out the signal which it was hoped would reach the *Glendower*.

The night was not so dark but that it was possible to see with reasonable distinctness from one end of the yacht to the other, and Paul made his way toward that solitary figure in the bow, guessing on the instant who it might be.

"We've got speed enough to catch any tramp steamer that ever floated, if we can get an idea of where she may be," he said, striving to speak cheerily,



and the sorrowing man replied without turning his head:

"I suppose the yacht is moving swiftly, and yet at times it seems to me almost as if she were standing still. Have you heard anything through the wireless?"

"Not a word; but surely that isn't any token we're not going to succeed. We haven't been away from the island an hour, and you heard Mr. Sawtelle's opinion that our search might be a long one."

"And while we are running in this direction the *Glendower* may be going directly away from us," the man said with a long-drawn sigh.

"That would hardly be possible, unless she was aiming to strike the mainland. She may be crossing the course we have laid out for ourselves; but even in such an event, we should be able to pick her up if she has a wireless apparatus."

"Ah, my boy, it is the fear she hasn't, that comes near breaking my heart! Of course we can't hope to run upon her without knowing in what direction she may be, and unless she can be reached by the wireless there is no hope of my seeing the baby again."

"You are speaking now as if you were positive the child would die if you didn't succeed in taking her off the steamer," Paul replied, striving to think of some words of cheer. "It may be that even at this moment she is as well as when you saw her last."

"There's no such chance as that. The greatest fear is that the little thing may be dead already. My wife wouldn't have sent the message she did, if it had not



been plain that the baby's life was in gravest danger."

Paul was on the point of suggesting that the mother's anxiety might have caused her to magnify the danger; but he refrained from doing so as he realized that little good could come of attempting to argue with this father who was well-nigh distracted, therefore he said as if there was no doubt in his mind regarding the matter:

"We shall surely pick up some craft before many hours have passed, and if we explain why we are cruising, word will be passed from one vessel to another until the *Glendower*, even though she hasn't a wireless apparatus, can be warned of our coming."

"I never thought we might get a message to her in that way!" Barton exclaimed with a fluttering of hope in his voice, and Paul believed that it was best the conversation cease lest it be brought to a less satisfactory ending.

"We are sending out the call for aid every moment, and there isn't a possibility that very much more time can pass before a reply comes from some craft."

"Do you intend to tell why we are hunting for the *Glendower*, in case your call is answered?"

"Certainly, unless the vessel is too far away, or on a course which would not admit of her coming across the tramp steamer."

"If the story is heard by a shipmaster who has children of his own, he will be certain to do all he can to help us," Mr. Barton said after a brief pause, and Paul believed he had done no little toward lessening the man's anxiety.



“Any captain, whether he has children of his own or not, will do everything in his power to bring us in touch with the *Glendower*,” Paul added as he went toward the wheel-house, where Zenas greeted him in a low tone by saying:

“I allowed it was about time Ned gave you a breathin’ spell. So you’ve been havin’ a chin with Barton?”

“I saw him standing there alone, and thought the least I could do would be to make him believe we counted on catching the *Glendower*.”

“How’d he take it?”

“I fancy he’s feeling a bit better in mind; but you can’t expect that he’ll be very cheerful until he knows his baby is alive and well.”

“Then I’m afraid it’ll be a long time before he perks up again,” and now Zenas spoke in a whisper. “Betwixt you an’ me I’m beginnin’ to think we’re on a wild-goose chase. When we first started I was a bit excited, an’ almost believed we’d be able to run right alongside that ’ere tramp steamer; but now I’ve had time to chew the business over, it looks mighty dark. Jest think what we’re up against.”

“Don’t, Zenas! Don’t figure out how and why we are certain to make a failure of the cruise!” Paul cried in a tone so loud that the solitary figure in the bow turned quickly, as if fancying some news had come concerning those whom he was so eager to see. Then Paul added in a whisper, “It won’t do any good to insist that we shan’t find the *Glendower*, and will only serve to keep us down-hearted. We must try



to believe that there's no question about striking her."

"If I remember rightly, you was the one who was bent on crossin' bridges before we came to them, when we searched for the *Nera*."

"That's true, Zenas, and it was well for me you persisted in looking on the bright side, as you must do now, if for no other reason than to keep up the heart of the poor fellow yonder," and Paul pointed toward the statue-like figure in the bow.

"You're talkin' sense, lad, an' I know it. I wasn't meanin' to get down at the heel; but it's enough to give any feller the blues, standin' here tryin' to look through the blackness, an' knowin' that the steamer we're after may be within five miles of us at this very minute, without our bein' able to let her know we're comin' for the baby."

Before Paul could reply the bell which was connected with the wireless room rang out sharply as a token that the operator wanted to speak with someone, and Paul answered it quickly, entering the apartment in time to see that Ned was receiving a message from some point out in the world of darkness.

The lad was writing the words clicked off by the instrument, and, looking over his shoulder, Paul read as Ned formed the letters:

"*Glendower* seven miles S. E. by S. off Halifax yesterday 4 P. M. Her course should be S. S. W. Believe she has wireless. Stea. *Storm King*, Mason, Master."

"Thank you!" Ned wired, and then Paul seized him



by the shoulder, shaking the lad boisterously as he cried triumphantly:

“Good boy! Talk about wireless operators! You beat us all! Now we’ve got something to work on, and if that isn’t doing a big stroke of business I don’t know what you can call it! Not more than three hours from port, and have found out where the *Glendower* is to a dot!”

“Say, you’re going a bit too fast,” Ned said laughingly. “We know where she was yesterday afternoon, that is all.”

“Zenas won’t say so. He’ll have her whereabouts figured within a few miles, five minutes after getting this news,” Paul cried as he ran swiftly into the wheel-house, having with him the slip of paper on which Ned had set down the message received, and read it aloud by aid of the binnacle lamp.

“Well say, that’s great!” Zenas shouted in glee. “Now we’ve got her down fine, an’ you may kick me all over the deck if we don’t come somewhere near sizin’ her up before four an’ twenty hours go by.”

Mr. Barton could not have failed to hear the helmsman’s cry, and he ran swiftly aft to the wheel-house window as he asked in a voice choking with emotion:

“Have you any news of the *Glendower*?”

“Aye, that we have, man! She was seven miles sou’east by south off Halifax yesterday afternoon, an’ her course should be sou’-sou’west. Find her? Why, man alive, it’s almost the same as if we had her under our bow this very minute!”

“Oh, thank God! Thank God!” Barton cried fer-



vently as tears of joy ran down his face, and Paul was sorry Zenas had spoken so confidently, for if they failed in the search now, this father's grief would be more overpowering, if indeed that could be possible, than if he had had no ray of hope.

"Yes, sir, you can bet your bottom dollar that we'll pick her up, wireless or no wireless, unless she's a better sailer than tramp steamers generally are! Paul, take the helm a jiffy, an' let me do a bit of figgerin'. I'm goin' to overhaul the charts in Mr. Sawtelle's room, an' we'll soon know how far we've got to travel before strikin' the *Glendower's* course in time to cut her off. Sou'-sou'west from Halifax should be near enough for us."

Paul took the wheel, and Zenas ran below as if his very life depended upon getting there within a given time, while Mr. Barton, who yet stood by the window, said as if he had no doubt as to the truth of Zenas's wild statement:

"If me or mine ever forget what you and the owner of this yacht have done in our behalf, I hope direst misfortune may follow us all the rest of our lives. Without you, my baby——"

Paul had not the heart to listen to this poor father's words of gratitude when the work was far from being accomplished—when there were yet an hundred chances to one against their ever coming in contact with the *Glendower*, and he cried sharply:

"Don't, Mr. Barton, don't thank us for what hasn't yet been done. Wait till you have the baby in your arms, and then I'll listen to whatever you may have



to say, even though we don't want to be thanked because of doing what any person, with half a heart in him, would have done."

"But shouldn't I say that which I feel, now it is certain we shall come up with the steamer?" Barton asked in surprise.

"Perhaps I've got a foolish notion, borrowed from old sailors, about salting fish before they're caught. I'll admit that it seems as if we had a fairly good reason to say we'll be able to overhaul the *Glendower*; but the ocean is large; there are many chances of our missing her even now, through being overconfident, and it isn't well to make up our minds that it is impossible to fail."

"Hurrah, lads!" Zenas shouted at the full strength of his lungs as he opened the wheel-house door. "As I figger it, allowin' that the *Glendower* don't steam over twelve knots, which is good time for a tramp, we ought'er be mighty nigh to her before sunset tomorrow."



## CHAPTER IX

### THE "GLENDOWER"

THE seemingly authoritative statement made by Zenas that the *Nera* should be in the vicinity of the *Glendower* before sunset on the following day, caused an exclamation of joy and relief from Barton. The unhappy father, prompted by hope to believe that which promised success, gave full credit to Master Cushing's words; but Paul could not put implicit faith in the prediction.

The lad knew that much of Zenas's faith rested on a foundation of guesswork, for even though he had been a skilled a mariner he could not have been positive of the relative positions of the tramp steamer and the yacht, through the information received, unless a long time had been spent in working the problem according to a seaman's rules. It seemed certain Master Cushing had simply made a rough estimate of courses and distances, announcing as a fact that which was born only of a desire to ease Mr. Barton's aching heart.

"Now, I'm tellin' you what ought'er be done," Zenas said in a matter-of-fact tone as he took the wheel from Paul. "There ain't the least little bit of a show that we'll see the *Glendower* before to-morrow night, therefore, if you'll take my advice, Mr. Barton, it's a case of turnin' in to get some sleep, while the rest of us run this 'ere craft. You'll be needed to act as lookout from noon to-morrow, 'cause we're bound



to keep a mighty sharp watch after that time, an' it stands you in hand to be fit for the job."

"But it doesn't seem right for me to sleep while all the others are on duty," the man said hesitatingly, much as if he was inclined to follow the advice given.

"You couldn't help us a little bit if you kept pacin' the deck from now till the crack of doom. Of course we must twist things 'round so's all hands can have a spell below, an' you're the first to go off duty. I reckon Paul will show you where's a chance to turn in."

"That I will," the lad cried promptly. "You shall go into my cabin; it has two bunks, and since Ned and I cannot be below at the same time, there's no fear of your depriving anyone of a chance to sleep."

"You're certain I can't be of any use on deck?" Mr. Barton asked of Zenas, and the latter replied emphatically:

"Seein's how you can't work the wireless, or run a craft of this kind, you'll only be in the way so long as you're on deck. Go below an' get what sleep you can, so's to be in good shape for a long watch to-morrow."

Barton did not attempt to argue the matter further; but wheeled about as token that he was ready to follow Paul, and the lad led him to the cabin which had been set apart for the use of himself and Ned.

"You'll be sure to call me if there's the least little thing I can do toward spelling any of you?" he said as if asking the greatest possible favor, when Paul



would have left him alone, and the latter replied in a tone which carried with it conviction:

"I'll agree that you shall have a chance to do more than a full share of the work, if there is anything in your line."

Then Paul went directly to the wheel-house, and once there asked in a cautious tone, as if fearing Mr. Barton from his cabin below might hear him:

"Why did you tell him so positively that we would come up with the *Glendower* by to-morrow night?"

"'Cause I saw that was the kind of medicine he was needin' to prevent him from eatin' his heart out on deck," Master Cushing replied calmly.

"But you are not seaman enough to work out the course of each craft by simply looking at the chart."

"I can guess at it as well as the next man, I reckon; but if he'd got the idee that I wasn't dead certain, he'd mooned 'round the deck all night long, an' in the mornin', when we might stand in need of a helpin' hand, wouldn't be worth his salt. Besides, how do you know that I can't work out the position of a ship?"

"In the first place, I knew you hadn't had the time, and then again, unless you are considerably more of a sailor than you have always allowed, it is impossible."

"Well, to tell the truth, lad, I did depend on guess-work wholly; but I had a mighty good foundation to work on. Jest take a squint at the chart in Mr. Sawtelle's room; draw a line from quarter of an inch off Halifax on a course sou'-sou'west, an' another due east from Barren Island, an' you'll see that the two



come together somewhere as we're headin'. It stands to reason that I was out'er my reckonin' as to the distance, an' had to allow how fast each craft was sailin'; but it was a fair guess, an' I'm bound to hold, even when we're talkin' facts, that the chances are we'll hit the *Glendower* unless she's an abler steamer than tramps generally are."

"What about it if she hasn't a wireless?"

"Then it's all a matter of luck, same's when we started off in the Hampton boat to pick up this 'ere yacht. Anyway you look at it, I'd better have sent Barton below believin' there wasn't the slightest doubt about pickin' up the steamer, than to have hemmed an' hawed till he got so fidgety he'd need a straight jacket. I'm reckonin' we can do more good by makin' ready for a long cruise, than in chinnin' over what can't be mended whichever way things turn. S'posen you send Ned below for a two-hours' watch, so's he'll be in shape to spell you later? We can't hold our eyes open twenty-four hours on a stretch, an' keep on doin' sich work as is bound to come our way after sunrise."

"Ned and I will be able to do the turn all right, getting as much sleep as will be needed; but what about you and the engineer?"

"He's got a couple of men to spell him, so we needn't borrow trouble on that score," was the careless reply.

"But what about you? Who is to take your place at the wheel?" Paul asked sharply.

"I'll look after that part of it, lad. Either the



engineer or one of you boys can hold this 'ere craft on a course, after you've put yourself in condition to do the work, for she steers herself, as you might say."

"Why shouldn't I spell Ned at the instrument, and let him take the wheel for an hour?"

"Look here, lad, didn't you catch on to what Mr. Sawtelle said 'bout my bein' in command durin' this 'ere cruise?"

"Well, what if I did?"

"Nothin', only that what I say goes, an' I'm layin' out the duties of all hands while we're under way. It's for the rest of this 'ere crew to obey orders even if they break owners, an' then if we fail, which I don't allow, all the blame will be on my shoulders. Take the wheel while I run into the motor-room, an' then send Ned below."

Zenas had thrust the spokes of the wheel into Paul's hands as he spoke, and the last word was no more than uttered before he left the helmsman's quarters for an interview with the engineer.

Never before had the lad realized how lonely such a position might be, nor how filled with needless fears. After straining his eyes into the gloom a few moments, it was as if the sea ahead of the yacht's bow was an inclined plane up which she was striving to climb, and the gleam of a crested wave in the course loomed up big, as if it might be the canvas of some vessel which must be avoided.

Now and then Paul involuntarily strove to shield his face with his arm when a mountain of green water towered above the *Nera's* bow as if bent on



coming aboard, and again he allowed her to fall off two or three points, almost believing there was a craft of some kind directly ahead.

"This isn't the kind of a job I'd hanker for very long at a time," the lad muttered, striving to hold himself up to the work, knowing full well that he was giving way to fancies. "Running at full speed in the darkness isn't to my liking, for we'd be full on a danger before it was seen. I wish Zenas hadn't much the same as lied to Mr. Barton, and it amounted to that when he declared positively that we would pick up the *Glendower* to-morrow night, even though it made the poor man's mind easy for the time being. Now if we miss her, as seems most likely, his disappointment and grief will be all the greater for this time of assurance."

It was well that Zenas returned to his post of duty within a short while, otherwise Paul would have allowed himself to fall into a most uncomfortable frame of mind, and it seemed to the lad as if the entire situation had suddenly changed when Master Cushing burst into the wheel-house with a cheery hail of:

"Well, my hearty, how is she holdin' up?" and without waiting for the answer which he did not expect, the temporary commander of the *Nera* added, "I've straightened the engineer's crew out, so's he an' they'll get all the sleep that's really needed."

"But what about yourself?" Paul asked sharply.

"Oh, I'll pull through in great shape so long's you an' Ned can spell me. With two hours off an' on we ought'er get along without missin' a great deal."



“I hope I shan’t have to do much steering in the darkness,” Paul said as if speaking to himself, and Zenas cried laughingly:

“It does get on to a fellow’s nerves, an’ that’s a fact. I can conjure up all kinds of strange things while tryin’ to look inter the gloom. The safest way, lad, is to keep your eye on the compass, holdin’ her well up to the course.”

“And what if a sailing craft suddenly comes across the bow?”

“There ain’t overly many chances of that, an’ I’d rather have a smash come when I wasn’t expectin’ it, than to keep the idee in my head every minute of the time, believing the little craft was runnin’ her nose inter all kinds of danger. It don’t pay, lad, to do too much thinkin’ when you’re standin’ your trick at the wheel in the night. Now s’posen you go aft an’ see how Ned is gettin’ along? I don’t reckon it’s any too cheerful work, keepin’ that ’ere machine clickin’ as he was doin’ when I came past the deck-house.”

Acting upon this suggestion, Paul found his comrade industriously sending out the appeal for aid, and in answer to his question Ned replied:

“I haven’t learned anything worth while since you left. Somebody on shore picked me up and asked what the matter was; but when I explained he shut off mighty quick, with a sharp word or two about arousing the whole coast on account of one sick baby. I struck a sailing craft—a yacht, most likely; but she was off to the south, and hadn’t been east of



Portland, so there was nothing to be gained from her."

"Zenas claims that because Mr. Sawtelle put him in command of the yacht his orders are to be obeyed without a question," Paul said laughingly, "and you're to turn in for two hours, or stand a chance of being brought into court on a charge of mutiny."

"But I'm not sleepy," Ned replied decidedly. "Why don't you go below, if there's a show of getting a little rest?"

"The orders are for you to take the first turn at it, and I didn't venture to argue against the captain's direct command," Paul said as he shouldered his comrade aside, taking his place at the instrument and continuing the appeal for aid. "Try to sleep, Ned, so that you'll be in condition to relieve me when I take Zenas's place at the wheel."

Master Bartlett was by no means inclined to seek his bunk, for the excitement of the blind chase was upon him, overpowering for the time being all demands of his body; but he had sufficient good sense to understand that Zenas's command was a proper one under all the circumstances which might arise, and, without another word of protest, went below.

During five minutes or more Paul clicked off the letters s-o-s, and then, at the very moment when he was least expecting a reply, came the answering signal.

"Looking for tramp steamer *Glendower*. Do you know anything about her?" was the message he sent out, and then, taking up his pencil in order to set



down the reply that it might be shown later to his companions, he wrote as the words were sounded:

“What’s the matter?”

“Sick child aboard; father trying to save life. This is yacht *Nera*, Sawtelle owner.”

Again from over the waters, in what direction no one might say, came the words through the ether as distinctly as if sent by wire on land:

“Yacht *Norseman*, cruising Maine coast. Saw tramp steamer last night heading south, southwest, May be her if she comes from Halifax.”

“She was off that coast last night,” Paul replied, his heart bounding with joy at thus getting more news of the craft for which they were searching.

“Then we saw her. Is Sawtelle aboard?”

“He is at Barren Island.”

“Report us to him.”

Then communication ceased, and although he had not learned anything new, it seemed to Paul as if his work at the instrument had been well rewarded.

“I’m beginning to think that perhaps Zenas wasn’t so far wrong when he said we’d pick up the *Glendower* to-morrow night. If she has a wireless apparatus the work is almost the same as done, and even if she hasn’t, we may succeed in keeping track of her. It was my business to ask the *Norseman* how fast the tramp was sailing; but I forgot that part of it.”

Then Paul began to send out his call once more, encouraged greatly by the reply just received, even though it brought him nothing new in the way of information.



Within the next hour he heard twice from the mainland; but, as a matter of course, without getting any news of the tramp steamer, and then came that which caused him to shout for joy:

The call was answered, and after he had explained why it was sent out, the reply came:

“Steamer *Cornishman* from Halifax for Boston six yesterday afternoon. Passed *Glendower* about midnight, steaming ten knots, southerly course.”

“Has she wireless?” Paul asked, literally trembling with excitement, for here, indeed, was news of importance.

“Tried to speak her; but failed. Should say she wasn’t equipped. What course are you on?”

“From Barren Island off Maine coast, steering due east. Perhaps sixty miles out.”

“You are bound to strike her course. Be careful not to over-run it,” were the parting words, and Paul was so excited that he left the instrument to hasten into the wheel-house.

“Well, there, didn’t I come somewhere nigh guessing right?” Zenas asked triumphantly when the lad had repeated the words which had been sent from the *Cornishman*. “I may not be much of a sailor when you come right down to cut an’ dried navigation, but I’m mighty good at hittin’ a nail on the head. After it comes somebody’s turn to spell me at the wheel, I’ll try to figger out about how far from Barren Island that ’ere tramp would pass if she held to her course.”

“Go now; I’ll stay here. It won’t do any harm to leave the instrument ten minutes, for there can’t be



any craft, except the *Cornishman*, within hearing distance."

Zenas did not hesitate to do as Paul suggested, and at least twice ten minutes passed before he returned to say in a positive tone, as if it was impossible he could have made a mistake:

"You can't fool me now, lad, an' I can come mighty nigh sayin' jest when we'll pick up the *Glendower*. We're runnin', as the engineer figgers it, twelve knots, an' the tramp is doin' ten 'cordin' to all accounts. At that rate it stands us in hand to slow down 'bout two o'clock to-morrow afternoon, an' keep everybody on the lookout."

"It seems positive that she hasn't got a wireless aboard, and to run upon her by chance, as we're trying to do, is next to impossible," Paul said, beginning to despair once more, as he weighed all the odds against them.

"We've tackled harder jobs, when there wasn't so much need for pullin' through, an' worked the traverse in great shape," Zenas cried cheerily. "I'm goin' to hold to it for the next four an' twenty hours that we'll snake Barton's wife off the *Glendower* before we're much older; but you may keep on croakin' that it can't be done, if so be it'll make you feel better."

"Of course I want to believe that we shall succeed; but it seems like an impossible task when you figure all the chances against us," Paul replied as he returned to the telegraph room, and another hour passed as he continued to send out the call which was bound



to attract the attention of whoever heard it; but no reply came.

Then it was that Ned appeared, asking sharply as he entered:

"Why didn't you waken me? I thought the understanding was that I should remain below two hours, and it is nearly sunrise now."

"It hadn't come into my mind that I needed a rest," Paul replied as he handed his comrade the sheet of paper on which was written the communication from the *Cornishman*. "I felt so good after getting word from the steamer that I forgot all about myself. You may take my place now, and I'll try to persuade Zenas he'd better get his watch below in order to be ready for work after a new day comes."

"It looks as if we had a chance of picking up the *Glendower* even though she may not have the wireless," Ned said as he read the written words. "There can be no mistake about our course, and the only danger appears to be that we may cross hers after she has passed."

"Zenas thinks he has it figured down to the merest fraction, and we will try to believe he is in the right," Paul replied as he rose from the chair like one whose limbs have been cramped by remaining in one position too long. "Of course we'll keep the call going, according to Mr. Sawtelle's orders; but I don't believe any further good will come of it."

Then he went into the wheel-house with the proposition that Master Cushing turn in for a short time,



and a stranger might have fancied that the helmsman believed he had been insulted by such a suggestion.

“You’re the one who must go below. I could stay here four an’ twenty hours longer, an’ never know I’d missed anythin’ in the way of snoozin’. Leave me alone, an’ see to it that you flash up bright an’ smilin’ about sunrise.”

Then it was Paul argued that the commander of the yacht should be on duty after day had fully dawned, representing that it would be impossible for either he or Ned to sleep all the forenoon, even though one of them felt so disposed, and so successful was he in his purpose that Zenas finally came to believe it might be as well if he took his watch below just then.

“It’s understood that you’re to call me if anythin’ turns up that you don’t know how to tackle?” he said questioningly, halting for an instant in the door of the wheel-house, and Paul replied decidedly:

“If we sight anything larger than a fishing smack you shall be notified, and in case Ned gets information of importance by the wireless, he will rout you out.”

“I’ll make more certain of that last by speakin’ with him,” Zenas said grimly, and a moment later Paul could hear him giving Ned strictest orders to arouse him in case any word was received.

“I’m only goin’ below to please Paul, not ’cause I’m achin’ to sleep,” he said, “an’ don’t allow that you two lads shall take any chances, for, even though



you mean well, I'm not so certain I'd trust you in a chase of this kind where it needs a sailor to do the thinkin'."

"So you have come to believe you're a real sailor, after claiming that you was a duffer at such business," Paul heard Ned say laughingly, and Zenas muttered something indistinctly about boys who tried to be funny, after which it was possible to hear his footsteps as he went down the cabin companion-way.

If Paul grew despondent of succeeding in their search while he remained alone at the wheel during the remaining moments of darkness, he was wondrously heartened when the red and yellow tokens of the rising sun seemed to spring out of the waters directly under the bow of the little yacht, and then he realized to the utmost the beauties of sunrise at sea.

During many moments the eastern sky was gorgeous in coloring with the advancing heralds of a new day, and even while he gazed at the wondrous spectacle, at the same time he held the *Nera* true to her course, the flaming shafts of colored light faded away before the brilliancy of the sun, which showed his glowing face just above the horizon, changing to a golden hue all that sky of blue, red, and orange.

Mr. Barton came on deck at the very moment when Paul was standing as if spellbound, his hands gripping the spokes of the wheel, but his eyes fixed on this old, old miracle of darkness dispelled by light.

"Did you hear anything by wireless while I was below?" the anxious father asked, the grief in his



heart too great to admit of his admiring the wonders of nature.

Paul told of what had come from the *Cornishman*, saying in conclusion:

"I don't know whether Ned has got anything since I came on duty here; but it wouldn't have been possible to learn more definitely that we are sailing on a course which should bring us across the *Glendower's* bow, if we have not miscalculated her speed."

"Then you believe we will be able to pick her up?" Mr. Barton asked anxiously, and Paul, not willing to stretch the truth to quite such an extent as Zenas had done, replied evasively:

"There is nothing else we can do to run across her, save keep on the same course until it seems possible we are in her path."

"When do you count on seeing her?"

It was in Paul's mind to say plainly that it was even now only by the merest chance they could hope to sight the tramp steamer; but he checked himself with the thought that no real good could come of killing the hope which had grown strong in the father's mind since Zenas had said so positively the search would soon be successful, and he replied hesitatingly:

"Cushing believes we should be able to speak her this afternoon; but, of course, that is guesswork, and we may have a long chase after all, for there is good reason to believe she isn't equipped with the wireless."

Mr. Barton stood irresolute an instant as if he would say that which was in his mind, and then he turned



abruptly away, going into the very bow of the yacht, where he took up the same position of eager watching which had so worked on Paul's nerves during the night.

It is doubtful if either of the boys really knew whether a cook was on board the *Nera* or not, until about this time, when he gave ample proof of doing his share in the chase, by carrying into the wheel-house and the telegraph-room cups of steaming coffee.

It was the one thing needed to cheer the tired lads, and Paul asked as he drank the last drop, wondering meanwhile how soon it would be before he might have something to eat:

"How does it happen that you are on board? I didn't give much heed to the matter last night; but if I had, it would have been to believe that you went ashore with Mr. Sawtelle."

"I was asleep when you got under way, and knew nothing of what was going on until getting an account of it from the engineer. Most likely Mr. Sawtelle will contrive to get along with such food as Mrs. Downs can cook, until we are in port once more. He has been so taken up with aeroplanes during the past two weeks, that I question if he really knows what is on the table when he sits down to a meal. At what time shall I serve breakfast?"

"When you come right down to dots, I suppose that is a question Zenas should answer, since he considers himself the commander of this expedition because Mr. Sawtelle put him in charge," Paul said laughingly; "but if I had any voice in the matter, I'd



say breakfast-time couldn't come any too soon to please me."

"Will you awaken Cushing?" the cook asked.

"No; let him sleep as long as he can, for no one may say how long it will be necessary for him to remain on duty when he next shows up."

"I'll bring you something to eat here, as I always do the helmsman when we are on a cruise," the man said, and as he disappeared Ned came into the wheel-house.

"It won't do any harm to give the instrument a rest for ten minutes or more," he exclaimed, throwing himself on the locker as if tired to the verge of exhaustion. "I have continued the call till I can hear or see nothing save the letters s-o-s, and it gets to be monotonous after three or four hours of such work."

"Haven't you had any reply since I left?"

"Nothing of consequence. We are now so far at sea, and the wind blows so strong, that nothing definite can come from the land, and it seems as if vessels equipped with the wireless were mighty scarce in this vicinity. I wonder how your father and Mr. Sawtelle are coming on with the aeroplane this morning?"

"I had rather know if they are in any danger from John Ed Bingham. While standing here with nothing else to think of, it has come into my mind that we might have left port just in time to give that old smuggler the chance he is most likely looking for."

"I believe we've got enough to worry us without harking back to John Ed for something disquieting," Ned said almost petulantly. "Look at Bar-



ton standing there in the bow, straining his eyes in the hope of getting a glimpse of the *Glendower*, and, because of what Zenas told him, confidently expecting she will heave in sight sooner or later. Then tell me whether you can afford to spend time thinking of what an old reprobate like Bingham may be able to do?"

"If you were to stand here at the wheel with good opportunity to think of everything that might work us harm, I'm allowing your thoughts would hark back to John Ed, even though Mr. Barton stood there in plain view to remind you that Zenas had no right to give him grounds for hope, when the chances are that we shall finally fail in what we've come out to do."

"Then you do not believe we will come up with the *Glendower*?" Ned asked as if in surprise, and Paul replied gloomily:

"You must agree that the chances are against us. Of course it is possible everything will work out as Zenas has figured; but it is only a possibility, and when we have done our best and failed, it will be a question of guarding against the old smuggler."

Perhaps it was fortunate that the cook came at this moment with bread, broiled bacon, and an egg, for Paul was growing woefully despondent, as indeed he had ample grounds for being so far as the purpose of the cruise was concerned, and food was the one thing needed to bring him around to a healthy frame of mind.

It was as if Master Cushing had followed at the heels of the cook, for before Ned could take the



wheel in order to give the helmsman an opportunity to eat that which had been left on the locker, the temporary commander of the yacht entered in a bustling, cheery fashion as if everything was going exactly as he would have it.

“I reckon I’m in good trim now for a full day’s work,” he said breezily. “You lads can divide the wireless business to suit yourselves till this ’ere voyage is finished, an’ I’ll look after my end of the ship. Given over sendin’ out your call for help?”

Ned explained how it chanced that he was in the wheel-house, and Zenas replied as if the wireless had become of but little importance:

“It’ll be all right whether that ’ere machine clicks or lays still, for we’ll pick up the *Glendower* ’twixt now an’ sunset, even though we don’t hear another word from outsiders.”



## CHAPTER X

### ZENAS TRIUMPHS

EVEN though Paul and Ned knew Zenas was only guessing that the *Nera* would pick up the *Glendower* before another sunset, and were well aware that he had nothing on which to base such a statement save the desire that it should be so, they were decidedly impressed by the words, perhaps because of the triumphant tone in which they had been uttered.

It was almost as if Master Cushing could look forward into the future, and saw there the rescue of the baby from the tramp steamer. It surely seemed positive he himself believed the statement just made, and yet the lads knew full well that Zenas was simply striving to put faith in the prediction even while he was well aware how many chances there were against its verification.

Mr. Barton, who yet remained in the very eyes of the ship as when he took up his station after coming from below, heard the triumphant words and hurried aft, believing further news of the *Glendower* had been received.

To Paul's surprise, he did not appear disappointed on learning that Zenas was simply indulging in another prediction of success; but an expression of joy and content overspread his face, for to him the words were an expression of fact rather than the voicing of a hope.

At this opportune moment the cook announced



that breakfast was served, and all save one of the engineer's assistants and Zenas, went below to partake of such a meal as would have given satisfaction even to the fastidious Mr. Sawtelle.

There are times when those stricken with grief can be heartened by dainties in the way of food, and on this occasion every person at the table felt not only refreshed by the skillfully prepared breakfast, but had, as one might almost say, their burden of sorrow greatly lessened. The little company were in a comparatively cheerful mood when the meal came to an end, and then those who had been on duty were given opportunity to appease their hunger.

"Now I reckon I'm in prime condition to finish up this 'ere job," Zenas announced when he returned from the cabin to take the wheel from Paul, who had been acting as helmsman. "I must say that Mr. Sawtelle knew what was good for him when he hired sich a cook as we've got aboard. A breakfast like the one we've had is enough to make a cripple dance. What about workin' the wireless once more in the hope that the *Glendower* may have the same kind of a contraption aboard?"

"That is what we've been counting on doing," Paul replied. "I'll take the first trick at the instrument, and Ned can stay here to spell you at the wheel."

"Bless your heart, lad, I don't count on takin' another watch below till after I've put this 'ere craft somewhere near alongside the tramp steamer, an' brought Barton's wife an' baby aboard," Zenas cried



cheerily, and again the father's eyes glistened with tears of joy.

At this point the engineer came into the wheel-house for his morning smoke, which could not be indulged in below because of the danger that the gasoline might be ignited by a glowing coal of tobacco, and straightway he and Zenas set about arguing as to the speed of the yacht compared with that of the *Glen-dower*, the chart having been brought from Mr. Sawtelle's room that they might calculate about where the two vessels should come together.

Paul lingered until the two men got into a warm dispute as to the distance which must be run before the *Nera's* speed was checked, and then he went into the telegraph-room, Ned following to say laughingly:

"To hear those fellows talk, one would think there was no question but that we could pick up the *Glen-dower* as easily as to make Barren Island, when, as a matter of fact, according to my way of thinking, we stand a mighty small chance of finding her, even though we have had what might be called definite information regarding her whereabouts. Suppose she changes her course by two or three points, what then?"

"If she swung off to the westward there'd be no show whatever of coming across her," Paul replied with a sigh. "But all this talk of being positive the cruise will come to an end before sunset serves to cheer Mr. Barton, and because of that it is well for them to keep it up, although what may be the result,



if it chances that we are forced to put back unsuccessful, makes me tremble.”

“We’ll do our full share, and then won’t need to blame ourselves if the cruise is a failure,” Ned replied, and Paul seated himself at the instrument again, repeating the call for aid a dozen times or more before waiting for a reply.

So faint were the hopes of the boys as to receiving an answer, that they were thoroughly surprised when the receiver began to click, sounding so distinctly that they knew the sender must be reasonably near at hand.

One might have counted ten before Paul recovered from his surprise sufficiently to send off the sad story of the Barton baby’s illness and the desire of the father to speak the tramp steamer; but when it had been done, and the operator on board the ship which had heard the appeal for help began his reply, Ned gave vent to a cry of mingled joy and triumph which must have been heard from one end of the yacht to the other, for it brought the engineer, the cook, and Mr. Barton into the telegraph-room, where they crowded close upon Paul to peer over his shoulder at the words he was writing while they were being sounded by the instrument.

“Steamer *Canada*. Quebec to Liverpool. Spoke *Glendower* five this morning. Can yet make her out astern. No wireless aboard her.”

“Talk about luck!” the engineer shouted as he ran into the wheel-house to quiet Zenas, who was roaring



out questions in a tempest note that could not have been equaled by any save Captain Tobi.

No one save Paul appeared to think that any reply was needed to this information. It seemed to be enough that the whereabouts of the tramp they had been so eager to find was known to some ship near at hand, and for the moment there was never a thought that they were no wiser than before, since the exact location of the *Glendower* had not been given.

Fortunately, however, Paul had all his wits about him at that critical moment, and he clicked off the following facts with the hope that the master of the *Canada* might suggest a way whereby it would be possible for them to make certain of arresting the *Glendower* in her course.

“Power yacht *Nera*, Boston, Sawtelle owner. No navigator aboard. Left Barren Island, Maine coast, eleven last night, running due east, twelve knots. Can you tell where the *Glendower* should be picked up?”

“Wait; I will ask the captain,” the operator of the *Canada* replied, and just then Zenas, excited beyond all power of controlling himself, burst into the telegraph-room as he shouted:

“Now then, what about our pickin’ up the steamer ’twixt this an’ sunset?”

“Do you happen to know exactly the course we should steer in order to come up with her before she gets too far to the south?” Ned asked sharply, and



for the first time since the welcome news had been received, an expression of blank dismay overspread Master Cushing's face.

"We're close aboard of her, as I take it," he muttered, and Ned replied:

"No one here knows exactly where the *Canada* is, and in case the captain simply gives us his latitude and longitude, who can figure it out within fifty or sixty miles?"

"I've allers allowed that I'd study navigation; but never did, an' now, when by knowin' it, I might count to a certainty on savin' the life of Barton's baby, I'm no better than a shoemaker at this business," and Zenas wheeled about as if he had lost all hope.

"It so happens that Paul kept his wits about him, and has asked the captain of the *Canada* to work it out in such a way that a crowd of landsmen will stand a show of finding the steamer," Ned added, "and we'll soon——"

"He ought'er told him how fast we've been runnin', an'——"

"Keep quiet," Paul cried as the instrument began to click once more, and those who clustered around him could read the following as he translated the dots and dashes into written words:

"Make course east by south, half south, and slow down eleven o'clock if steamer not in sight. The *Canada* will hold up to tell her you are coming."

"If the baby's life is saved it will be through you, not us," Paul replied, forcing, by an impatient gesture,



the occupants of the telegraph-room to silence, and once more a message came from the *Canada*:

"We will all claim a share in it," the steamer's operator answered, and Paul fancied there was a certain ring of joy even in the click of the needle, that this had not only been rendered possible, but probable. Then came the remainder of the message, "Look out for my signal within an hour. Will tell if the *Glendower* has been spoken."

"Thank you," Paul replied, and then he turned to face his companions, excited, happy, and at the same time bewildered that it had been possible, not only to locate a craft which had no wireless apparatus aboard, but to receive instructions as to how she might be spoken.

"The captain of the *Canada* is a dandy, and I hope I'll have a chance some day of telling him what I think!" the lad cried exultantly, turning his head slightly that he might not appear to see the tears which were streaming down Barton's face.

"We'll get Mr. Sawtelle to write all that to him," Ned said quickly, and then he added sharply to Zenas, "what about your being able to find the *Glendower* before sunset?"

"What about it? Why, 'cordin' to what the cap't'in of the *Canada* figgers out, we'll speak her before noon," Zenas replied, failing to understand the full meaning of Ned's question.

"Yes, *if* we alter our course, and slow down at eleven o'clock; but if we hadn't picked up the *Canada*



you'd kept the yacht running due east, and by noon the *Glendower* would have been so far south of us that there wouldn't have been the slightest chance we could overhaul her."

"True for you, lad, an' I've got to haul in my horns when it comes to savin' the baby, 'cause I've been sich a fool as to fritter away my time in doin' useless things when I might'er been studyin' navigation. But," Zenas added as a happy thought came to him, "if I hadn't egged you lads on to startin' the wireless, the *Canada* might have run out of hearin' before you got to work."

"I reckon we can kind'er divide the credit up among all hands, countin' in the capt'in an' operator of the *Canada*, an' not forgettin' the owner of the *Nera*," the engineer said gravely. "It looks to me as if we'd been reg'larly driven by what's called Providence, to do exactly as we've done, an' if I was the father of the baby, I'd get right down on my knees when I wanted to give thanks, 'cause if everything hadn't been worked exactly to a hair, this 'ere cruise would have been a failure."

It seemed as if Mr. Barton was even more affected by what was much the same as an assurance that he would soon be with his wife and baby, than when it had been more than doubtful of his being able to overtake them. He was leaning against the bulkhead, his face buried in his arm, while he trembled as if in an ague fit, and the cook, flinging his arm around the agitated man's shoulder, said as he literally forced him below:



"We'll get a cup of coffee, old fellow. You've had more'n enough to shake your nerves since last night, an' somethin' warmin' will do you a world of good."

"What about alterin' the course?" the engineer shouted as Mr. Barton and the cook disappeared. "Here's the yacht runnin' herself all this time as if we were a crowd of fishermen who didn't care how their craft was headin'."

"Jiminy crickets! I'd clean forgot that there was no one at the helm," and Zenas made all haste to get into the wheel-house, when the *Nera's* course was changed according to the directions given by the *Canada's* captain.

It seemed to Paul as if the little yacht actually dashed on in a joyful manner now that it was possible to count on a successful ending to the cruise, and as she rose on the crest of a wave, or dove into a valley of green water, it was almost as if she did so exultantly, knowing that she had done her full share toward saving a human life.

There no longer appeared to be any reason why the wireless should be worked. It was now positive that the *Glendower* was not equipped with that most valuable invention, and it would do no real good to attract the attention of those who could not aid in the work on hand.

There could be no question but that the captain of the *Canada* had worked out the positions of the two vessels very carefully, and his information might be relied upon implicitly. Therefore it was that Paul



said after the *Nera* was headed on the new course, and matters had settled down into something like monotony, if indeed any portion of such a cruise could be monotonous:

“We needn’t do more than stand ready to receive the message from the *Canada’s* operator, telling us whether that ship had been able to signal the *Glendower*, and when we get such news there will be no need of our staying in here.”

“What about Mr. Sawtelle?” Ned asked. “He wanted to hear how we might be getting along, and I’m a bit curious to know if we can raise Barren Island from such a distance.”

“I had entirely forgotten that we might learn how matters were going on at the island,” Paul said as a flush of shame overspread his face. “I should have called him up the first thing this morning——”

Paul was interrupted by the clicking of the instrument, and he wheeled about suddenly, wondering how it could be possible that the *Canada* had been able to signal the *Glendower* so quickly, when he caught from the needle the word “*Nera*” repeated twice.

“Mr. Sawtelle is calling us now!” he exclaimed as if such a possibility was something astonishing, and immediately answered the call.

“Where are you? What are you doing?” came through the ether as clearly, thanks to the power of the island equipment, as if the words had been flashed across to Seaview.

It was a long story Paul had to tell, and he set about it at once by describing the incidents of the



night, following with the speaking of the *Canada*, and ending:

“With a thorough seaman like the captain of the *Canada* to work out the positions of the two craft, it doesn't seem as if we could go astray, particularly since those on the *Glendower* will know we are hunting for her.”

“You have done wonders,” Mr. Sawtelle replied. “How fast have you been running since leaving here?”

“Twelve knots.”

“Then we need not look for you before to-morrow. Be careful when you transship the woman and the baby, and carry them to Seaview before heading for the island. My congratulations; I knew you boys and Zenas would do the work if it was within the range of possibilities.”

“Ask him if they have seen or heard anything of John Ed,” Ned cried when Paul wheeled around in his chair as if communication with Barren Island was at an end, and the lad seized the telegraph key once more, flashing across the waters his desire for information as to how the aeroplane builders were progressing.

“Everything quiet here,” came the reply. “No signs of the smuggler. Are shaping the rudder to-day. Count on having the machine assembled by the time you return. Good-by.”

“Now it only remains to hear from the *Canada* that the *Glendower* knows we are looking for her, and that which yesterday appeared impossible, will



be much the same as accomplished," Paul said as he turned once more to face Ned, who muttered half to himself:

"Even now, when it looks as if everything was working our way, it doesn't seem reasonable to believe that we could have done so much."

"Go out and tell Zenas the news from the island, and by the time he gets through shouting you'll be convinced that it is all true," Paul said laughingly, and a few seconds after Ned had acted upon the suggestion, Master Cushing's voice could be heard raised in a loud cry of triumph.

By this time Mr. Barton had come from below, in a partially rational frame of mind once more, and again he took up his station in the bow of the yacht. Now, however, he was of real service in such position, for it was of the highest importance that a sharp lookout be kept.

Zenas had literally bellowed the command that everyone, not otherwise engaged, remain on deck to watch for the steamer, since it was not impossible the captain of the *Canada* might have set the probable time of meeting a few moments later than it would really occur, and within the hour Paul received a message from the friendly operator:

"Have hailed the *Glendower*. She will look out for you. Let her crew do the transshipping unless you have a lifeboat aboard."

"We have nothing save a small tender such as yachts usually carry," Paul replied, and then read from the busy needle:



"Our captain says lay to leeward of her, and let them board you."

"Some day we will try to tell you what a favor you have done us," Paul telegraphed, and promptly the reply came back:

"We are working to save the baby, as are you. Let us hope it will be done."

"I shall try to catch you once more when it is accomplished."

"Thank you. Good-by," came from the steamer which was now probably steaming swiftly on her course, the work of mercy having been performed, and Paul went out on deck feeling satisfied that he could be of no further service at the instrument.

Now there was nothing to be done save keep careful watch, and, from the temporary captain to the cook, everyone on board took part in this work. Even those whose duty it was to care for the motors, ran on deck from time to time to gaze anxiously out over the heaving waters, and certain it was that if the *Glendower* came within range of the marine glasses aboard the *Nera*, she would not escape notice.

Steadily the little craft plowed her way across the billows, care being taken that she should maintain the speed of twelve knots, and as the time predicted for the meeting of the two vessels approached, great was the suppressed excitement on board the yacht.

Mr. Barton, now with every reason to believe he would soon see his wife and baby, overhung the bow straining his eyes to detect the first faint line of



smoke on the horizon. Paul, in the wheel-house with Mr. Sawtelle's glasses to his eyes, was sweeping the broad expanse of waters with an anxiety that betrayed itself in the trembling of his hands, which now and then became so pronounced he was forced to lean against the window-casing to hold the binocular steady.

The engineer stood amidships with his glasses, swaying with every motion of the yacht as he kept his gaze fastened on the horizon directly under the *Nera's* bow, and at the helm Zenas glanced alternately at the compass needle and the sky line.

As seemed to the anxious ones most fitting, it was Mr. Barton who first called attention to a faint smudge against the eastern sky, by asking hoarsely as he pointed with tremulous finger:

"Don't that look like smoke?"

"It is! It is!" Paul cried excitedly as he leveled the glasses in the direction indicated. "Hurrah, boys! There's the *Glendower*, and we've found her when there didn't seem to be the least little show of our turning the trick!"

"Thank God!" the engineer cried fervently, and at the same instant Barton sank to his knees as if he was pouring out his soul in gratitude to Him who holdeth the waters in the hollow of His hand.

Twenty-four hours later neither Paul nor Ned could have told what they said or did at this time when the search had much the same as come to an end. There was no doubt in the mind of any but that yonder smoke came from the stacks of the *Glen-*



*dower*, and the little *Nera* was sent ahead at racing speed until the hull of the tramp could plainly be seen by the naked eye, when everyone knew the goal had been won.

Now it was that Paul repeated the advice given by the *Canada's* captain, and Zenas turned the yacht to leeward at the instant the big steamer's propellers ceased working, as she lay motionless waiting for those who would do all in their power to save the baby's life.

There was no more than an ordinary breeze blowing, therefore Zenas deemed it safe to run the *Nera* within easy hailing distance to leeward, and his first words were:

"How is the baby?"

"Alive, and with a good show of living if it can be got ashore. We'd put in to Halifax but for the fact that our insurance would be canceled if we made port except through stress of weather."

"If I'd been the captain of that tramp the insurance might go hang, but that I'd have put the baby ashore," Zenas muttered, and Paul added soothingly:

"A man's first care must be for his own, and you can't tell what you would do, until knowing all the circumstances that prompted the *Glendower's* master to continue the voyage even after believing the child must die."

There was no opportunity for Zenas to reply, however much he might have had in mind bearing on the subject, for at this moment the captain of the tramp steamer shouted:



“What kind of a boat have you?”

“Nothin’ but sich a tender as yachts generally carry. The master of the *Canada* advised us to have you send the woman an’ baby aboard in one of your boats,” Master Cushing shouted gruffly, as if almost fancying such a request would be refused; but the reply came quickly:

“Keep your screw turning to hold the yacht steady, and we’ll have them aboard in short order.”

Almost instantly the watchers on the *Nera* saw the *Glendower’s* crew breaking out one of the lifeboats, and Paul could almost have believed that Barton did not breathe until his loved ones were alongside, the mother holding her baby wrapped in many a blanket and shawl, while she looked at her husband as if in perfect content now that he was near at hand to share her sorrow and anxiety.

Until the lifeboat was to leeward of the *Nera*, rising and falling like a cork on the heavy seas, Zenas had not considered the danger that might attend the transshipment of the passengers. The yacht was not equipped for such work, and it became a most serious problem to get the helpless ones aboard.

“Can’t you send down a chair on a whip?” the cockswain of the boat shouted as the crew of the *Nera* gazed over the rail helplessly, and but for the engineer the temporary captain might have declared that there was no such thing aboard.

“I’ve got one of them foldin’ arm-chairs that’ll do the trick. Rig your tackle, an’ I’ll have it here in a jiffy.”



Paul and Ned knew how to swing the whip in such fashion that it could be used to advantage, and by the time the engineer gained the deck again, everything was ready for the venture.

The crew of the lifeboat lashed Mrs. Barton into the folding chair, she holding the baby, as a matter of course, and then, with a line made fast to prevent the burden from striking too heavily against the side of the *Nera*, came the hoarse command from the lifeboat:

“Hoist away smartly, an’ stand by to let go before your craft rolls to windward!”

With the exception of Mr. Barton, who stood by the port rail waiting with bated breath to clasp his loved ones to his heart, every member of the *Nera’s* crew tailed on to the tackle, and in a twinkling the chair with its precious burden was swinging over the deck.

“Let go lively!” came from the lifeboat, and as the chair was lowered, Barton had his wife in his arms.

“All right up there?” the cockswain of the *Glendower’s* boat cried, and Zenas replied with an odd quaver in his voice, for the sight of those two who were united after it had seemed certain they could not meet this side of New Orleans, affected him deeply:

“All right, my hearty! It seems like as if we’d succeeded in doin’ somethin’ that wasn’t down in the books, an’ that’s a fact!”

“You’ve had great luck, an’ we on the *Glendower*



are mighty glad the poor woman has been able to go ashore."

"Well, so long to yer!" and Zenas's voice rang out loud and triumphant. "I reckon you don't want to keep the *Glendower* waitin', an' it stands us in hand to get the baby ashore as soon as it can be done."

"So long, an' may you find a helpin' hand same's you've shown, if so be you get inter the same trouble that came to the father of the baby," the sailor shouted as the painter of the lifeboat was cast off and the oarsman pulled toward their steamer.

But for the cook, the Barton family might have remained on deck uncared for during all this time. He, however, eager to be of some material assistance, had led the father and mother below to Mr. Sawtelle's cabin, where he strove to minister to the sorrowing, and at the same time joyful, woman with the aid of hot tea, when the *Nera*, her work nobly done, was swung around on that course which her temporary captain believed would bring her within sight of Barren Island once more.

"I ain't enough of a navigator to be certain of strikin' Seaview at the first go off; but I'm allowin' we'll make Barren Island, an' once we get that as a landmark I can run her inter port in a way that'll make Captain Tobi's eyes stick out," Zenas said to Paul as the lad stood by his side while the yacht was being headed for the mainland. "What about tryin' to get Mr. Sawtelle, so's to tell him what a big thing we've done? When silver fox farmers can pick up a tramp steamer two or three hundred miles at sea,





"LET GO LIVELY!" CAME FROM THE LIFEBOAT.







without turnin' a hair, it's somethin' to crow about, 'cordin' to my way of thinkin'."

Therefore it was that while the *Nera* was on the first leg of her homeward-bound voyage, Paul telegraphed, after spending nearly half an hour in calling the island station:

"Mother and baby aboard. Are making for Seaview."

"Good work," was the approving reply. "I knew you lads and Zenas could do the trick if it was within the range of possibilities; but had no hope it might be turned. Work on the aeroplane going ahead in great shape. Shall be ready for first trial by time you arrive. Call me up when you make Seaview."

"What about Bingham?" Paul asked, and, now that the rescue had been effected, the only care in his mind was regarding what the old smuggler might be able to do against those on Barren Island.

"He hasn't shown himself as yet. Reckon he understands that he can't hope to work further mischief. Don't worry. Your next voyage shall be through the air to the mainland. Good-by."

"It won't be in any such fashion while I'm a free agent," Paul muttered as he arose to report to the temporary captain the information which had been gained.

Mr. Barton was no longer to be seen when Paul came out of the telegraph-room. All that the world held dear to him was in the cabin of the *Nera*, and there, as a matter of course, he remained.

"I reckon the baby isn't as sick as she was," Zenas



said when Paul asked regarding the little one. "Perhaps the mother got fussy, an' made things out worse than they really were; but all the same, it don't take any credit away from us, lad, for I count that we've done a mighty big thing since leavin' Barren Island."

"There's no doubt of that, Zenas; but we won't crow too loud, for we've been helped in such a wonderful way that I feel as if we have no right to brag about it very much."

"All the same, that's exactly what I'm goin' to do," was the emphatic reply. "When I pick up a ship at sea without any information that could be depended upon to go an' come on, I shall howl mighty loud that what we've done goes way ahead of wireless telegraphy or air-ships."

"And if it hadn't been for both you wouldn't have succeeded," Paul replied laughingly.

"How do you make that out? What have air-ships to do with this 'ere job?"

"If Mr. Sawtelle hadn't decided on building one, the *Nera* wouldn't have been at Barren Island. If we hadn't been aboard of her, it would have been impossible to pick up the *Canada*. If we hadn't found her we couldn't have held the *Glendower* up, and so, you see, we needed the whole combination, with some power far above this earth, to bring the whole together."

"Have it your way, lad," Zenas said, now speaking in a milder tone as if more than half convinced that Paul was in the right. "I'll allow it's much as you



put it; but at the same time I'm goin' to do a pile of crowin' once I get ashore."

"And you have the right, Zenas, for I verily believe that if you hadn't been so positive we would succeed, this yacht might have turned back without having gone far enough to pick up the *Canada*. Don't it strike you that some of us ought to know how the Barton family are coming on?"

"I reckon we can trust the cook for that part of it," was the careless reply. "All I want to know is that the baby's alive when we send her ashore at Seaview, for then our part of the job will have been done shipshape, Bristol fashion."



## CHAPTER XI

### DASTARDLY WORK

BOTH Paul and Ned were eager to get some word as to the health of the baby, but hardly daring to venture into the cabin while Mrs. Barton held possession lest inadvertently they disturb the little one, there was nothing to be done save wait until the cook came on deck, for it was known that he was aiding the mother and father in the effort to make the child comfortable.

“Well, it strikes me that the *Nera* has come somewhere near squarin’ accounts with the Hampton boat!” the engineer exclaimed in a tone of triumph as he came on deck while the boys were loitering around the cabin companion-way in the hope of being able to signal the cook. “It’s true she hasn’t helped save a craft from founderin’; but the little steamer has done everything possible to preserve the life of a baby, which is a bigger job.”

“So you’re giving all the credit to the *Nera*?” Ned cried laughingly, and the engineer replied gravely:

“Indeed I’m not, lad; but it pleases me to think that she’s had some part in a life-savin’ job. It looks as if all hands of us might rightfully do considerable crowing over what has been accomplished, for it’s a work of which a man can feel proud.”

“That’s what it is!” a voice from the companion-way cried emphatically, and Mr. Barton appeared, looking excited and happy. “I have been trying to



figure out what it is possible to say in order to make you understand how much my wife and I owe you who are on board here, and the owner of this yacht, because of what has been done in our behalf."

"Don't try to do it, old man," the engineer said as he laid a greasy hand on the father's shoulder. "I've got babies of my own, an' know somethin' of what is in your mind. These lads may not understand quite all the meaning of what has been done; but they can guess mighty near, which is enough without words of yours. How's the child?"

"Very ill; but we're hoping to see a change for the better as soon as we get on shore. My wife believes that a goodly portion of the trouble was caused by seasickness. The *Glendower* rolled like a tub, she says, and every time the tramp wallowed in a seaway the baby would cry out as if in pain. The dear little thing appears to be more comfortable already, for this yacht, small though she is, rides the waves steadily."

"We'll soon have you on the mainland, Mr. Barton. Except in event of an accident, the speed won't be slackened until after we've put you ashore at Sea-view," the engineer added as he turned to go into the wheel-house. "I reckon we're makin' a good twelve knots, an' while the fuel holds out there's no reason why we can't keep the pace without any trouble."

Then the boys were left alone with Mr. Barton, who strove so hard to give words to his gratitude that the interview was really painful to the lads who



were unable to make what they deemed a fitting reply, or to give a different turn to the conversation.

It was a real relief to the boys when the cook appeared, having come to say to Mr. Barton that his wife wanted to see him, and when the happy father had hurriedly obeyed the summons, Paul asked again regarding the condition of the baby.

"I don't know very much about children," was the reply; "but I'd be willing to guarantee that the little one will pick up right fast now she's on board a decent ship. I reckon there's no question but that more than half the trouble was caused by seasickness, and it's pretty near certain the baby would have died if she'd been forced to stay aboard the tramp. I've made fresh coffee, and you boys better get your share before this captain of ours starts in on it. Zenas is a master hand at getting away with coffee when he puts his whole mind to the business."

Paul and Ned took advantage of the opportunity, making their way on tiptoe through the cabin to the cook's quarters, and when they went on deck once more Zenas was ringing the pantry bell vigorously, as token of his desire to be served with a liberal supply of the refreshing beverage.

"Now's the time when Mr. Sawtelle ought'er have one of his flyin' machines out here to give us a race," the temporary captain said with a grin as the boys entered the wheel-house. "Even if such things can be built so's they'll work 'cordin' to all the yarns he's told, I won't believe they could make any better time than our little *Nera* is showin' this blessed min-



ute. Ain't she just liftin' herself? Talk 'bout aeroplanes an' air-ships! I'd rather have this little beauty under my feet than a whole fleet of sich machines as he can build on Barren Island."

"Wait until you see what his craft will do," Paul suggested laughingly. "He telegraphed that it would be ready for launching by the time we got back, and possibly you'll soon come to believe that sailing through the air goes way ahead of water navigation."

"I'll be bald-headed when I do," was the decided reply, and then the conversation was cut short by the arrival of the cook with a pot of steaming coffee.

There is no good reason why any attempt should be made to repeat all that was said by the crew of the *Nera*, as she sped swiftly toward the port which Zenas believed it would be possible to make by dead reckoning. The weather was all that could have been desired for such a craft as the yacht, and, as the engineer had said, the pace was not slackened until she had much the same as arrived in port.

It might readily have been seen that Zenas was considerably disturbed in mind before they made land. He was running the little craft by guesswork, and knew only too well that there were many chances of her being wrecked through his ignorance of the true course.

Then came the moment, near midnight, when he shouted to Paul, who was asleep on the wheel-house locker:

"Turn out, lad, an' have a squint at Barren Island,



if so be you're pinin' for any sich sight! I may not know overly much 'bout navigation; but when it comes to makin' a guess at a course, it's hard to beat me."

"How do you know that is Barren Island?" Paul asked sleepily as he strained his eyes to make out in the gloom a dark mass, far away in the distance. "It doesn't look like anything more than a black cloud on the horizon."

"If this 'ere craft was headed straight for it, an' the screw kept turnin' as it's doin' now, you'd soon come to have a mighty good idee that it was more'n a cloud. How do I know that yonder is Barren Island? 'Cause I can see the shape of the land, an' half an hour from now I'm allowin' you'll be able to make out the hotel and your wireless contraption. Talk 'bout dead reckonin'! It comes pretty nigh beatin' reg'lar navigation, an' I've proved it. The engineer has been runnin' back an' forth all night askin' if I was certain of the course, an' predictin' that we'd pile the *Nera* on the rocks, till I told him plainly that there'd be trouble if he come 'round here agin till after we'd made port. The truth is, he said so much 'bout what might happen that he got me all heated up, an' one spell I almost began to believe we might be goin' wrong. What about gettin' the island by wireless?"

"Mr. Sawtelle wouldn't be awake at this hour of the night, therefore it would be useless to work the instrument. It will be time enough when we get into Seaview——"



Zenas started as if suddenly remembering some neglect of duty, and rang the motor-room bell vigorously.

"What's the matter now?" Paul asked in surprise.

"It won't do to make any bluff at runnin' inter Seaview in the night, for I'm needin' a sight of the landmarks to keep away from Higgins' shoal," Zenas said hurriedly, and then, getting a reply from the motor-room, he added through the telephone, "We're off Barren Island, an' you'd better reduce the speed, for I ain't anyways anxious to run inter port till after daylight."

"Sure you've made the island?" the engineer asked, and Master Cushing replied sharply:

"Look here, don't forget that I'm runnin' this 'ere yacht, an' while we're at sea you'll believe every blessed thing I tell you, or we'll have a heap of trouble."

Paul expected to hear some intemperate answer, for surely the engineer was well within his rights when he questioned the seamanship of an amateur who was running the yacht by guesswork; but none came, and a moment later it was possible to tell, from the motion of the little craft, that the speed had been reduced.

"I'm allowin' to get inter port jest 'bout daybreak, an' seein's there'll be nothin' for you to do 'twixt now an' then, s'posen you go below an' turn in, so's to be bright an' smilin' in the mornin'?"

"But someone must be here to spell you."

"I'll stay right at this 'ere wheel till we let go the



anchor in Barren Island harbor, an' there ain't a man aboard as can drive me away," Zenas replied hotly. "After doin' up the life-savin' work same's it has been done, I count on holdin' my job as captain till Mr. Sawtelle comes on deck."

Paul knew full well that it would be useless to make any attempt at arguing with Zenas, therefore he went below as had been suggested, and the next definite knowledge he had regarding the yacht's movements, was when the dropping of the anchor in Seaview harbor awakened him.

Hurriedly arousing Ned, Paul ran on deck to find Mr. Barton, and his wife, who held the baby in her arms, making ready to go on shore. The sun was just rising, and the engineer's assistants were lowering the tender as if it was highly important the passengers be sent off without delay.

"What has gone wrong?" Paul asked of Zenas in surprise.

"Nothin'. Mr. Barton wants to get ashore as soon as possible, an' I allowed we'd help him along the best we knew how."

"But I didn't intend to leave without speaking once more to you two lads who have done so much toward helping me out of my troubles," the man said quickly as he took Paul by the hand, and the latter, fearing lest he was to be overwhelmed with words of gratitude once more, asked:

"How is the baby?"

"She has been resting quietly since midnight, and I truly believe the dear one will be well as soon as



we are ashore," Mrs. Barton said as she turned aside the blanket wrappings to show a tiny pinched, wan face. "Some day my husband and I will try to——"

"Please don't say anything about that part of it," Paul interrupted nervously. "All hands of us are mighty glad we had a chance to help you along, and the satisfatcion of having accomplished what we set out to do is enough."

"That is it!" Zenas cried emphatically, and then, as if understanding that Paul desired to escape any demonstrations of gratitude, he shouted loudly, "Bear a hand, Mr. Barton; the boat is ready."

The passengers went over the rail just as Ned came on deck, and, once in the boat, were rowed swiftly to the shore, the crew of the *Nera* watching until they stepped on the dock, when Zenas said to Paul:

"That job is done, an' now I reckon we'd better get under way, eh?"

"I must let Mr. Sawtelle know that we're here."

"You can tell him, after we're under way, that we struck Seaview right side up an' are headin' for Barren Island."

"The orders were to telegraph from here, and that is what must be done. It may be he'll want us to bring over something, and we needn't be afraid of loitering a few minutes."

"Jest as you say," Zenas replied with an air of dissatisfaction; "but I don't want to loaf around this harbor very long, 'cause things have been goin' so smooth that it stands us in hand to get back to the island before they take a turn the other way."



Paul was not the only one who laughed at Zenas's superstitious fears, yet at the same time he set about calling the island at once, and, as was soon shown, all had good reason for congratulating themselves that the matter was not delayed until after leaving port.

Mr. Sawtelle answered the call so quickly that it was reasonable to believe he had been waiting in the telegraph-room, and when Paul explained that the Barton family had been sent ashore, with the baby in seemingly a fair way of recovery, the owner of the *Nera* telegraphed a long list of supplies which were needed on the island, adding in conclusion:

"Take plenty of time, and put everything aboard. There is no good reason why you should be in haste to get back, for everything is going smoothly here. At sunrise to-morrow, if the weather permits, I count on trying out the aeroplane."

"Is it finished?" Paul asked in surprise.

"All done. I am strengthening a part here, or tuning up there; but the machine is, as I believe, ready for a voyage, and you will be on hand to see the first flight."

"We'll be there to fish him out'er the water after he's been dropped in by that blessed contraption," Zenas said contemptuously as he read that which Paul had written. "The idea of his wantin' to take chances in the air when he owns sich a craft as this 'ere *Nera*, beats me!"

Paul did not believe it necessary to spend time discussing Mr. Sawtelle's scheme. There was no



slight amount of work to be done if the supplies were to be put on board the yacht, therefore he and Ned went on shore at once, Master Cushing ill-naturedly refusing to accompany them.

The shopkeepers of Seaview do not believe in making undue haste while waiting upon a customer, therefore the task set the boys was a long one. The news of what had been done was already spread about in the village, and no man would serve them until after they had related all the details of finding the *Glendower* and taking from her the Barton baby.

As a matter of course, this story-telling consumed very much time, and when the boys returned to the yacht to wait until their purchases, which were bulky, should be sent down in drays, Zenas was in a fine state of impatience.

"Why didn't you haul the yacht out on the dry dock, an' stay here the rest of the season?" he asked simply. "I s'pose now we'll hang 'round till sunset before Mansfield gets that wooden hoss of his harnessed, an' then there's no tellin' whether the beast will agree to pull a load."

"I know of no good reason why you should get so excited about it," Ned cried laughingly. "There's nothing to be done on the island, now that the aeroplane is finished, and you may as well loaf here as there."

"I don't allow it would make much difference to you if the yacht dropped to pieces," Zenas retorted angrily, and Ned asked in surprise:



"Do you think there is danger anything of the kind may happen?"

"I want to get back an' be reg'larly discharged as capt'in before this 'ere streak of luck breaks, as it's bound to do before long," Zenas literally roared. "I never saw things run smooth, but that there come a sharp turn before a feller got through pattin' himself on the head."

"Now don't be foolish, Cushing," the engineer cried. "We've finished our job in good shape, an' unless you contrive to run the *Nera* ashore when we enter Barren Island harbor, there's nothin' to be feared. I'll answer for it that the motor don't go wrong 'twixt here and there."

"It's all very well to say you'll do this or that; but there's no man livin' who can tell what'll happen, an' I know sich luck as ours is bound to break mighty soon."

"Ahoy on the yacht!" came in a trumpet note from the shore, and, looking up quickly, Master Cushing saw Captain Tobi standing on the pier waving his hand as if to say that a boat should be sent ashore for him.

"There, *now* what about the luck's breaking?" Zenas muttered savagely. "I never run across that old pirate but somethin' went wrong, an' we're in for it."

"Ahoy," Paul replied to the hail. "What can we do for you?"

"Seen anythin' of John Ed?" the old sailor shouted.

"We have been out to sea where there wasn't any



chance of coming across him," the lad replied with a laugh. "Heard from Mr. Sawtelle this morning, and he reports everything as being all right on the island, so I reckon we can count that he has given over trying to make trouble."

"Given over!" Captain Tobi roared. "That's somethin' he won't do till he's in his grave, an' I ain't certain but he can contrive to stir things up a bit even then! I don't care what Sawtelle may say, I'm tellin' you that he's hoverin' 'round that 'ere fox farm of your father's this very minute."

"How do you know?" Zenas shouted as if in anger.

"'Cause he was goin' that way yesterday, an' I'll answer for it he wasn't bound on startin' any Sunday school. Why don't you come ashore an' take me aboard?"

"Our tender wasn't built for sich heavy weight as you tote 'round," Master Cushing replied gruffly. "If you're wantin' to come out here, the best way is to get aboard one of them 'ere dories."

"You allers was an impudent dog, Zenas Cushing," the old man roared in a voice sufficiently strong to have been heard from one end of the village to the other, and then he turned as if in anger, rolling away in the direction of Mansfield's shop.

"Now he's goin' to tell Uncle Billy what he has dreamed 'bout John Ed Bingham, an' by the time the two of 'em get through talkin' the matter over, it'll be nightfall, with the stores yet on shore," Zenas grumbled, and Ned whispered to his comrade:



"Dont you think we should telegraph to Mr. Sawtelle what Captain Tobi said about John Ed?"

"I can't believe there is any real need of it; but since we've nothin' else to do, perhaps it will be as well, and then, if anything should go wrong, we won't be blamed for holding our tongues."

Then Paul and Ned went into the telegraph-room, and after working at the instrument nearly half an hour, succeeded in getting a reply from the island.

"Are you still at Seaview?" Mr. Sawtelle asked as if in surprise, and Paul was forced to explain why they were delayed, after which he repeated Captain Tobi's words, and the boys could fancy that the owner of the *Nera* was laughing in derision as he clicked off the words:

"The captain will continue to see the smuggler in every bush until he has received the amount due on the sale of his sloop. There is no sign of Bingham around here, and I will answer for it he can't get ashore without my knowledge."

"That settles it," Paul said as he switched off the receiver after getting "good-by" from the station on the island. "They are taking every precaution against visitors, and it isn't reasonable to suppose, no matter what Captain Tobi may say, that John Ed will venture his nose in the vicinity after having tried to scuttle the yacht. Such a piece of work is sufficient to warrant his arrest whenever he can be captured, and he won't run the risk of serving another term in prison."

"You can't make Zenas believe anything of the



kind," Ned replied carelessly. "He has made up his mind that what he calls 'our luck' is bound to turn mighty soon, and had proof of it when Captain Tobi hailed."

The boys were yet in the telegraph-room when Mr. Mansfield's heavily-laden dray appeared on the wharf, and Master Cushing summoned all hands to assist in taking the goods on board.

Two hours later the *Nera* was got under way while Captain Tobi stood on the pier alternately roaring commands to Zenas, which were not obeyed, and warning the entire crew to "have an eye out on John Ed," until Master Cushing muttered savagely, taking very good care, however, not to speak sufficiently loud to be heard by the subject of his remarks:

"If that old idjut don't shut his mouth I'll give him a good big piece of my mind. Anybody would think he believed no one but him ever saw a vessel, an' yet if I can't get this 'ere craft under way in better shape than he could, even with all his noise, I'll agree to go over the rail with an hundred-pound weight tied to my feet."

"Don't get nervous," Ned whispered, at the same time striving to choke back his mirth, for it was indeed comical to see the old captain striding to and fro on the pier while Zenas literally quivered with impatience and anger.

"It's all very well to say 'don't get nervous'; but how's a feller to help it while that old image stands there makin' a bloomin' fool of himself?"

It was well that the yacht got in motion quickly,



else the temporary captain might have had an attack of nervous prostration, and the last heard of the old sailor was his warning, repeated in tempest tones, to beware of John Ed Bingham.

"We'll have dead bad luck from this out," Zenas said in a tone of conviction when the *Nera* was so far from the shore that Captain Tobi's voice could no longer be heard. "It'll be a reg'lar blessin' if we make Barren Island harbor without a breakdown of some kind."

Paul and Ned, who saw nothing save that which was comical in these fears of Master Cushing's, literally roared with laughter when he spoke so decidedly of the unknown dangers the future had in store for them, and their mirth was not well calculated to soothe the angry man.

He took refuge, as it were, in a fit of the sulks, and from that moment until the *Nera* glided like a swan into the island cove, he spoke never a word, although the lads tried again and again to entice him into conversation.

"Well, we haven't broken down yet," Ned cried cheerily when Zenas gave the word for someone to stand by the anchor, and Master Cushing replied, still suffering from an attack of the sulks:

"There's an old sayin' that it ain't well to call a day fair till the sun has set, an' I reckon you'd better not begin to crow too soon."

"It's enough for me that we are back here safe and sound after having accomplished all for which we set out," Paul cried as he swung the accommodation



ladder over the rail, and made ready to go ashore, where could be seen the owners of the island coming down on the beach to greet them.

"You have done good work," Mr. Sawtelle said approvingly as the boys approached him, "and we mustn't forget that Zenas is entitled to a fair share of the credit, for it is no slight task to run two hundred miles or more out to sea, and make the home port readily."

Mr. Simpson clasped his son's hand, and Paul could read in his father's eyes a certain joy and satisfaction because the lad had contributed his share toward the saving of the baby.

Then it was that Ned laughingly told of Zenas's forebodings, and his anger against Captain Tobi, whereupon Mr. Sawtelle said carelessly:

"Those two and the Downs family will never get over their fears as to what the old smuggler may be able to do against them. After working his last bit of mischief, he won't be so foolish as to pay another visit to this island while we are on it."

"And the aeroplane is finished?" Paul cried, turning from his father to face the owner of the *Nera*.

"Yes, lad, to my mind it has been completed. I have been over every stay and bar carefully, and can find nothing which may be improved upon."

"I suppose we may go into the tent and look at her?" Ned said questioningly, and Mr. Sawtelle replied with a smile:

"Better wait until morning, when you can see it in motion. We have closed the tent, leaving Sam



Downs outside as guard to prevent anyone from entering. Of course there's no reason why you shouldn't look at the craft; but I want to give you a surprise in the morning."

"And you really intend to go up in it?" Ned asked.

"Certainly, my lad. I've worked such craft, and have no question as to my ability to handle her. However, to guard against possible accidents, we'll send you lads off-shore in the Hampton boat, while Zenas handles the *Nera*, and then, in case I should have a fall, one or the other of you will be on hand to give me a lift."

Then Mr. Sawtelle proposed that they go on board the yacht, he professing to be eager for a meal prepared by the *Nera's* cook, and the boys could do no less than follow him, although they were eager to see the finished aeroplane.

Zenas did not recover from his fit of the sulks until after both the owners of the island had congratulated him on the work just performed, and then he "thawed out" as Paul expressed it, very slowly.

It was only natural he should refer to Captain Tobi's warning, as had the boys; but Mr. Sawtelle was so positive no harm could be done by John Ed, that he was forced to seemingly dismiss the matter from his mind.

That evening the cook prepared a veritable feast in celebration of what had been done in behalf of the Barton family, and during the meal Mr. Sawtelle was as merry as any boy, predicting wonderful things when he had his fleet of aeroplanes built, with



everyone present instructed in the art of sailing them.

It is impossible to say whether Zenas gave over fearing that their "luck" would turn in the near future, for he did not mention the subject again that evening, and appeared to be in a very jolly mood when he retired to get the sleep which was so sadly needed.

Perhaps no one, with the exception of the *Nera's* owner, was more excited over the coming trial of the aeroplane than Paul. He could not but believe all Mr. Sawtelle had told relative to airships which might be sailed as are vessels on the water, and now that this particular craft was ready for the initial flight—or failure—he was able to think of nothing else.

Until a very late hour he discussed the matter with Ned, when the latter fell asleep, and then he, too, wandered off into Dreamland, to be awakened shortly after sunrise by the cheery cry from Mr. Sawtelle:

"All hands on deck! Breakfast is served, and must be eaten hurriedly. This is ideal weather for air sailing, and we cannot afford to loiter until a breeze springs up."

There is little need to say that this command was obeyed without loss of time, and during the meal the *Nera's* owner said to the boys:

"You two lads may go up to the tent with me to see the aeroplane as she hangs there, and then you are to return and get the Hampton boat under way. I shall sail due west, and you are to run in that direction, following me as nearly as you can. Zenas will do the same with this yacht. I am not anticipating



any accident; but it is as well to guard against any possibility."

Master Cushing was eager to accompany the boys when they went on shore to look at the wonderful craft which was intended, as Mr. Downs had said, to "chase crows," and every other member of the *Nera's* crew had the same curiosity, therefore it was a reasonably large party which went on shore with the aeroplane builder.

Mr. Sawtelle led the way, explaining as they walked how he proposed to rise in the air before beginning the flight, and had not come to an end of the details when they arrived at the tent.

"Where is Sam?" Paul asked as he failed to see anyone on guard, and Mr. Sawtelle replied carelessly:

"It was really for the purpose of preventing his own family from blundering around inside that I had him remain on watch. He was given permission to go to bed at midnight, and from that time Daniel and his son Ernest were to patrol the shore. You can see," he added with a smile, "that I did not neglect any precautions, even though having no fears that mischief could be done. Now for the aeroplane," and the gentleman flung open the front of the tent with an air of triumph, only to give vent to a loud exclamation of mingled anger and dismay.

The machine which he had put together with so much care, was now no more than a pile of kindling wood. Every brace and bar had been splintered, and the covering of the main surfaces were cut and torn in a manner which showed that considerable time must have been spent in the work of destruction.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE SEARCH

WHILE one might have counted ten no one spoke, and then it was Zenas who broke the painful silence, as he cried in a voice hoarse with rage:

“So this is the way you take every precaution, is it?” and he turned upon Mr. Sawtelle as if charging him with having done the mischief. “You looked out mighty sharp so’s nobody could fool ’round with the flyin’ machine, an’ you was dead certain John Ed Bingham wouldn’t dare come on this ’ere island while you was here, eh?”

“It must have been the smuggler who did the mischief,” the owner of the *Nera* muttered, giving no heed to Zenas or his angry words.

“Must have been? Of course it was!” Master Cushing cried, his rage seeming to increase each instant. “Who else would spend so much time jest for the sake of payin’ off a grudge? Look at them ’ere braces that we worked over so long in order to have ’em the right thickness an’ strength! Don’t you allow it took a man quite a spell to break every one? An’ what was your gang of watchers doin’ while John Ed was at work?”

It was as if this question aroused Paul’s father from the stupefaction which had come over him on first viewing the scene of destruction, and he cried sharply:

“Where is Daniel Downs?”



"I'm hopin' I'll allers be as near when you're wantin' me," came in cheery tones from the rear of the "hotel," and Mr. Downs stepped out into view. "Goin' to fly this mornin', sir?"

"Who was on watch last night, Daniel?" Mr. Simpson asked sharply, and the old farmer replied with the air of one who expects to be praised for having done his full duty:

"I was, sir—that is to say, me an' Ernest toddled 'round the island after Sam went to bed 'cordin' to what Mr. Sawtelle told him might be done."

"How often were you in the immediate vicinity of this tent?"

"Meanin' did I come 'round this way, sir?"

"Of course that is what I mean!" was the reply spoken so emphatically as to sound angry.

"Well, I couldn't say for sartin, sir, seein's how I didn't try to keep count; but me an' Ernest met here now an' then all night long——"

"Were you here twice between midnight and day-break?"

"More'n that, sir. We must have been nigh 'round here half a dozen times."

"And you neither saw nor heard anything to arouse suspicions?" Mr. Simpson continued sharply, and by this time the worthy Mr. Downs began to have an inkling that something had gone wrong.

"Things went along like clock-work, so to say. We didn't hear the least little thing out'er the way," and as he spoke Mr. Downs advanced until it was possible for him to have a view of the interior of the



work-tent, when he staggered back as if someone had dealt him a severe blow.

“Wa’al, I’ll be jiggered if John Ed ain’t been here after all! How did the sneakin’ creeter get ashore?”

“How did he succeed in doing all this mischief without being overheard by you or your son, if both of you were on watch?” Mr. Sawtelle cried. “When those braces were broken considerable noise must have been made, for the splintering of wood is what can’t well be muffled.”

After his first exclamation it was as if Daniel Downs had lost the power of speech, and he stood staring stupidly first at the wreck and then at his employer.

Zenas was the only one who ventured inside the tent, and he was turning over this bit of splintered wood or that fragment of torn covering, as if expecting to find something which would give answer to Mr. Downs’s question.

The sound of voices had brought Ernest and Sam out of the “hotel,” and the evidence of the mischief done seemed to affect them even more forcibly than it had their father. Both lads acted as if suddenly grown faint, and Paul, who was watching them intently, was at a loss to decide whether this was proof of innocence or token of guilt. He believed he knew that the lads, if having come suddenly upon the old smuggler when none others were around, would be so frightened as to obey implicitly whatever commands he might give, as had already been shown, and it was by no means impossible that they had



taken some part in the mischief, because of Bingham's threats.

Mr. Sawtelle questioned the boys as he had their father; but both were so terrified as to be unable to make intelligent replies. They looked imploringly from time to time toward Mr. Downs, on being asked how often Ernest came in the vicinity of the work-tent, or when Sam went to bed, and answered at random, as if not really knowing what they said.

"We shall gain nothing by questioning," Mr. Simpson suddenly cried when his partner had demanded for at least the fourth time a coherent account of how the boys had spent the night. "It appears, if we can put any faith in what they say, that Sam remained inside this tent until midnight, up to which time he had seen nothing to arouse suspicions. If that be true, then it is certain the mischief-maker had less than four hours in which to do his dastardly work and get away, even though he was not interrupted by Daniel and Ernest——"

"We were 'round this way no less than four times, an' I'll take my solemn 'davy that there wasn't anythin' the bigness of a mouse stirrin' while I stood near here," Mr. Downs interrupted.

"We must believe it was Bingham who did this thing," Mr. Simpson continued, "and in such case he can hardly have had time to get clear away from the island. The watchman on the yacht would have seen him put to sea, unless there's a chance for him to launch a boat on the easterly side——"



Again Mr. Downs interrupted the speaker, and this time it was to say emphatically:

“Surely you ought’er know, Mr. Simpson, that no livin’ man could get away from the east shore, unless he had someone pullin’ back an’ forth beyond the line of surf waitin’ for him, an’ even then it would be a case of swimmin’ out to the craft, which is a mighty ticklish job.”

“I was on watch from two o’clock till four this morning, sir, and am ready to swear that no one put to sea from the island during that time, except they set off from such portion of the east coast as is hidden by the trees from view of anyone on the yacht,” a member of the *Nera’s* crew said, as if suddenly remembering that it stood him in hand to give some evidence of having been on the alert.

“It appears to me,” Mr. Simpson continued, showing no sign of impatience because of these interruptions, “that the work must have occupied at least two hours, providing the scoundrel worked diligently, and from what can be judged by these evidences, he set about it in a methodical manner with a view of preventing us from using any of this material in making another aeroplane.”

“By which supposition you infer—what?” Mr. Sawtelle demanded irritably.

“That the man must now be on the island,” was the emphatic reply. “It is barely possible there is a hiding-place of which even Daniel Downs and his sons are ignorant, where a person might lay concealed a number of days. We can do no good by



chewing the matter over here; but there is a chance of coming upon the scoundrel if a systematic search be begun without delay."

"Employ every man and boy," the owner of the *Nera* cried loudly. "Take charge of the work, Simpson, and see that it be done in the most thorough manner possible regardless of the time occupied. I stand ready to obey orders."

At this point Zenas came out from the further end of the tent, and said with the air of one who has gained valuable information:

"Whoever did the work crept under the canvas as if havin' come from the easterly shore. You can see where he cut a slit in the canvas so's to find out if anybody was inside, which kind'er looks as if he allowed that we might have had a man on watch——"

"As we would have done if I had not been next door to an idiot!" Mr. Sawtelle cried emphatically; but Zenas gave no heed to the interruption, save to wait until his employer had ceased speaking, when he continued:

"He tore that 'ere blanket we used in steamin' the braces, inter two pieces. I reckon it was done so's he could wrap the wood before breakin' it, an' by sich means prevent very much of a noise. One or two of the pieces have on 'em marks of a saw, showin' it was hard work to splinter the wood with his hands. The weather has been so dry lately that I don't allow we could make any fist at trailin' the villain; but if so be there's a soft place 'twixt here an' that little horse-shoe cove on the east shore, I'd bet dollars agin



the hole in a doughnut that we could find footprints on it, an' they wouldn't have been made by any of us."

"I am beginning to think, Zenas, that it would be a wise plan to let you take charge of the searching party," Mr. Simpson said after he had examined critically all the evidences of the mischief-maker described by Master Cushing. "I wish it might be possible for you to decide at what hour the fellow ceased work."

"If it be true that Sam didn't turn in till midnight, an' I've got no reason to doubt what little he seems able to tell, then you can count it as a fact that the villain didn't leave this 'ere tent till after day had begun to break," Zenas replied confidently.

"How would you set about the search?" Mr. Sawtelle asked, as if impatient because the conversation was prolonged.

"I ain't got any idees as to that, sir, an' I reckon you or Mr. Simpson are the ones to look after the matter; but I'd like to be counted out of the job."

"Why?"

"'Cause I want to put in my time 'round that 'ere little cove I was tellin' 'bout. The tide has been ebbin' since two o'clock, an' if he *did* leave the east shore of the island, either by swimmin' or any other way, it would be from there, consequently the prints of his feet must be seen on the wet sand."

"Do whatever you please, Zenas. The remainder of the party will make careful search of every inch of land, beginning at Swallow-tailed Cove," Mr.



Simpson said in a tone of one who has fully decided upon some course of action, and then he gave explicit directions to each as to how the work must be done.

Master Cushing set off at once by himself, glancing over his shoulder now and then as if afraid of being followed, and Ned whispered to Paul:

“If anything of importance is learned to-day, it will be by Zenas. He has either seen something that he did not tell your father and Mr. Sawtelle, or else has made a mighty good guess.”

“His wanting to go by himself is because he hopes to find some clue alone, and thus make it appear that he is a better hand at such work than all the rest of us put together,” Paul replied carelessly, for the belief was firm in his mind that whoever had done the mischief was already a long distance from the island.

The searchers under direction of Mr. Simpson did their work thoroughly but slowly. Advancing in a line which stretched from one side of the island to the other, they covered nearly every square yard of land, examining carefully every clump of bushes or pile of rocks which might afford a hiding-place to a cat, without seeing anything of that for which they sought.

The task required much time because the line of searchers was forced to move slowly in order to keep the formation, and the day had nearly been spent when the party arrived at the southerly end of the island.

Zenas had been seen more than once loitering



around the tiny cove of horse-shoe shape; but he gave no heed to the others, and even refused to answer Paul's hail when the lad saw him a short distance away.

The work had not been interrupted when Mrs. Downs sounded the horn from the "hotel" as token that supper was served, and it is safe to say that every member of the searching party felt weary as well as hungry when his labors came to an end at the rocky shore against which the surf beat with a noise like that of distant thunder.

Mr. Downs and his sons had, as a matter of course, been among the searchers, and Paul, who observed them closely from time to time because of certain suspicions which had come unbidden into his mind, decided that they were thoroughly alarmed by the probable evidence that John Ed Bingham had been in the vicinity.

"Sam may not have remained in the work-tent later than ten o'clock, while it is possible that Mr. Downs and Ernest spent more time in the kitchen than they did outside; but I can't believe they know other concerning the destruction of the aeroplane, than does Mr. Sawtelle," the lad said to himself when the little party came to a halt because it was impossible to go any farther.

"From now until sunset you may dispose of your time as best pleases you," the owner of the *Nera* said after he had remained gazing out over the restless waters a full minute. "After that time watch will



be set, and the man or boy who shirks his duty in the slightest degree will be dealt with by me in a manner that won't be agreeable."

Those last words sounded much like a threat, and Paul looked searchingly once more at the Downs family to see how they received it.

So far as might be guessed from Daniel Downs's stolid face, the announcement pleased him, while the two boys looked frightened, rather than otherwise, as if asking themselves whether it would be possible for them to do full duty during one entire night.

Zenas had not shown himself when the searchers walked slowly toward the cove or the "hotel." Paul and Ned kept close to the owners of the island in order to hear what they might have to say, for it seemed certain that plans for the future would be discussed, and both lads were eager to learn if the destruction of the aeroplane would affect Mr. Sawtelle's intent to build an air craft.

They were not kept long in suspense as to what was to be done, for when the two men were comparatively alone, save for the companionship of the boys, Mr. Sawtelle said in a decided tone:

"If you and I, with half a dozen others to aid, can't prevent Bingham from paying off old scores, we deserve to fail in anything we undertake. I'm free to admit that I am the one who should be blamed for last night's work. I was so positive the smuggler would not dare interfere with us, that the aeroplane was much the same as left unguarded, for the Downs family are but little better than children."



"I shared your belief," Mr. Simpson interrupted as if to soothe his partner; "and even now am in doubt as to whether this last mischief can be laid at John Ed's door."

"You suspect the Downs family?" and Mr. Sawtelle wheeled sharply to face his partner.

"It is impossible to suspect anyone, and yet there are the evidences of foul play. I fail to understand why Daniel Downs or his sons should desire to work mischief, and I question if they would have dared do anything of the kind, however favorable the opportunity which presented itself——"

"You can answer for Zenas and these two boys, even as I do for the men aboard the *Nera*. Who, then, could have done the foul work?"

"I can't say," and Mr. Simpson spoke as if in direst perplexity; "yet I won't believe that Bingham has been on this island during the past forty-eight hours. It is worse than useless to speculate upon what has been done. The question is, what course shall be pursued in the future?"

"I have already settled that matter to my satisfaction," Mr. Sawtelle replied firmly. "We are to build an aeroplane, and make many voyages in her before the summer comes to a close. While working to repair the mischief, we will keep strict watch night and day, even though it entails the hiring of more men."

"What about material?" Mr. Simpson asked. "It will require considerable time to gather such as you'll need, for but little can be found in Seaview."

"It is my intention to sail for the city at daybreak



to-morrow, and when I return we shall be in condition to go forward with the work."

Having thus announced his decision Mr. Sawtelle quickened his pace, as if no longer caring to continue the conversation, and, having learned that which they desired to know, Paul and Ned allowed themselves to be distanced by the owners of the island.

The two lads were walking slowly, each deep in thought, when Zenas overtook them, he having evidently come from the cove where he had last been seen, and as he approached Paul asked laughingly:

"Well, have you settled the matter, Zenas?"

"I've figured things out in a way to suit me; but haven't finished tryin' to make a whole story of it yet."

"Did you find any footprints on the shore?" Ned asked.

"None of any account. My man didn't leave in a boat, an' I'm allowin' he's here this blessed minute, chucklin' to himself 'cause we're so dumb as not to smoke him out."

The boys came to a full halt, gazing in surprise and bewilderment at Master Cushing, who replied, as if reading the question in their eyes:

"Yes, I'm allowin' it was John Ed who did the job last night."

"Has it taken you all day to arrive at such a wise conclusion?" Paul asked in a tone of irony, and deeply disappointed because Zenas had nothing of real importance to impart.



"I'm allowin' that somethin' more'n guesswork was needed to make certain even of that much," Master Cushing replied calmly, in nowise disturbed by Paul's tone. "First off I got a sneakin' idee that perhaps the Downs family had been hired to do the job, seein's how it didn't seem possible John Ed would dare make a try at landin' on the island while there were so many on watch."

"But he would have had to come in order to hire the Downs crowd, and it's certain there is no other person who could have any interest in destroying the aeroplane, therefore I can't see how you might have believed they had been hired," Ned cried, thinking Master Cushing was striving to display a certain amount of detective ability.

"Old Daniel has been on watch the last half of each night, an' John Ed could have pulled across, had a talk with him, an' gone back without bein' seen by any of our crowd. That was the way I figgered it at first; but now I've changed my mind."

"And you have decided that Bingham did the work last night?" Paul asked.

"Aye, that's what I have."

"How do you reckon he could have spent so much time, and rowed out of sight before daylight?"

"I don't allow he left the island. The villain could work till day began to dawn, an' then sneak off before anyone was astir."

"But he isn't on the island, therefore it seems as if you had wasted the day working up an impossible



theory," and Paul was inclined to be angry because Zenas had come with such a proposition after it had been proven an impossibility.

"How do you know he ain't on this island?" Master Cushing asked sharply, and Paul replied irritably:

"How do I know? Haven't we just finished searching, after having been over every square yard of land and rock? If a cat had been hidden here she couldn't have escaped us."

"And I'm tellin' you that John Ed is on Barren Island this blessed minute!"

"That's a foolish guess!" Ned cried, and Zenas retorted:

"It ain't more'n half as foolish as some other things that have been done an' said this day. I'm willin' to admit I'm guessin' part of what I say 'bout that old villain; but I've got good grounds to work on, an' don't allow that settin' a crowd walkin' across the island, pokin' their noses inter every bush an' under every rock, is makin' certain John Ed can't be here. Did Mr. Sawtelle allow that he'd be fool enough to make a try at hidin' where even such a dumb brute as Sam Downs could ferret him out?"

"If there were any hiding-places on this island such as you've been dreaming about, some of us must know of them," Paul cried. "Do you suppose Daniel Downs, who has lived here ten years or more, wouldn't know if a man could crawl so far out of sight that a party of searchers, spending nearly a whole day in the work, couldn't come upon him?"

"Wa'al, now you're gettin' down somewhere to my



way of thinkin', lad," Zenas replied in a tone of satisfaction, and much to the mystification of the boys. "I've agreed that Daniel didn't have a hand in last night's work; but you haven't heard me say he mightn't have known what was goin' on. S'posen there *is* a hidin'-place here sich as you say I've dreamed about, an' Daniel knows where it is? Then s'posen agin that John Ed comes here an' tells Downs he's got to be hid or he'll make trouble? It don't take much in the way of threats to scare the old man, an' I'm allowin' he'd come mighty nigh dancin' 'cordin' to the way Bingham whistled."

The two boys gazed at each other in amazement. Zenas had "guessed" at a very plausible possibility, and the surprising part of it was that no one save Master Cushing had hit upon this solution to the mystery.

It had a different appearance, however, when they began to examine closely into every detail, and the strongest argument against it was, a hiding-place so thoroughly well concealed that the exhaustive search of the day had failed to reveal it.

"It isn't a reasonable supposition," Paul exclaimed after a long time of thought. "If this island was covered with a regular forest, then I'd say it was possible a man might be hidden here a day or two; but how could he keep out of sight on these bare rocks? The grove is so small that we know beyond the shadow of a doubt he can't be concealed there."

"I've got an idee that I'll be able to answer that question 'twixt now an' the time I'm called on to



help build another crow-chaser, 'cause it'll take Mr. Sawtelle quite a spell to get what lumber an' sich-like truck as will be needed."

Ned made haste to explain what the owner of the *Nera* intended to do, and Zenas exclaimed in a tone of satisfaction:

"That suits me way down to the ground! Now if I can run through the rest of my plan without lettin' all hands know what I'm tryin' to do, we'll be gettin' mighty close to John Ed's heels."

"There is no use in trying to convince you that you've got the silliest kind of a bee in your bonnet," Paul said laughingly, all the irritation having vanished; "but I'd like to know what may be the 'rest of the plan'?"

"I'm wantin' to run out in the Hampton boat when the tide is about half-ebb, an' cruise 'round till I get tired."

"I don't have any desire to spend my time in such a foolish manner."

"That's jest the idee, lad!" Zenas cried as if well pleased. "I want to go alone, an' it won't be much of a job to look after the motor an' steer at the same time. There ain't a fisherman runs out of Seaview who can't do sich a trick."

"Go alone?" Ned repeated. "Have you got it into your head that one of us might prevent you from finding Bingham?"

"Wa'al," Zenas replied with a grimace, "seein's how you don't put any faith in my guessin', there'd be a chance for a lot of fool talk, an' I ain't in the mood



for anythin' of the kind. What about my takin' the boat?"

"There is no reason why you shouldn't; but it strikes me you had better explain to father that you want to take a cruise all by your lonesome, otherwise he may have different plans so far as you are concerned."

"Look here, Paul, I'm dependin' on your lendin' me a hand even if you don't put any faith in my guessin'. I don't want to talk to your father, 'cause he'd need to know too blamed much, an' you must explain after I've started."

"Making a wonderful mystery out of nothing, aren't you? Well, when you put out from the cove I'll tell father that you've gone to catch John Ed Bingham, and surely that should satisfy both him and Mr. Sawtelle."

"All I'm wantin' you to say is that I counted on runnin' 'round the island, an' went alone on account of your bein' tired out with trampin'. That ain't a very big favor to ask, an' if I'm makin' a bloomin' fool of myself there can't be much harm done."

"How long do you count on being away?"

"Till the tide is at half-flood."

"Now see here, Zenas, what has John Ed's being here got to do with the tide?" and Paul spoke impatiently, whereupon Master Cushing replied with a smile:

"That's all of a piece with my guessin', an' since it's only a finicky idee, there's no need of tryin' to explain it. I know for a fact that your father would



make all kinds of fun of me if I told him, an' I don't count on takin' sich chances."

"What's the need of making so much talk about Zenas's folly, for that is what it amounts to when it's boiled down?" Ned asked impatiently. "I haven't eaten anything since sunrise, and had rather have an interview with the *Nera's* cook than stand here listening to wild schemes. Promise what he asks, Paul, and then you and I will have done with his crazy ideas."

"Very well," Paul said laughingly. "I agree to repeat to father that which you have told me; but my advice is, to come back before the watches are set for the night, otherwise you may have to make explanations to Mr. Sawtelle such as won't fit in with your mysterious plans."

"I'll attend to that part of it," Zenas cried cheerily, and then he hurried away as if every moment was precious, going, much to the surprise of the boys, across the island in the direction of that tiny horse-shoe-shaped cove on the eastern shore, instead of where food might be found.

"He puts big faith in his guesswork, if he's willing to keep at the scheme without first getting something to eat," Ned said as if speaking to himself. "He must be as hungry as I am, and yet is turning his back on such a dinner as the cook of the *Nera* has most likely kept warm for us since noon."

"There's no sense in our bothering over his crazy plans," Paul replied sharply. "The idea of claiming that John Ed Bingham has remained securely hidden



on this island while all hands of us searched every inch of it, is the wildest kind of nonsense, and if he gets good and hungry it may bring him to his senses."

Then Paul led the way to the harbor, Ned following at his heels, neither of the lads inclined for further conversation, and when they were on board the *Nera* Mr. Simpson asked:

"Didn't I see you with Zenas a few moments ago?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why didn't he come aboard?"

"He thinks he has business on the east shore, so went back without waiting for anything to eat. He's going to take a cruise in the Hampton boat before sunset, and it may be he is getting ready for it."

It was only reasonable that the owners of the island should be curious regarding Zenas's proposed movements; but the boys made no explanation other than Master Cushing himself had requested should be given, and the two men apparently dismissed the matter from their minds, as they discussed what ought to be done in the city by Mr. Sawtelle.

"I am intending to get under way as soon as day breaks, therefore you and the boys will be forced to return to the old quarters to-night, since it would be useless to turn out so early in the morning," Mr. Sawtelle said to his partner when the discussion was brought to a close, and Paul and Ned, having appeased their hunger, went on shore in order to get as much sleep as might be possible before doing their share of guarding the island during the hours of darkness.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE HIDING-PLACE

IT had been in the minds of Paul and Ned that Zenas would set off in the Hampton boat at once, therefore it was they expected to see him getting under way when they went on shore from the *Nera*; but, much to their surprise, he was nowhere in sight, while the craft he had asked permission to cruise in lay at anchor in her customary mooring-place.

"It must be that he has abandoned his plan," Paul said after looking in vain for Master Cushing. "Most likely he has come to understand that the crazy idea he had in mind would only mean a waste of time and strength, to say nothing of giving us a chance to laugh at him. I am expecting to find him in bed when we get to the quarters."

"He'll take good care to get something to eat before turning in," Ned added confidently, and because of this last suggestion the boys were not particularly surprised at failing to find him at the "hotel."

Sam Downs was the only person to be seen when they entered the building, and one might have fancied he had been waiting to speak with them, for on the instant he sprang up eagerly as if to ask some question; but stepped back suddenly as if disappointed.

"What's the matter, Sam?" Paul asked in a friendly tone.

"Nothin'," was the glum reply. "I kind'er wanted to see Zenas, an' thought he might be with you. What



made you come up here to-night instead of stoppin' aboard the *Nera*?"

"We're counting on sleeping here for a change," Paul replied, refraining from speaking of Mr. Sawtelle's intended voyage, although why it should be kept a secret he could not have said.

"Goin' to hunt for John Ed any longer?" Master Downs asked as if for the sake of saying something, rather than to gain information.

"Don't you think we have searched long enough?" Ned asked, and Sam muttered something that could not be understood, as he started toward the door.

"Why don't you wait till Zenas comes?"

"Do you know when he'll be here?"

"No, we don't," Paul replied laughingly. "He seems to have something on his mind that he intends to keep secret. Why did you want to see him?"

"For nothin' much," Master Downs muttered; and then, as if thinking perhaps the boys might give him the desired information, he asked with more of eagerness in his tone, as Paul fancied, than the matter warranted, "Do you know what he's tryin' to do over on the easterly side of the island?"

"Is he there?" Paul asked much as if he was not aware of Master Cushing's whereabouts.

"Of course he is—been there mighty nigh all day, nosin' 'round like he counted to find John Ed under the rocks."

"Doesn't your father know what Zenas is about?"

"No, an' that's what's fussin' him," Sam replied earnestly. "It looks as if he'd struck some kind of



a silly idee, else he'd stayed with the rest of us when we was huntin' over the island."

There was no question in the mind of Paul but that Mr. Downs had sent his son to quiz Zenas, and this fact seemed sufficient to prove that the old man was disturbed because of what Master Cushing was doing. If such was the case, and it surely seemed a reasonable proposition, why should Daniel Downs be worried because the search for Bingham might possibly be conducted on lines with which he was unacquainted?

These thoughts flashed across Paul's mind even while Sam was speaking, and on the instant he began to have some little faith that Zenas was not quite the simple his movements would have seemed to indicate, while at the same time doubts as to Daniel Downs's strict honesty came with no little force. He could not forget the double part played by the old man the summer previous, and such knowledge served to strengthen his newly aroused suspicions.

"Then your father doesn't like to have Zenas hanging around on the east shore?" he said questioningly, and Sam replied hesitatingly, as if beginning to realize that it would have been better had he held his peace:

"I don't reckon he cares so very much; but all hands of us would kind'er like to know what Zenas counts on doin' over there all by his lonesome."

"You'll have to ask him that question," Ned said laughingly, wondering why it was that Paul had suddenly grown grave, and Sam replied as he hurried out of the building:



"I don't reckon it makes any great difference; but father allowed that he'd like to know, so I came over to see what Zenas had to say."

When Sam had disappeared behind the "hotel," to make report to his father, most likely, Ned asked curiously:

"What did he say that made you turn glum so suddenly?"

"It was the whole talk that set me to asking myself why Daniel Downs should be worried because Zenas loitered around the eastern shore. And again, since he was 'fussed,' as Sam said, would it not be because he was afraid Bingham might be found—meaning that the smuggler is still hiding on the island?"

"Jiminy!" Ned exclaimed. "You are coming mighty near saying that Daniel Downs is in collusion with John Ed!"

"If he isn't, and if he didn't have fears that the smuggler would be found, why should he care where Zenas spent his time? The old man wasn't distressed when all hands of us swept down the length of the island, examining every possible hiding-place; but he sends Sam to ask questions as soon as Cushing loiters near Horse-shoe Cove."

"Crickey! It begins to look as if Zenas wasn't quite as crazy as we allowed!" Ned exclaimed. "But I don't have the glimmer of an idea as to what part that little cove plays in the business, for it is certain even a rabbit couldn't find a hiding-place anywhere near there."

"It's a puzzle to me; but we can count it as certain



that Zenas is on a trail of some kind, and intends following it to the end. Let's tell him about Sam's visit," and Paul led the way hurriedly to the door; but he halted very suddenly on gaining the open air, for then it was possible to see the Hampton boat standing out of the harbor at a swift pace, a single figure standing at the helm.

"We shall have to wait till he gets back," Paul said in a tone of disappointment, and Ned added hopefully:

"Perhaps it is just as well. It might mix him up to know that Daniel Downs was taking a hand in the game, or trying to do so."

"That wouldn't trouble him a little bit, for it's hard work to throw Zenas off a scent once he has found it; but the knowledge that Mr. Downs is worried might help out in picking up a clue."

Since it was no longer possible to have speech with Zenas until after he returned from the lonely cruise, and because there was nothing to be done toward solving the mystery, Ned proposed that they go to bed in order to bottle up the needed sleep before the time when they must do their share of standing guard.

To this Paul agreed; but they might as well have remained outside, for both were excited by that which had apparently been discovered, and to close their eyes in slumber was well-nigh impossible.

Again and again they asked, without hope of receiving an answer, why Mr. Downs should be agitated because Zenas loitered in the vicinity of the tiny cove on the eastern shore. In their minds they went over



that short stretch of beach, only to decide that there was no available hiding-place for a man in that vicinity, and then, puzzled to the verge of bewilderment, the boys speculated upon the agitation of Daniel Downs, as shown by Sam's visit, wondering if he would dare, after all that had happened during the previous summer, to obey the commands of John Ed Bingham when it would be treachery to those who employed him.

They were yet awake, speculating vainly, when one of the men from the *Nera* came to summon them to their share of guard duty, and on emerging from the building Mr. Sawtelle was found awaiting their coming.

"Mr. Simpson and I will keep watch on the westerly side," he said as the boys approached. "You are to patrol the eastern shore, but keeping especial guard over Swallow-tailed Cove. There is no fear anyone will attempt to land on the southern point while the surf is running so high, therefore you need not give much attention to that portion of the island."

"How long are we to stay on duty?" Ned asked.

"Until someone comes to relieve you," was the curt reply, and the owner of the *Nera* walked swiftly away as if averse to conversation.

The boys began their portion of the night's work by going to the very extremity of Swallow-tailed Cove, and skirting the shore toward the eastward until arriving at the opposite side of the island, when they set off along the coast in a southerly direction.

There were no clouds in the sky, and, after their



eyes had become accustomed to the gloom, it was possible to distinguish surrounding objects with reasonable distinctness, therefore it seemed to them an impossibility that any moving thing could escape their notice.

Not until having arrived in the vicinity of the horse-shoe-shaped cove did the boys see anything to attract attention, and then both halted suddenly to point seaward as an exclamation of surprise involuntarily escaped their lips.

There, not more than fifty yards from the shore, lay the Hampton boat rocking at moorings on the gentle surf, but nothing could be seen of the man who had gone out in her for a lonely cruise, until two or three minutes had elapsed, the lads meanwhile standing silent and motionless in astonishment because of what seemed much like the mysterious disappearance of Zenas.

Then, suddenly, as if he had popped up out of the very rocks at their feet, Master Cushing appeared, coming cautiously toward them with a gesture which prevented either of the boys from speaking.

Not until he stood close beside them did he say in a whisper, as if fancying there might be others in the vicinity who would overhear if he raised his voice:

“Stay right where you are, an’ don’t move about any, till I carry the Hampton boat ’round to the harbor.”

“How did you get ashore?” Paul asked in the same cautious tone.

“I took Daniel’s old dory with me, countin’ that



I might want to make a landin'. Don't speak above a whisper while I'm gone; keep mighty sharp watch, an' be careful not to move 'round any, for on a calm night like this the sound of your feet in the sand carries far."

"But what——"

"I can't stop to talk now; everythin' can be chewed over after the tide rises a bit more. It's hardly half-flood now."

Then it was that Master Cushing stole softly away, and in haste, to prevent further questioning, moving so cautiously that unless the boys had seen him they would not have known he was in the neighborhood.

It was possible to distinguish his figure in the gloom as he pushed off in the old dory, which had been hidden in a cleft of the rocks where the surf could have no effect on her, and, once having gained the Hampton boat and raised the anchor, instead of starting the motor, he paddled her along the coast northward.

It can readily be understood that these mysterious movements caused the boys greatest surprise and no little anxiety. It really seemed as if Master Cushing had taken leave of his senses, otherwise why should he behave in such a manner, as if there were others nearby who might have warning of his presence, when, as a matter of fact, both the lads knew—or believed they did, that no living thing, save themselves, was on that side of the island.

It was slow work paddling the Hampton boat with a single oar; yet Zenas continued what appeared much like senseless labor until he had come to the easterly



point of Swallow-tailed Cove, and then, by the more rapid movements of the craft, the lads understood that the motor had been started.

During all this time the boys had stood as if stricken motionless with astonishment, and then Paul motioned Ned to move back a short distance from the water, the latter saying in a whisper:

“He told us to keep sharp watch.”

“We can do that further back, on the rocks, as well as here; but it is the veriest folly for us to watch when there isn't the slightest chance anyone could come ashore without our knowledge.”

“But he acted as if believing some person, who could hear if he spoke in an ordinary tone, was close at hand.”

“And by so doing showed that he was either trying to fool us, or had lost his wits entirely,” Paul whispered impatiently, continuing to move cautiously toward the line of vegetation until he was on the highest point overlooking the tiny cove. “We *know* there is no one anywhere around here except our two selves.”

“Then what is the meaning of all this mystery?”

“That is what I can't make out, and I would set it down as a fact that Zenas had suddenly gone crazy, but for Sam Downs's anxiety because he was loitering around this place.”

The two relapsed into silence while seated on the ground, each striving desperately to arrive at some solution of the strange problem, and perhaps half an hour had elapsed when the sound of rapid footsteps



could be heard from the distance, and Paul said in a tone of relief:

“Zenas is coming at last, and now he shall be made to explain this nonsense.”

He would have risen to his feet, but that Ned seized him by the arm, forcing him to lie down at full length, and the two were hardly more than stretched out where, even from a short distance, their bodies might have been mistaken for a portion of the ledge immediately in front of them, when a lad came into view carrying a basket on his arm.

There was no need now for anyone to urge caution. Both began to understand that there was good reason for Master Cushing's odd behavior, and, raising their heads ever so slightly in order to follow the movements of the newcomer, they saw him walk directly toward the southerly point of the cove as if intending to put out to sea.

Now it was that Paul and Ned fancied there might be a boat hidden in the vicinity, and this prowler in the night was counting on leaving the island; but instead of continuing on to the water's edge, he began to climb a portion of the reef that rose to a considerable height.

The mystery was about to be solved, and the watchers were literally holding their breath in suspense, when from the distance could be heard the voice of Mr. Simpson as he shouted:

“Hello, Paul! Paul!”

The boy who had been clambering up on the reef turned suddenly, and without delay started at full



speed toward Swallow-tailed Cove, still carrying the basket. In his flight he passed unwittingly within a few feet of Paul and Ned, who recognized him even in the gloom as Sam Downs, and although the mystery was far from being solved, the two lads came to understand that, improbable though it seemed, the old smuggler must be somewhere in the vicinity, or was likely to come within a short time.

“Hello, Paul! Paul——”

The cry ceased suddenly, as if he who had uttered it was choking, and, believing some harm was being done his father, Paul leaped to his feet, running swiftly in the direction from which the sounds had come, Ned following close at his heels.

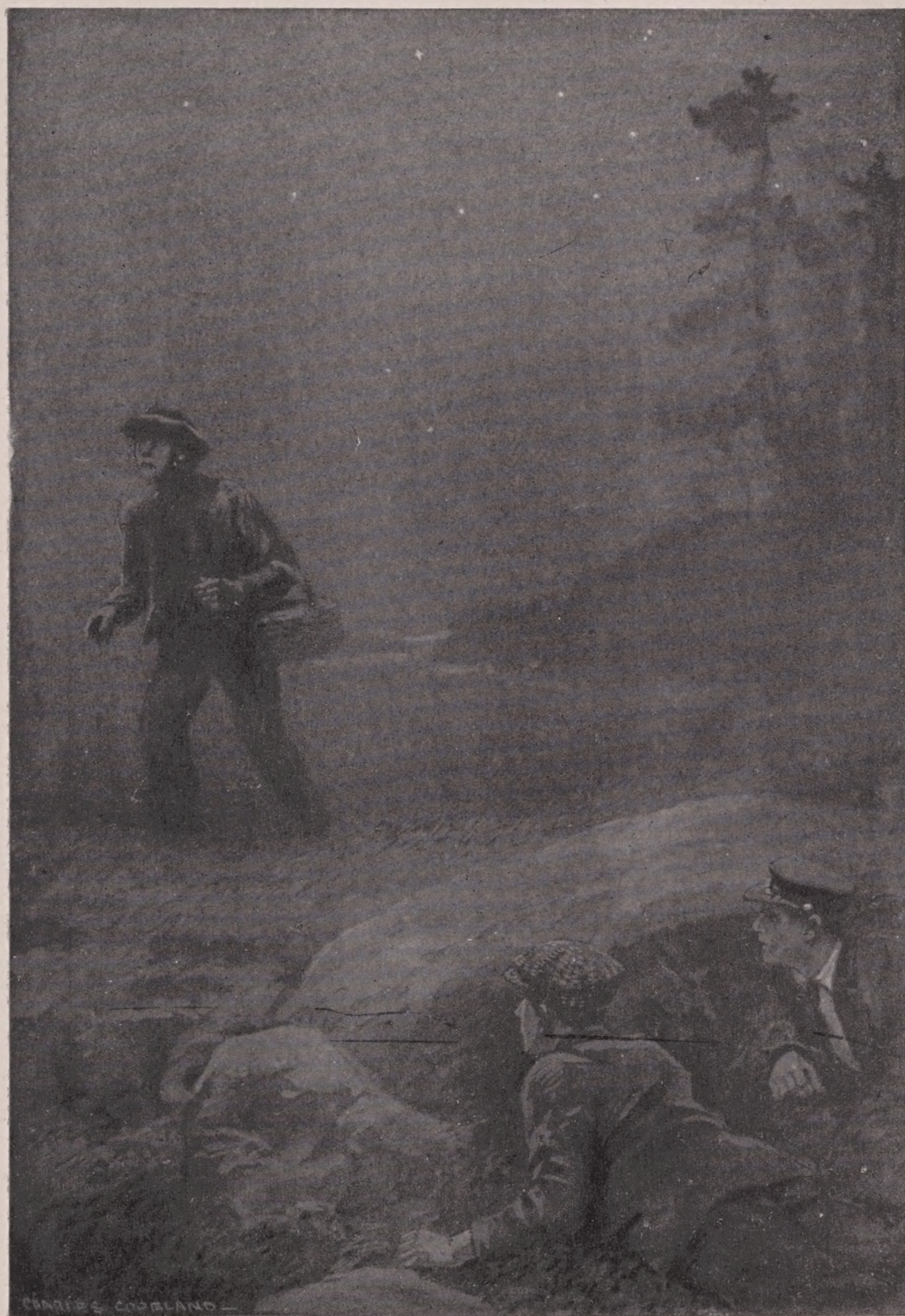
Before the lads had advanced fifty paces they came full upon Zenas, who was hastening toward them, and he brought both to a full stop by swinging an arm around the neck of each.

“I choked your father off, so there’s no need of your huntin’ for him, ’cause he understands we’ve got business on hand that mustn’t be interfered with.”

“But, Zenas, we saw Sam Downs come down on the rocks with a basket on his arm, and then take to his heels when father shouted,” Paul said hurriedly, speaking with difficulty because of having spent his breath in running, and Master Cushing received the information as if it was something to be expected.

“I allowed one of that tribe would be over this way before daybreak; but counted to get back in time to take a hand, for the tide isn’t much more’n half-flood,” Zenas replied in a matter-of-fact tone.





A LAD CAME INTO VIEW CARRYING A BASKET ON HIS ARM.







"But what has the tide to do with this mystery?" Ned asked impatiently, and Master Cushing replied softly, as if soothing a fretful child:

"You'll know all about it after a spell, lad, an' I'm tellin' you the same I did Paul's father. I'm countin' to get my hands on John Ed before many hours go by; but haven't fixed things jest right yet. Go on with your guard duty, keepin' well away from this 'ere cove all the while, an' 'twixt now an' another noon I'll give you somethin' to chew on."

"At least you can tell us——" Paul began eagerly, laying his hand on Master Cushing's arm; but the latter shook him off almost roughly as he said in a low tone:

"I can't tell you the least little thing jest now, an' if you hang on to me tryin' to find out what I ain't overly certain of, you may spoil the whole broth. Get away, an' don't show up here again unless you hear me yellin' for help."

"Do you remember the time when you counted that we two could take Bingham prisoner without help from any of the others?" Paul asked nervously, fearing that out of this plan of Zenas's trouble might come as it had in the past.

"I've cut my eye teeth since then, lad, an' ain't countin' that John Ed can play me any trick this time. Now get away, an' don't come back, leastways, till after daybreak."

In order to prevent further questions Zenas started off toward the tiny cove swiftly yet noiselessly, and the two lads stood gazing after him in perplexity



until he was lost to view in the gloom, when Paul said in a half-whisper:

"It's certain he's on the track of Bingham, and that Sam was carrying food to the old smuggler; but where can he be? It's sure he isn't anywhere near the cove, and yet they seem to be looking for him there."

"We might stand here the rest of the night chewing the matter over without being any wiser when the sun rises," Ned replied. "Let's find your father, and learn what he thinks about it. Zenas may have come somewhere near explaining the situation to him."

Paul acted upon the suggestion at once; but it was not a simple matter to find Mr. Simpson in the gloom. As they ran here and there, not daring to call him by name, the lads suddenly came upon Daniel Downs, who was near the ruins of his old home as if awaiting the coming of someone, and he brought them to a halt by asking sharply:

"Did you boys have orders to come 'round this way? I allowed you'd be on the other shore."

"That's where we have been; but now we're looking for father," Paul replied, not minded to have any lengthy conversation with this man whom he believed was playing the part of traitor.

"Didn't I hear him yellin' for you?" and Mr. Downs spoke sharply, as if fancying he had some cause for complaint.

"Very likely you did, and we are going to learn



why he wanted us," Paul said as he turned to hasten away; but the old farmer was not at an end of his questioning.

"What is Zenas Cushin' cavortin' 'round with that big motor boat of your'n for?"

"He didn't say why he went out."

"But I reckon you know, all right?"

"Indeed we don't," and Ned spoke so emphatically that, suspicious though Daniel Downs might be, he could not fail to understand the ring of truth in the words.

"I reckon Zenas is still playin' the fool over on the other shore?" and Mr. Downs motioned with his thumb in the direction of the tiny cove from which Sam had retreated in such haste when Mr. Simpson's voice was heard.

"He was there a short time ago," Paul replied, again turning as if to continue on his course.

"What was he doin'?" and this time there could be no question but that the old man spoke in an angry tone.

"Nothing, so far as we could see," Ned replied curtly, and while speaking he set off in the direction they had been pursuing, Paul following him as Mr. Downs muttered something about Zenas which was probably not very complimentary.

"If he isn't cheating your father, why should he be so keen to find out what Zenas is doing?" Ned asked in a half-whisper as he ran, and Paul replied in a tone of mystification:



"I'm getting all mixed up, and if this mystery isn't cleared soon, I'll be running around asking questions same as Daniel is doing."

Five minutes later the boys were come to where Mr. Simpson was standing at the head of the harbor gazing at the *Nera*. The yacht showed many a light, as if all on board were astir, and Paul asked wonderingly:

"What is going on?"

For a reply Mr. Simpson pointed toward the eastern sky where could be seen the red and blue hues which gave token of the coming sun.

"But it won't be light yet for an hour," the lad said half to himself, and his father added:

"Sawtelle wants to make an early start, and by the time he is well clear of the island it will be day-break."

"Why did you call me?"

"I thought perhaps you might like to see the *Nera* get under way."

"You stopped shouting as if someone was choking you."

"That comes very near being the truth of the matter," Mr. Simpson replied laughingly. "Zenas has some kind of a bee in his bonnet, and appears afraid to have any noise made just now. I suppose he believes that he has found traces of Bingham—perhaps fancies he can capture him, as he and you thought last summer."

Paul was eager to tell his father of what he had seen and suspected, therefore as they stood watching



the evidences of activity on board the yacht, he gave a detailed account of that which seemed so mysterious, concluding by repeating the words of Daniel Downs, and asking, when the story was finished:

“Now what do you make of all that?”

“It is evident Zenas believes he has discovered something which escaped the notice of all when we made thorough search of the island; but he is making the biggest kind of a mistake if he thinks Bingham is here.”

“What has half-flood or half-ebb tide to do with his suppositions or mistakes?” Ned asked eagerly, and Mr. Simpson laughed heartily.

“Zenas dearly loves to be mysterious, and has used those terms to puzzle you,” he replied carelessly, and Paul added emphatically:

“It is certain he has puzzled Daniel Downs; but how do you account for Sam’s being at the cove with a basket on his arm?”

“He might have counted on finding lobsters under the rocks while the tide was low.”

“But he ran as if afraid, when he heard your voice.”

“I am willing to admit, Paul, that some portions of your story have a mysterious ring; but I will not agree that it is possible for Bingham to have remained in hiding after we made such a thorough search, nor can I believe, after his past bitter experience, Daniel Downs would do otherwise than act honestly by us. There goes the *Nera’s* anchor, and as soon as she leaves port you lads had better go to



bed in order to make up for the sleep you failed to get earlier in the night."

"You'll have nothing to do but look after the foxes during the next three or four days," Mr. Sawtelle shouted from the wheel-house of the yacht, "and then we'll get about our aeroplane, making certain this time that the work isn't in vain."

"A good voyage to you!" Mr. Simpson replied, and in another moment the screw of the yacht sent her ahead toward the entrance of the harbor, Ned saying half to himself as the dainty craft gathered speed:

"If it wasn't for finding out what Zenas is about, I'd wish we could be on board her, Paul. She surely is a dandy, and I'd like to take a cruise on such a craft when we wasn't chasing a tramp steamer with mighty little hope of being able to pick her up."

"We'll have a chance for that sort of fun after Mr. Sawtelle has built his crow-chaser, as Zenas calls it; but just now I couldn't be persuaded to leave this island, for, even though father doesn't put any great faith in what seems to us so mysterious, I'm convinced we'll have a surprise here before we're many hours older," and Paul whispered the words lest he be overheard by Mr. Downs, who appeared at this moment coming from the direction of his old home.

"Is Mr. Sawtelle goin' to leave us?" the old man asked, and Paul's father replied carelessly:

"He's going for materials with which to build another aeroplane."

"Takin' a mighty early start, eh?"



“No earlier than was agreed upon last night. He is in a hurry to get back, and hopes to be at his destination before sunset. When we begin work in the tent again, a sharper watch must be kept, unless we have laid the worthy Mr. Bingham by the heels before then.”

“Have you got on his track?” Mr. Downs cried sharply, and the boys fancied he looked alarmed.

“I only wish we had; but it is certain he can't come ashore on this island many times without our being able to catch him.”

“True for you, sir,” and the old man looked as if relieved in mind, so the boys believed. “I didn't know but you'd got an inklin' of where he might be this very minute.”

Mr. Simpson turned quickly, looking at Daniel Downs so sharply that the old man moved about uneasily as he added:

“That's what I was hopin', sir, 'cause I don't feel safe a single minute while he's skulkin' 'round ready to pay off old scores. I'm afraid we're bound to have a heap of trouble before he's through with his monkey shins.”

“If you and your sons do as you have agreed, there is little fear Bingham can work very much harm. He has already done a great deal of mischief, I'll admit; but we are now aware of his intentions, and it will be strange if all of us on this island can't keep him at a proper distance, or lodge him once more where he belongs.” Then turning to the boys, Mr. Simpson added, “Better go to bed now, lads, for you



will be called on to do guard duty when night comes again, and it stands you in hand to be wakeful."

Paul and Ned could do no less than act upon this suggestion; but they had no inclination for sleep. It would have pleased them better to take station on some high point of the island where they might overlook Zenas, and, perhaps, discover what the tide had in common with his belief that John Ed Bingham would soon be made prisoner.

Therefore it was that, on arriving at the "hotel" they were yet further mystified by seeing Master Cushing in the act of entering the building with the air of one who has nothing better with which to occupy himself than the killing of time, and Paul cried as he hurriedly followed:

"Now we'll make him explain what he's about, or know the reason of his refusal to speak!"

Master Cushing did not show any desire to avoid the lads. On the contrary, he was in the room usually occupied by them, evidently awaiting their arrival, and Paul said impatiently:

"Now I suppose you'll be willing to tell us the meaning of your maneuvering around the cove on the easterly side of the island?"

"Wa'al, I can't say as I'm jest ready to make a clean breast of it yet awhile. Wait till the tide is about half-ebb, an' then, unless I'm way out of my reckonin', I'll show somethin' that'll make your eyes stick out."



## CHAPTER XIV

### ZENAS MAKES A DISCOVERY

MASTER CUSHING's reply to Paul's question was not calculated to satisfy either of the boys. They failed to understand why he could not explain the meaning of his mysterious movements as well then as at any other time, and his frequent reference to the tide very nearly exasperated them.

"I'm tired of hearing about half-flood or half-ebb, as if the height of the tide had anything to do with the destruction of the aeroplane!" Paul cried in what was very like an angry tone. "What's the sense of your trying to put on such an air of mystery? You either know whether you have seen any traces of John Ed, or if you failed in the search, and why not say as much outright, without making a lot of talk as if the rise and fall of the sea had anything to do with the matter?"

"It has all to do with it, as I'll show you when the tide is about half-ebb, 'cordin's I said before. The trouble is, Paul, while I'm feelin' about as certain as a fellow can that I'm on the trail of Bingham, it ain't what might be called a fact, an' I don't want to give all hands a chance of laughin' at me. I'm believin' I'll come mighty nigh gettin' my hands on John Ed 'twixt now an' another sunset; but it may turn out that I'm makin' a bloomin' fool of myself."

"Why not tell us what you suspect, and then if it doesn't turn out as you'd figured, there couldn't be



any chance for us to call you a fool?" Ned asked, and Zenas replied gravely:

"If I hold my tongue till the tide is about half-ebb, there'll be no show of your callin' me one thing or another, an' until that time comes I can't explain matters so you'll understand what I'm drivin' at. That's the straight goods, lads, an' s'posen you let things run 'cordin' to my ideas? It won't be long to wait, an' you'll soon know jest why I'm holdin' off in what seems to you like a silly way."

After such an appeal it was much the same as impossible for the boys to urge him further, although both felt confident that his talk about the tide had nothing whatsoever in common with the search for the man who had destroyed the aeroplane.

There seemed to be nothing for them to do save go to bed, as Mr. Simpson had suggested, and this they did; but not to sleep, for two very good reasons. First, they were not accustomed to lying abed in the daytime, and the morning sun was streaming in through the windows suggesting duties to be performed outside. Then again, even though it had yet been dark, they were so excited over the partial promise of Zenas to explain the mystery, that neither lad could have crossed over into Dreamland with so much on his mind which promised excitement.

However, they remained in bed, each striving to do as he had been bidden, and indulging in no conversation although they were eager to discuss the situation, until Master Cushing, opening the door sufficiently to admit of his looking into the room, said curtly:



"I'm allowin' the tide will be about right for my little trick by the time you've had a bit of sich a breakfast as Mrs. Downs can fix up. After eatin' aboard the *Nera*, an' knowin' how victuals *can* be cooked, it gives a fellow pain to see her daub everything, from meat to beans, with lard."

"We won't mourn very much over her way of cooking if you're ready at last to explain how John Ed Bingham can have any connection with the tide," Paul said laughingly as he sprang from the bed to make a hurried toilet, Ned following his example.

Zenas did not linger to go into details as to his proposed movements; but disappeared quickly, shouting as he went down the stairs:

"I'll see that what the Downs family call breakfast is put on the table right away, so don't spend overly much time primpin', for I count to leave this hotel inside of ten minutes, else we may be too late."

In no other way could Master Cushing have hastened the movements of the boys so effectively as by suggesting that the seeming mystery might not be explained if they delayed, and he had hardly more than warned Mrs. Downs of their coming before Paul and Ned entered the dining-room.

Daniel Downs himself was there, sitting by the stove smoking. Paul had a suspicion that the old man was loitering around the building in order to know what they might be intending to do, and this suspicion became almost a certainty when he asked, as the three seated themselves at the table:



"I reckon you've got lots of business on hand this mornin', eh?"

"That's where you're makin' the mistake of your life, Mr. Downs," Zenas replied quickly, as if fearing one of the boys might reveal the secret he was striving so jealously to guard. "Until the *Nera* comes back with stuff to build another crow-chaser, we're much the same as our own masters, with nothin' to do except stand guard when the owners of the island say the word."

"Wa'al now, from the way you have been hurryin' mother, I kind'er allowed you had somethin' special on hand," the old man said reflectively; but Paul took note that he kept his eyes fixed on Zenas as if to watch the expression on the latter's face.

"An' that's what we have," was the prompt and unexpected reply. "I've been on this island nigh to a year, an' have never been out fishin', so it kind'er struck me that this would be a good day to try my luck."

"So it will, Zenas, so it will," and Mr. Downs appeared to be deeply interested in the plan. "I'm fixed 'bout the same way so far as time goes, an' I'll show you a spot where a boat can be loaded in one tide, if so be you're wantin' good sport."

"It won't pay for us to drag you off with us, Mr. Downs," Zenas replied as if the old farmer's comfort was the one thing uppermost in his mind. "We count on tryin' the Hampton boat out a bit before settlin' down to real fishin', an' there's no knowin' when we'll be back."



“So you’re here before sunset, I’ll be satisfied,” Mr. Downs said, laying his pipe on the mantel as if making ready for the excursion. “It’s mighty dull work loafin’ ’round here day after day, an’ I’ll be glad to have a change.”

Zenas was evidently at loss for a reply. The boys understood that he did not intend Mr. Downs should accompany them; but how it was to be prevented, save at the expense of telling him plumply he could not go, they failed to make out.

Zenas apparently gave undivided attention to the meal from this moment, as if he was well content to have Daniel Downs as a companion on the alleged fishing trip, and when his hunger had been satisfied he said as he rose from the table, having first made certain the boys were ready to accompany him:

“Get the gear together, Mr. Downs, an’ while you’re about that job the boys an’ me’ll give the Hampton boat a try-out. It ain’t no ways certain the motor is in first-class shape, an’ it won’t do to run very far to sea without makin’ sure we can get back.”

“How far are you goin’?” the old man asked suspiciously, as if he had doubts regarding Master Cushing’s real intentions.

“Wa’al, that ain’t to be said off-hand, seein’s we don’t know jest how much work is to be done; but we’ll hug close to the land, so’s all you’ll have to do is keep an eye out in order to tell ’bout when we’ve got the motor down to our likin’. The worst of these ’ere power boats is that you never know when



they're in what might be called runnin' shape. If I ever own one of my own I'll have a double action on her, so that when one set of machinery won't run, the other can take its place."

The last portion of this remark had been uttered after Zenas was in the open air, Daniel Downs following him to the door, and when he had come to an end of speaking Master Cushing walked rapidly in the direction of the harbor, apparently giving no heed as to whether the boys followed.

"Are we really going out in the Hampton?" Paul asked when they were so far from the "hotel" that there was no danger the question could be overheard by the old man.

"We are for certain, an' Daniel ain't comin' with us, not if I've got a speakin' acquaintance with myself. The old fox knows that somethin' is in the air which John Ed would like to hear, an' counts on findin' out, if so be we're sich fools as to give him half a chance."

"But he'll soon know that you don't intend to come back after him," Ned suggested, and Zenas replied laughingly:

"By that time he can have the Hampton boat all to himself, in case your father is willin'. I'm allowin' that the first part of our job, which is to show you lads what the tide has to do with John Ed, will be finished before he can say for certain that we're through foolin' with the motor."

When Zenas and his companions arrived at the shore of the harbor, Mr. Downs could be seen com-



ing from the "hotel" as if to join them, and Paul whispered warningly:

"Move lively unless you're willing he should come aboard at once."

"He's too late by considerable," Zenas said with a chuckle of satisfaction as he pushed the Downs dory into the water, motioning for the boys to get aboard. "This 'ere is the only small boat left in the harbor, an' it'll puzzle him a good bit to follow us, unless he takes to swimmin', which I don't allow he's willin' to do."

Five minutes later, when Mr. Downs, with a certain amount of fishing gear in his arms, arrived at the shore, the boys and Zenas were aboard the Hampton boat and the motor in motion.

"That seems to be workin' all right," the old man cried shrilly, and Zenas replied as he stooped over the motor after setting the course:

"She misses a stroke every now an' then, an' till we can put a stop to that kind of business it ain't no ways safe to run very far from the land. Stay where you are, an' we'll soon be back, if so be this bloomin' thing does as it should."

If Daniel Downs made reply the occupants of the Hampton boat did not hear him, for Zenas had hardly more than ceased speaking when she rounded the northerly point of the harbor, running as smoothly as if just from the builders' hands, and Paul suggested:

"He'll take good care to see where we're going, for it's only necessary to stand back of the house in



order to keep us in view, unless we're bound on a long cruise."

"I'm willin' he should have an eye on us, an' I reckon that's what he'll do. If he's any the wiser when we get back inter the harbor, I'll lay right down an' let him use me for a door-mat," Master Cushing replied carelessly, thus increasing the mystification of the boys, who failed to understand how the secret might be revealed if a watcher could gain no idea of what they were about.

Zenas did not waste his time in explanations. He stood at the helm, sending the Hampton on a northerly course until she was well clear of the reef at the mouth of Swallow-tailed Cove, and then swung her around until she was heading into the east.

"Where are we going?" Ned asked in perplexity.

"Only down as far as that 'ere little cove where I left you on watch, unless it seems best to run clean 'round the island in order to mix old Daniel up a bit," Zenas replied, and then he held his peace until they were nearly opposite the place where the boys had seen Sam with a basket on his arm, when he said sharply:

"Now slow her down, Paul, till she's barely movin', so's to give old Daniel the idee that what I said 'bout the motor was straight goods. Then keep your eyes on that 'ere point which runs out on the southerly side."

"What do you expect us to see there?" Paul asked impatiently, for it was beginning to appear to him



as if Master Cushing was disposed to make sport of them.

"It's a little more'n half-ebb, as I figger it, an' I'm askin' you to look sharp at the end of the point, close 'down by the water."

"What are we to see?" Paul demanded.

"Somethin' that looks like a hole in the rock, where the surf runs in an' out."

"Yes, I can see that," and Paul spoke sharply now, for surely such a formation of the ledge had nothing to do with Bingham. "The waves have worn a hole there, nothing more; you can find plenty such places along the shore."

"Now I ain't so bloomin' certain of that," Zenas said quietly. "Stop the motor, an' we'll drift 'round a spell, with you watchin' the hole when the water runs out."

"It's bigger than I fancied," Ned said half to himself as a receding wave left exposed an opening into which one might have believed the bow of the Hampton could be run but for the restless dashing to and fro of the waters.

"Yes, I allow it is," Master Cushing muttered. "Keep your eye on it long enough, an' you'll see it grow larger as the tide ebbs."

"But what has that to do with the man who destroyed the aeroplane?" Paul insisted.

"Unless I was mightily mistaken last night, there's a dory inside that 'ere hole, an' when the time comes right it'll be run out by John Ed himself, on his way



to Seaview, or some other place where he can make a dishonest dollar."

"Do you mean to say that Bingham is inside?" Paul cried in amazement.

"That's exactly what I'm tellin' you, lad," and now Zenas spoke in a grave tone.

"But he would be drowned when the tide came in."

"There's where you're makin' a big mistake. That 'ere place, unless I'm way off my reckonin', runs inshore a long bit, an' I'm dead certain you'll find an openin' in the top of the ledge, for I've seen it. It's where Sam Downs counted to leave the grub he had in his basket when you lads were watchin' him."

"I don't understand it!" Paul exclaimed, and Zenas continued, speaking in the same grave tone:

"When the tide has ebbed three or four hours it's possible for a man to put a dory squarely inter that 'ere hole, pervidin' the surf ain't runnin' too high. Once inside he can live aboard the dory, for there must be room enough to float her without jammin' the craft against the top. Then, with an air-hole in the top, same's I count to show you, what's to hinder John Ed from stayin' in hidin' as long as he pleases? I ain't sayin' the thing could be done in the winter, nor jest after a big storm; but now, with the sea what you might call calm, it's the greatest snap for a fellow like Bingham that could be found."

"Do you know if there is a dory inside?" Ned asked, while Paul sat staring at the black opening in the rocks as if doubting the evidence of his own senses.



“I saw one there when the tide was a bit lower than it is now, an’ took good care to have an eye on the place till there was no longer any chance of its bein’ taken out, owin’ to the height of the water. Now jest stop to think at what time the crow-chaser must have been knocked to pieces. We allowed it to be after midnight. Wa’al, how was the tide then? If John Ed had been hidin’ hereabouts, he could get outside an’ back before daylight, pervidin’ he didn’t wait till the hole was covered agin. As I figger it, he can’t shove a boat out of that ’ere place till the tide has ebbed a full hour longer, so we may as well run back to the harbor an’ tell old Daniel it won’t be safe to put to sea in this ’ere craft till she’s in better shape.”

“It’s likely he is looking at us this very minute,” Ned suggested, and Zenas replied carelessly:

“Wa’al, what if he is? What has he seen? The motor went back on us, an’ we’ve been foolin’ with it, that’s all. Of course, if he’s helpin’ John Ed as I allow, he’s gettin’ mighty suspicious; but what does it amount to? He don’t dare lift an eye-lid, else he’ll give himself clean away. Start her up, Paul, for I’ve got considerable to do ’twixt now an’ next ebb tide.”

When the Hampton boat was in motion once more, and had been swung around to run back over the course, Paul asked in a tone which told of the bewilderment that had come upon him with the revelation of Master Cushing’s secret:

“What do you intend to do now? If you are not



mistaken, Bingham is inside that cavern, waiting for a good opportunity to come out when it's so dark the watchers on the island will not be able to see him as he pulls seaward."

"Wa'al, lad, I'm not mistaken; that much you can count on as a fact. It may be John Ed ain't there; but some livin' man is, an' one or more of the Downs family not only knows it, but is feedin' the scoundrel till he can get away, or do more mischief. I haven't had a chance to make up my mind jest how we'll trap him; but you can be certain I'm goin' to have the credit of doin' it without any help from your father or Mr. Sawtelle."

"What proof have you that a man is there?" Paul asked.

"I've seen one end of the dory, an' there wasn't need of lookin' farther, 'cause if a boat is inside, somebody's with her; but if more proof was needed, you got it when Sam came down there with a basket most likely filled with grub, an' ran away when he thought your father was comin'. That's all I need to tell me Bingham is curled up inside the cave, or whatever you call it, an' I'm the one who'll pull him out."

"How?"

"That's what I haven't settled on yet. I want you lads to see his air-hole on the top of the ledge, an' then, when the tide rises so far that he can't sneak out, we'll chew the thing over till we've figgered on the best way of yankin' him in."

"Why not tell father about it?"



“’Cause he’s been so cocksure John Ed couldn’t be on the island, that I want to jar him a bit.”

“He already suspects, owing to questions which Daniel Downs asked, that the old man and his sons may be trying to play him false again, and I know he would believe as you do, after seeing what you have shown us.”

“He couldn’t help it,” Zenas replied grimly; “but I ain’t countin’ on givin’ him the chance yet a while.”

“Don’t forget that when you and I tried to capture Bingham by our own two selves, we came to grief,” Paul suggested with the faintest suspicion of a smile, and Master Cushing replied angrily:

“I’m keepin’ all that mighty fresh in my mind, lad, an’ it’s why I allow to get the best of John Ed this time without lettin’ anybody else interfere. If you hadn’t been in the same muss with me, I’d held on to this secret a spell longer; but it’s your right to get square, same’s it is mine, an’ now’s the time.”

It seemed surprising to Paul that no other had hit upon the possibility of a boat’s being hidden among the reefs, although neither he nor Ned had any doubt but that the old smuggler was in the cavern as Master Cushing insisted. It was not reasonable to suppose that any other man, simply in order to work mischief when nothing in the way of money could be gained, would take such desperate chances.

“Well, unless Sam succeeded in giving him the contents of that basket, after he was frightened away by Mr. Simpson, the old fellow must be hungry by



this time, or in need of water," Ned said half to himself, and Zenas wheeled about to cry sharply:

"I took mighty good care that neither Sam, nor any member of the Downs family, had a chance to get at him, an' it's 'cause he may be in need of somethin' to eat or drink that I'm lookin' for him to make a break to-night. But he'll be a good one if he gets off scot free!"

"Suppose you were on watch, and he came out, how could you stop him?" Paul asked. "If you stood on the point he'd push off in spite of you, and in case you stayed outside in this boat, he wouldn't be fool enough to make the attempt."

"That's what must be figgered out 'twixt now an' sunset. We're gettin' nigh the harbor, an' I reckon you'd better be foolin' with the motor so's to kind'er back up the story I'm goin' to give Daniel," Master Cushing suggested, and the conversation, so far as concerned the man who might possibly be hiding in the cavern, came to an end for the time being.

When the Hampton boat entered the harbor again she was moving slowly, her motor ceasing to work now and then, and finally, as if after considerable difficulty, she came to anchor at her old moorings.

Mr. Downs was on the shore as Zenas and the boys scrambled into the dory which had been towed astern, and shouted with something very like anger in his tone:

"How's she workin'?"

"We've got to give her a reg'lar overhaulin', an' don't feel like tacklin' the job jest now, seein's we



didn't get overly much sleep last night," Zenas replied cheerily. "I reckon we'll have to put off our fishin' trip till to-morrow."

"Where have you been?" Mr. Downs asked as if he had remained in total ignorance of the Hampton boat's movements.

"'Bout halfway 'round the island. I reckoned you knew 'bout it, seein's you've been up to the hotel all the while."

This last was guesswork on Zenas's part; but the chance shot hit the target fairly, for the old man replied almost sheepishly:

"I was up there gettin' the fishin' gear together, that's all."

"An' I don't reckon you saw anythin' of us, eh?"

"Wa'al, it strikes me I got a glimpse when you rounded Swallow-tailed Cove; but I wasn't thinkin' of watchin' you, 'cause I allowed you'd come back here as soon as you could."

"Now that's queer," and Zenas ceased rowing to stare at Mr. Downs as if in surprise. "Do you know, I really thought you was gettin' kind'er nervous, thinkin' we counted on givin' you the slip, an' so kept a mighty close watch on what we was doin'. Of course it didn't make any difference to me, though I felt sore at the idee that you'd harbor sich a suspicion ag'in as good a friend as I've always been, except 'long 'bout that time when John Ed hit me a clip over the head an' you felt dreadful bad 'cause Mr. Simpson wanted to find me."

"Now what'er you bringin' up old sores for?"



Mr. Downs whined as Zenas bent to the oars once more. "All that is past an' gone; I went wrong, an' did all I could to square up for it, so there's no use naggin'."

"Why bless your heart, Daniel, I wouldn't nag for the best silver dollar that was ever squeezed out'er the mint. It jest come inter my mind that we'd allers been friends, except 'long 'bout that time, an' I spit it out. As you say, it's all past an' gone. Neither you nor me would be so foolish as to play any more games of that kind, an' it wasn't the fair thing to get the idee inter your head that I didn't want you to go out fishin' with us."

Then Zenas ran the dory's bow up on the sand, Daniel Downs standing idly by while the boys and Master Cushing pulled her high beyond reach of the tide, and when the three had left the craft in good position, he followed as they went slowly toward the "hotel."

"You lads are to go inside, givin' me a chance to slip over on the east shore," Zenas whispered as they walked. "I ain't countin' on givin' John Ed a chance to sneak out this tide, though it don't stand to reason he'd make a try for it in the daytime; but we'll be certain. Don't tell your father anythin', and' we'll fix up some kind of a plan for trappin' that old smuggler before midnight."

Master Cushing entered the building by the front door, while Daniel Downs went around to the back in order to gain the kitchen, and after assuring himself that the old man was in conversation with Mrs.



Downs, Zenas retraced his steps, walking swiftly over that ledge that shut out a view of the tiny horse-shoe-shaped cove from the "hotel."

Not until the boys were in their own room, with the door open so they might see if anyone came up the stairway, did either venture to speak of what had been learned during the morning, and then Ned said as he paced slowly to and fro:

"Now we've got back, it seems as if we must have been dreaming. The idea that John Ed Bingham is snugly in hiding, ready to work further mischief, or sneak away, as best suits his purpose!"

"But we're not absolutely certain he is there," Paul replied as if unwilling to believe that which seemed to have been proven a fact. "Zenas may have been mistaken as to seeing a dory inside the cavern——"

"But we were not mistaken when we saw Sam go down on the rocks with what was probably food in his basket," Ned interrupted.

"We are not certain it was food, or that he intended to let the basket through what Zenas calls an air-hole. Then again, seeing a dory, and guessing that Sam went to carry supplies to someone who was hidden, doesn't prove that Bingham is the man in the cavern."

"What is the sense, Paul, in trying to make out anything different from that which Zenas has told?" Ned cried almost petulantly. "You know very well there isn't another man in the world who would do all that has been done, or stay hidden in such a place in the hope of working further mischief!"



"You're right, Ned, I do know it, and yet it doesn't seem possible. I have a great mind to tell father the whole story at once, regardless of what Zenas has planned——"

"It wouldn't be fair. He has trusted in us, and we have no right, if it is to be honest dealing, to betray him."

"I'm not so certain of that," Paul muttered. "Last summer he had a plan laid for the capture of Bingham, and you know how it turned out. Suppose something of the same kind should happen now, and John Ed gave us the slip as he did then, don't you fancy father might blame us for not telling him, so he could make sure the villain was captured?"

"Yes, most likely he would," Ned replied thoughtfully; "but at the same time we wouldn't be playing fair with Zenas, if we did that very thing which he has cautioned us against."

"It's of greater importance Bingham be taught such a lesson as will prevent him from trying any more games, than that Zenas should have the satisfaction of capturing him single-handed. Besides, I can't figure out how the smuggler can be caught. Of course Zenas wouldn't think of shooting, and yet nothing but a rifle could halt him if he once pushed out of that hole in his dory, while we were on shore."

"At least wait till you hear what plan Zenas has cooked up," Ned cried, as if believing Paul was on the point of going directly to his father. "Give Cushing a fair chance, and then, if the scheme doesn't appear



good, tell him what you propose to do in regard to speaking with your father."

"All right, I'll wait; but he shall be made to understand that no foolish chances are to be——"

Paul ceased speaking very suddenly, for at that instant Sam Downs came up the stairs, looking curiously around as if expecting to see something more than ordinary.

"Where's Zenas Cushing?" he demanded peremptorily as he entered the room.

"Around here somewhere, I suppose," Paul replied, striving to speak in a careless tone. "He came into the building at the same time your father did."

"But he isn't here now," Master Downs cried sharply. "I've been over the whole place, an' he ain't in it."

"Well, suppose he isn't, I can't see that it is any business of yours or mine," and now Paul was angry, for Sam's manner was almost offensive.

"I've got to find Zenas," Master Downs added, speaking more mildly, "an' I don't see why you want'er keep him out'er the way."

"Look here, Sam," and Paul turned sharply on the visitor. "Try to bear in mind the fact that we have no idea of keeping Zenas out of anyone's way; but even though we were so disposed, it would be no affair of yours or your father's. One thing is certain; he hasn't left the island since we came in from trying out the Hampton boat, and I advise you to search for him, or go to my father and demand the information as you have from us."



"There's no need of gettin' grouty 'bout a little thing like that," and it was evident that Master Downs was more than a trifle confused. "I jest wanted to see him a minute, an' allowed you'd know where he was, seein's how the three of you have been thicker'n thieves these last few days."

"Meaning that we have been together since Bingham destroyed the aeroplane in order to pay off what most likely he calls old scores?" Ned demanded angrily, and Sam asked as if in surprise:

"Have you really found out that it was John Ed who played hob with the crow-chaser?"

"If it wasn't him, who do you fancy would do such a thing?" Paul cried, and Master Downs, turning on his heel, replied carelessly:

"You fellers who come from Seaview where the folks allow to know 'bout everything that's goin' on, ought'er be able to tell better'n I can. If you don't know where Zenas is, that settles it, an' there's no need of throwin' John Ed in my face every time I come where you are."

Then Master Downs stalked out of the room as if he had been injured by wrongful suspicions, and the two lads gazed at each other in silence, now thoroughly convinced that at least one member of the Downs family knew the secret, if secret there was, of the horse-shoe-shaped cove on the eastern shore.



## CHAPTER XV

### ZENAS OUTWITTED

PAUL was not in a very enviable frame of mind when Sam Downs left the room with what sounded much like mutinous words on his lips. It seemed to the lad as if it was his duty to repeat the story told by Zenas, to his father, in order that every precaution might be taken against the escape of Bingham, if indeed the old smuggler was hiding in that odd place of refuge on the eastern shore.

There was no question in Paul's mind regarding the loyalty of Zenas Cushing. He believed he knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that the young fellow would do everything in his power to capture John Ed; but, as had been shown during the previous summer, Master Cushing's plans were not always perfect, and surely there were many chances the scoundrel might make good an escape, unless all employed on the island were made acquainted with that which had been discovered.

Another reason why Paul believed it his duty to go to his father with all he had heard and seen during the day, was the behavior of Sam Downs. Surely there were good grounds for doubting his loyalty to Silver Fox Farm, and just at this time, while Zenas was trying to cover himself with glory by capturing Bingham single-handed, it was possible for this son of Daniel Downs to work very much in the way of mischief.



Ned, understanding that Paul was debating in his mind as to just what course should be pursued, insisted stoutly that all which had been learned, with the exception of this new phase in Sam's behavior, had been imparted to them as a profound secret, on the strength of their implied promise not to make it public.

"It wouldn't be using Zenas right," the lad cried hotly. "He knows very well he made a mistake last summer, and won't take any chances this time. Your father convinced himself that Bingham couldn't be hidden on the island, and was content with such supposed knowledge. Zenas, without assistance from anyone, learns the truth, and has a right to keep the information to——"

"Not while he is in the employ of Mr. Sawtelle and father," Paul interrupted hotly. "What he learned was gained during the time when he was paid for doing his best toward protecting the island, and of right belongs to the owners of the farm."

"But you mustn't forget that he counted on keeping the whole matter a secret until such time as he could lay his plans for capturing John Ed, and I claim, whether he was in the right or no, that we are not honest if we repeat what he told us in a friendly way simply to gratify our curiosity."

"Suppose Bingham succeeds in giving us the slip?"

"That would affect Zenas rather than you or——"

"What do you fancy father would say if we kept our mouths shut, and Zenas failed in his purpose?"

"I believe he would agree, after knowing how we



learned the secret, that it wouldn't have been honest for us to do other than as I propose," Ned replied emphatically, and before he could say more, Ernest Downs came into the room breathless and evidently excited.

"Look here, you fellers, Zenas Cushing says you're to come straight over to that 'ere little cove on the east side—says you'll know where it is, an' he don't want you to waste any time about it either."

"What's the matter?" Paul asked as he started toward the door, and at the same time realizing that now was the moment when it might be possible to learn whether Ernest knew as much regarding the supposed hiding-place of Bingham, as he believed he did.

"I dunno; but he's mightily on his ear 'bout some-thin'," Ernest replied as he followed Paul, Ned bringing up the rear, and in this order they left the building, walking at a swift pace.

"What has Zenas been doing on the east side?" Paul asked as they set off on a course which would lead them to the horse-shoe-shaped cove.

"Wa'al now, that's what beats me. An' the funny part of it is, Sam's jest about havin' a fit over it. He's been as grumpy as a bear with a sore head 'bout somethin' he thinks Zenas is up to, an' take it all in all, I'm gettin' mightily mixed up."

Ernest spoke in a truthful tone. Both Paul and Ned decided on the instant that he could not have assumed the look of perplexity which he wore, and thus did it seem reasonable to believe that if Sam was



disloyal to the interests of Silver Fox Farm, his brother could not be charged with having any part in the dishonesty.

“How did you happen to see Zenas?” Ned asked, and Ernest replied promptly:

“Wa'al, to tell the truth I was sneakin' 'round there tryin' to find out what he was doin'.”

“Why did it concern you?” Paul asked with a note of suspicion in his tone.

“'Cause Sam was makin' such a fuss. When I got home father an' Sam was havin' the biggest kind of a talk, an' didn't seem to want me to hear. I made out it was 'bout somethin' Zenas had done, so kind'er got the idee that I'd find out.”

“And you saw Zenas?”

“Yes, there he was, hidin' an' watchin' to beat the band; but it didn't strike me as bein' anythin' that need fuss Sam, 'cause it looked to me as if Cushin' was kind'er killin' time.”

“The same as you and Sam have done when it was your turn to stand guard?” Ned added laughingly, and Ernest's face crimsoned even beneath the heavy coat of tan, as he replied:

“Wa'al, it may be we've done somethin' of that kind once in a while; but it wasn't when there was any chance John Ed would come around.”

“Then you couldn't tell what Zenas was watching?” Paul asked quickly, not disposed to spend time in pleasantries when, as he believed, matters of greatest importance were afoot.

“There wasn't anythin' 'round there to watch. If



he'd been up among the trees I might'er got the notion he believed John Ed was still here, though that couldn't be after the way this 'ere island has been searched. Howsomever, if Zenas wants to spend his time over there where nobody can see him, it ain't what you might call my business."

It was only with difficulty Paul resisted the inclination to grasp Ernest by the hand, congratulating him on being honest, for it seemed certain that this member of the Downs family, if no other, was acting in accordance with the agreement made.

Even though he had decided to do that which would still further have increased the lad's perplexity, there was no time, for at this moment Zenas appeared.

"I thought you were at the cove? Ernest said you were!" Paul exclaimed in surprise, and Master Cushing replied in a low tone:

"I came over this way to meet you, 'cause I didn't count on lettin' that old villain hear us talkin'——"

"What old villain?" Ernest interrupted, his eyes opening wide with astonishment.

"I'll show you 'twixt now an' midnight, son, an' then I'm allowin' to find out some other things for myself. Why is Sam pokin' his nose over here?"

"If I hadn't wanted to find out that very thing I wouldn't been snoopin' 'round givin' you a chance to send me on your errands."

"Why were you in such a hurry to see us?" Paul asked impatiently.

"'Cause I believe it's time to get the Hampton



boat over on this side of the island. Of course there ain't the ghost of a chance that John Ed would make any try at givin' us the slip in the daytime; but it's jest as well to be on the safe side, an'——"

"Will you look there!" Ernest cried excitedly as he pointed seaward. "If we hadn't been over every inch of this island without findin' him, I'd say that was John Ed! Where on earth did he come from?"

A cry of anger burst from the lips of Zenas as he ran to the higher ground where Ernest had halted, and from there gazed into the cove.

Coming evidently from out the cavern which Master Cushing had watched so jealously, was a weather-beaten dory rowed by a single man, and that man John Ed Bingham.

"If I had only told father!" Paul exclaimed half to himself, and Ned said soothingly:

"If you had gone to him the very moment it was in your mind to do so, there wouldn't have been time to prevent that old villain from giving us the slip."

"An' he went out in broad daylight, while I was fool enough to believe he never'd dare do such a trick," Master Cushing moaned.

"Bingham always does, so it seems, that which we least expect," Ned cried bitterly, and Zenas, so excited and disappointed as to fail of realizing that he was doing a foolish thing, shouted at the full strength of his lungs:

"Come back here, you scoundrel! Come back, I say!"

"Yes, I'll be back, don't have any fears; but it





A WEATHER-BEATEN DORY ROWED BY A SINGLE MAN.







won't be jest this minute," was the mocking reply. "Did you think, Zenas Cushing, that I didn't know what you was countin' on doin'? I reckon you allowed to nab me. I wasn't born yesterday, as you'll find before you're many days older."

"Don't stop to swap words with him!" Paul cried excitedly as he exerted all his strength to pull Zenas away. "We can overtake him in the Hampton if we get her under way at once!"

"I'm blest if I didn't forget all about the boat!" Zenas cried in a joyful tone, and now there was no further need for Paul to urge him toward the harbor, for he was running at full speed in that direction, the three boys following as closely at his heels as was possible.

"Where'd John Ed come from? Where'd he come from?" Ernest repeated again and again; but no one gave heed to his questions.

The one thought in the minds of all was that it would be possible to overtake the villain if the Hampton boat was got under way without loss of time, and every nerve was strained to effect such purpose.

When Zenas arrived on the high ground in the rear of the ruins of the farm-house, Mr. Simpson appeared, coming from the direction of the harbor, and, startled by seeing four of his employés racing at full speed across the island as if great danger menaced, he would have stopped Zenas to demand an explanation; but Master Cushing evaded his grasp as he shouted hoarsely:



“John Ed has jest left the island in a dory, an’ we’re after the Hampton to stop him!”

This was sufficient inducement for Mr. Simpson to join the runners, and by the time they gained the head of the harbor Daniel Downs and Sam came at their best speed from the “hotel.”

So great was Master Cushing’s excitement that he launched the old dory unaided, even though she had been hauled out above high-water mark, and then would have pushed off without waiting to take on board Ernest and Mr. Simpson, who were several paces in the rear, if the latter had not peremptorily commanded him to wait.

“I’m allowin’ we can’t afford to fool ’round many minutes, for there’s no tellin’ how soon that ’ere fog bank down to the east’ard may work up this way,” Zenas cried angrily as he waited with ill-concealed impatience at the bow of the boat, standing knee-deep in the water. “That miserable Bingham must have counted on it’s shettin’ down thick, else he’d never’d dared to make a break in the daytime!”

Mr. Simpson literally fell over the rail into the dory, and Zenas would not wait for Ernest, who was a couple of yards behind; but pushed the boat into deep water and then bent to the oars as the boys had never seen him work before.

“What is the meaning of all this?” Mr. Simpson asked sharply and breathlessly. “What do you mean by saying that Bingham has just left the island, when we know he wasn’t here?”

“I haven’t got time to talk now,” Zenas panted.



"After we have got well under way there may be a chance."

"Bingham was here when you searched the island," Paul explained to his father. "There is a hiding-place on the east shore in which he had a dory concealed, and Zenas has been within an inch of capturing him single-handed."

"I'll have him yet, or drive that 'ere Hampton boat to the bottom!" Master Cushing cried savagely as he ran the dory alongside the larger craft, and jumped aboard without giving any heed to his companions.

Fortunately Paul leaped on the Hampton boat with the dory's painter in his hand, otherwise Ned and Mr. Simpson would have been left astern, for Zenas had started the motor on the instant, immediately afterward taking to the helm to prevent her from running ashore.

The power boat was out of the harbor before the dory had been made fast, or her crew fairly understood that the chase had begun, and Zenas was crying angrily to Paul:

"Jump it to her, lad. You ought'er get better speed than this. She ain't much more'n movin'!"

"She's running as well as when we put off for the *Nera*, and then the little boat was doing her best," Paul replied as he bent over the motor to make certain everything was as it should be, and Zenas, still dissatisfied with the speed, so great was his anxiety lest Bingham escape, ordered Ned to change seats from the port to the starboard locker in order the better to trim ship.



The Hampton boat was run southward, for the purpose of rounding the lower point, because Bingham had been bearing in that direction when last seen, but before she was so far clear of the land that an unobstructed view could be had seaward, a cry of mingled anger and dismay burst from Zenas, as he shouted:

“There it comes! You can count on his havin’ every advantage when he’s up to any of his games! Talk about honest men gettin’ their due!”

There was little need for him to explain the meaning of his words, for by this time all could see a thin veil of vapor creeping over the sea from out of the east, and there was no longer any question as to the possibility of Bingham’s making good his escape.

“We may as well turn back,” Mr. Simpson said in a tone of regret as the gray mist appeared to have grown thicker when the Hampton boat rounded the southerly point. “In ten minutes more it won’t be possible to see objects twenty yards away.”

“We’ll take our chances of that!” Zenas cried hoarsely. “I’d make one try at overhaulin’ that villain even if the fog was so thick we’d have to hew it with axes to get through. Shove that motor all you know how, Paul! There’s Bingham not two miles away, an’ if you can get a bit more speed out’er the craft we’ve got a chance of overtakein’ him yet.”

As he spoke Zenas pointed toward the southeast, where it was possible to see the faintest dot of darkness, which might as well have been a drifting log as a dory, and but for the fact that it was known Bingham must be somewhere in that vicinity, it is an



open question if even Master Cushing would have fancied he could distinguish the form of a man.

"She's doing the best possible," Paul replied sharply as he bent again over the motor to make certain there was no danger of a heated bearing. "The little craft wasn't built for speed, but with a view to sea-going qualities, and you mustn't expect she can be transformed into a racer simply because you're so eager to lay hands on John Ed Bingham."

"I'm expectin' a good deal more'n I'll ever get," Zenas muttered as he stood like a statue, gripping the spokes of the wheel and staring steadily into the fog with the hope that he might keep the faint outlines of the smuggler within range of vision.

"Tell me what you know about Bingham's hiding-place on the island," Mr. Simpson said to Paul when Master Cushing had turned all his attention to the chase, and Ned sat well in the bow with the idea that he might be able to aid the helmsman.

Paul, in a low tone, as if believing a noise might disturb Zenas, told all the story, including the argument which was had between himself and Ned on the subject of making the secret known despite the fact that they were, so to speak, on their honor to keep the matter strictly private, and concluded with the words:

"As things turned, we wouldn't have had time to find you before John Ed started, therefore no harm has been done by our keeping faith with Zenas."

"I fear no real good would have come of it, even though you had warned me a long time in advance of



his escape," Mr. Simpson replied with a sigh. "Because Zenas was quick-witted enough to smoke the old fellow out when Sawtelle and I were satisfied there was no possibility of his being on the island, it is more than probable I should have allowed him to take charge of the matter, and the result must have been the same. It would have saved us considerable labor and worry if we could have bottled the villain up once more."

"What part do you think has been taken by Sam Downs and his father?" Paul asked, and a full minute passed before he received any reply. Then it was that Mr. Simpson said slowly, as if to give due weight to each word:

"It would seem, from what you tell me, as if there can be no doubt but that Sam has been in collusion with Bingham, regardless of his repentance and promises of last summer. I can well fancy the boy might have been frightened or bribed to play the part he evidently has; but the important question is whether Daniel had any part in the treachery? The fact that Ernest remained in ignorance would seem to prove that he and his mother were not trusted with the secret, and it must be our business to learn just how far the old man may have gone in the matter."

By this time the fog had grown so dense that one could not see the water twenty feet ahead of the boat, and Mr. Simpson said to Zenas:

"You may as well put about, for there isn't the slightest chance now that you can come up with Bingham. He might be within hail this very moment, and



yet succeed, without very much difficulty, in remaining hidden from view. This motor isn't noisy, yet it can be heard fully a quarter-mile away, and we know that John Ed is listening intently all the while."

"He saw this fog creepin' down, an' took his chances, else the smugglin' old scoundrel wouldn't have been so brave!" Master Cushing cried angrily as he shook his fist in impotent rage at that quarter of the limited horizon where he fancied Bingham might be. "To think that I had him right under my thumb, an' let him give me the slip! If I'd been in cahoots with him, I couldn't have wiggled 'round more to his pleasure. The time is comin' though, John Ed, when I'll lay you by the heels single-handed, an' don't you forget it!"

Then, with one last, lingering look into the fleecy vapor of gray, Zenas swung the Hampton boat around in a wide circle, as if he had no doubt as to which course should be steered.

"How long have we been running?" Mr. Simpson asked abruptly, and Ned was the only member of the crew who could make any attempt at answering the question.

"We left the harbor thirty-five minutes ago," he replied after looking at his watch, and Mr. Simpson added:

"In that case we must be at least seven miles from the island. It will take fine steering, Zenas, to put us back into the cove while this smother lasts."

"Don't get to thinkin' that I'm goin' to lose you, sir," Master Cushing replied confidently. "I may not



be able to get the best of John Ed, but you'll see that I can keep the bearin's in my head, no matter how thick the fog, when we've been runnin' but little more'n half an hour."

Paul understood that his father did not feel as confident on this point as did the helmsman. It requires unusual skill to hold a vessel on the true course in a dense fog when there is no compass aboard, and for a time Mr. Simpson was most uncomfortable in mind, believing they might be forced to remain at sea until the weather changed.

Master Cushing did not attempt to enter into conversation when the others discussed the probable future of the man who was bent on making trouble for the owners of the Silver Fox Farm; but remained wrapped in angry silence during what seemed like a very long while, when he suddenly cried:

"Stop the motor! Now listen!"

It was possible to hear the dull booming of the surf, after one had listened intently, and Zenas said grimly:

"There's your island, all right, an' I'd hid my head in greater shame than I'm goin' to hide it when we get ashore, if I couldn't have brought this 'ere boat back, no matter how much of a smother had come to the aid of John Ed."

"You have done a sailorly piece of work," Mr. Simpson replied approvingly; but Zenas gave no heed to the praise.

"We're well off the southerly point, an' it may not



be so easy to strike the harbor at the first pop; but I reckon it can be done without puttin' the craft ashore."

It is quite possible that Zenas Cushing's sore heart was soothed a bit when he ran the Hampton boat into the cove at the first attempt, and rounded to at the buoy as readily as if the sun had dispersed the fog; but yet this did not drive the expression of gloom from his face.

When he got ashore he walked rapidly toward the "hotel," and there, an hour later, Paul and Ned searched for him in vain.

On being questioned, Daniel Downs admitted having seen Master Cushing enter the building; but he could not, or would not, make any guess as to where he had hidden himself, and Sam, seeing the boys searching in every available place, said in a meaning tone, which to Paul and Ned had a decidedly disagreeable sound:

"I reckon you'll find him down at that 'ere little cove on the east side; that's where he's been stayin' lately."

"What do you know about that cove?" Paul asked quickly and sharply, causing Master Downs to step back as if afraid of receiving a blow, when he replied hesitatingly:

"Me? Oh, I don't know anythin' 'bout it. There's plenty of fool places on this island if I was huntin' for 'em, without goin' way over there."

"I have noticed that you do go around that way



quite often," Ned said, looking the lad squarely in the face. "What's more, you carry considerable of a load in your basket."

Sam's face flushed, and then paled. He opened his mouth as if to speak, and, seemingly finding it impossible to make any sound, moved slowly backward until he came in contact with the wall of the building.

"What's the matter?" Paul asked grimly. "Did you suppose you were the only one on this island who had a fancy for knowing what others were doing?"

"I—I—I don't know what you mean," Sam stammered, looking this way and that as if meditating flight.

"Yes you do," and Paul spoke firmly, like one who can prove all his statements. "You were looking for someone who was hiding there, and had food in your basket to give him. I'm thinking my father and Mr. Sawtelle will want that matter fully explained before many days, and you had better be ready with some reasonable excuse, otherwise they may come to believe that you've been breaking the solemn promise made last summer."

Sam looked timidly at the lad for an instant, and then, muttering something which the boys failed to understand, moved unsteadily along with his back to the side of the building until coming to the corner, when he fled at his best pace toward the ruins of the farm-house.

Master Cushing's hiding-place, wherever it may have been, was well concealed, for search as they might the boys could find no trace of him, nor did he make



his appearance until the following morning when Mrs. Downs summoned all hands to breakfast by blowing the horn vigorously.

The fog storm had continued until after sunrise, and, so far as Paul and Ned knew, no watch had been kept along the shore of the island. It was probable, so they argued, that Mr. Simpson felt reasonably certain John Ed would not venture back so soon after having made his escape, and equally positive none others would come in such a smother simply for the purpose of working mischief.

"Where have you been?" Paul asked when Zenas came into the dining-room with an effort to appear unconcerned.

"Hangin' 'round one place an' another. There didn't seem to be much of anythin' on hand, so I kind'er made a loafin' spell of it."

"Are you feeling less like kicking yourself than when I saw you last?"

"I reckon it would be a good thing for me if somebody else did the job, 'cause I've been havin' a bad touch of swelled head, an' a dose of that kind is about the sort of medicine I'm needin'," Zenas replied grimly, after which he seated himself at the table and ate as hearty a meal as if he had never been disappointed in any of his undertakings.

During the forenoon Master Cushing absolutely refused to discuss the old smuggler's escape. He was ready to talk of what might be done when Mr. Sawtelle returned; of the improbability that a "crow-chaser" could be built by mortal hands that would



carry one or more persons through the air, and, in fact, had a decided opinion on any subject save that of Mr. Bingham's hurried departure from the island.

Two hours before sunset the *Nera* hove in sight, and from that time until well into the night, the dwellers on Barren Island had ample food for thought to the exclusion of John Ed and all that pertained to him.

Mr. Sawtelle had brought a generous supply of material for the building of another aeroplane, and was eager it be put on shore at once to the end that work might be begun at an early hour next morning. Therefore it was that everyone did his best to carry out the orders of the *Nera's* owner, and none labored more energetically than Sam Downs.

Late that night, after a very satisfactory supper on board the *Nera*, Mr. Sawtelle heard the story of what had occurred during his absence, and instead of being angered, as the boys had confidently expected, he appeared to be devoured with curiosity concerning the novel hiding-place.

"How large is it?" he asked eagerly, and when Paul confessed that no one had examined the cavern, he said decisively, "I reckon we can postpone work long enough to have a look at it, and that's what we'll do the first thing in the morning."

Then the word was given for all hands to "turn in," and Paul said when he and Ned were alone in their cabin:

"That which strikes me as being mighty odd is, that neither father nor Mr. Sawtelle appear to think



Sam's maneuvering has been such as to call for explanations."

"I'm allowing it will come later," was the sleepy reply. "You can set it down as a fact that neither of them count to let such a matter pass without looking into it mighty close."

Then Ned's loud breathing told that he had fallen asleep even while speaking, and Paul could do no less than follow his example.

Day had just begun to dawn when the boys were aroused by the owner of the *Nera*, who shouted cheerily as he threw open the door of their cabin:

"Turn out, lads, and we'll have a look at that famous cavern which Bingham and Zenas have discovered. The tide is at rather more than half-ebb, and we should have no difficulty in exploring it thoroughly before time for breakfast."

Zenas was already in the tender alongside the yacht when the boys came on deck, and began to ply the oars as soon as Mr. Sawtelle and his companions were aboard.

"Didn't father care to come?" Paul asked, and the owner of the *Nera* replied laughingly:

"He said the cavern would probably remain where it was as long as he lived on the island, and he could look at it some other time, instead of getting up before daylight had come, or breakfast was ready."

Once having landed, Master Cushing led the way straight across to the eastern side, and there indicated to Mr. Sawtelle the point of rocks in which the cavern had been excavated by the action of the waves.



Surely, when viewed from the land, it did not seem possible there could be in the ledge such an opening as would screen from view a dory, and yet, when the little party had crept down the rocks to the very edge of the water where it was possible to have a view of the interior, the cavern was found sufficiently large to have hidden two boats of considerable size, being so high that the craft would ride at high water without coming in contact with the upper portion of the reef that formed the roof.

As a matter of course, as all could see, when the surf was heavy it would surge into the excavation until anything in the form of a boat that was within must be beaten into fragments; but in fair weather, with a comparatively calm sea, it was the most complete hiding-place that can be fancied.

After having gazed at the interior of the cavern until it seemed as if he was trying to fix in his memory every inequality of the rock, Mr. Sawtelle examined the aperture, or breathing-place, on top, and at this point the searchers could see how easily Sam might have passed the contents of his basket to the man inside.

Several large bowlders had been rolled over a portion of the upper reef which had evidently been torn out by the surf, and this done in such a manner as to make it appear that it was the result of chance, or the elements. By pulling one of these aside, the opening, through which a man might have climbed without difficulty, was disclosed.

“When you told the story last night I felt a certain



sense of shame because of having believed that our search of the island was thorough," Mr. Sawtelle said thoughtfully as the little party retraced their steps to the harbor. "Unless Zenas had come upon the place, we might have lived and worked here a year or more without suspecting such a cavern was in the reef, and Bingham could have made of his coming and going a mystery that might well have caused us greatest alarm."



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE "SILVER FOX"

WHEN those who were entitled to take their meals aboard the *Nera* sat down to breakfast on the morning after having made a survey of John Ed's very snug hiding-place, with a single exception, all were in the highest spirits, believing that now it would be well-nigh impossible for the old smuggler to work any harm if a reasonably sharp watch was kept, even though Sam and his father might be inclined to treachery.

That single exception was Zenas Cushing, and he was as mournful as the others were merry, because of having failed in capturing the intruder when, if he had not been so eager to accomplish the task without the aid of the island's owners, Bingham might at that very moment have been a prisoner on his way for trial at Seaview.

Zenas was not only chagrined because John Ed had escaped from him so readily, but blamed himself even more than the circumstances warranted, for having delayed in making known to Mr. Sawtelle and Mr. Simpson, at the earliest moment, that which had been discovered.

The owner of the *Nera* had a very good idea of what might be in Master Cushing's mind as he ate breakfast in moody silence, while all others at table were talkative and cheery, and when the first lull in the conversation came, he said laughingly:



“Don’t take John Ed and his doings so much to heart, Zenas. Perhaps all which has happened could not have been avoided, however you tried to work the trick. Certain it is that but for the fog you would have laid hands on the old scoundrel, and when even the weather favors him in his mischief, you have no need to blame yourself overly much. We’ll lay our gentleman by the heels some day, if he tries to work us any more harm, and when it has been done he shall pay for his misdeeds.”

“That’s what we thought, sir, when his schooner stuck on Beekman’s Ledge; but the Governor of the State seemed to believe he hadn’t done evil enough in this world,” Zenas replied gloomily, and Mr. Sawtelle added cheerily:

“Put it out of your mind, man, put it out of your mind. What can’t be cured must be endured, and a smile works better than a frown, no matter what kind of a job you’ve got on hand. This morning we are to begin the building of our second crow-chaser, as Daniel Downs calls an aeroplane, and we’ll not only finish her despite all John Ed Bingham may do, but make a voyage to Seaview to frighten Captain Tobi out of several pounds of superfluous flesh.”

“But say, how he would open his eyes if you *could* flutter down inter Seaview!” Zenas cried, laughing heartily at the mental picture he had called up.

“We *can*, Zenas, and we will,” Mr. Sawtelle replied decisively. “There shall be no accident this time, even though all hands of us are forced to sleep and take our meals in the work-tent. We’ll not only



have an eye out on what *we* are doing, but keep sharp watch over Daniel Downs and his precious son Sam. Mr. Simpson must hold those two in order, and I'm hoping he will work them so hard that they'll have no opportunity to lend Bingham a hand, in case he pokes his nose around here again."

"I'm inclined to believe Sam is more to be blamed than the old man," Zenas replied sharply. "I'm allowin' John Ed got afoul of him, frightenin' the boy inter obeyin' his orders, and after that much mischief had been done, Daniel could do no less than fall in line."

"We won't allow him another chance," the owner of the *Nera* cried as he rose from the table. "Now we'll begin on the *Silver Fox!*"

"What have foxes to do with our making an aeroplane, sir?" Paul asked in astonishment.

"Nothing, lad, at this late day. But if your father had not gone into the business of raising them, neither the *Nera* nor her crew would have been here this day, therefore the first of Daniel's crow-chasers that is built, shall be named the *Silver Fox.*"

"And a right good name it will be," Master Cushing cried enthusiastically, the frown fading from his face. "I'll undertake to stay in the work-tent every hour of the day and night while she is buildin', an' we'll hope John Ed tries to be funny while I'm there."

Then the entire party went on shore, and during the short journey to the "hotel" it was decided that Mr. Simpson should have no hand in the labor, save to make certain the island was properly guarded.



"You are to forbid Sam and his father from even looking into the tent," Mr. Sawtelle said when his partner, having come with the party as far as the "hotel," was on the point of returning to the harbor. "I'm not fearing they could do any mischief, but we don't want them around."

"To forbid their coming on this side of the building will be much the same as telling them that you have suspicions as to what has just been done," Paul suggested, and Mr. Sawtelle replied emphatically:

"That is exactly the point I want them to understand; but because we have no proof of their treachery, save that of seeing Sam loitering around the hiding-place, and their inquisitiveness as to what Zenas was doing, we are not warranted in flatly accusing both of aiding Bingham."

Then Mr. Simpson went his way, and without further delay the work of building the *Silver Fox* was begun, the laborers growing so interested in the task as hardly to be conscious of the flight of time. They were really surprised when Ernest, standing just outside the entrance to the tent, shouted:

"The cook of the yacht says you folks are to come to dinner, unless you count on lettin' everythin' spile by growin' cold."

"Your father has warned Ernest as well as Sam, against coming inside the tent," Ned said laughingly to Paul, as he made ready to obey the summons, and then, noting the fact that Zenas continued at his work without any token of ceasing for the noonday meal,



he asked, "Ain't you intending to eat anything to-day?"

"I agreed to stay here all the time, and that's what I count on doin'."

"Don't be foolish, Cushing," Mr. Sawtelle cried cheerily. "No one can work mischief here at this stage of the game."

"I allow they can't; but all the same I'll stay right where I am till you get back, an' then take my turn at the cook's layout."

It was useless to argue with Master Cushing, as was shortly learned, and the two boys hurried away with the owner of the *Nera*; but Paul was so distressed at the thought of Zenas remaining alone on watch, that he made haste to satisfy his hunger before the others were ready to leave the table, and hastened back to the work-tent.

"I finished before the others did, so thought it would be as well to give you a chance, for the cook is chafing under the collar mightily because your dinner will be spoiled," the lad said as he opened the flap of the tent, finding Zenas busily engaged smoothing down one of the uprights.

"If the dinner was of Mother Downs's cookin', I'd say that the colder it grew the better a man could eat it; but when it comes to sich grub as is served up aboard the *Nera*, a man is a fool to take chances of lettin' it go to waste. If you're to stay here, make certain none of Daniel's family comes inside. They've been warned away, an' I'm goin' to see that the order is obeyed."



Paul promised to remain where he could have a full view of the interior of the tent; but did not propose to begin work again until Mr. Sawtelle should be on the spot to supervise what was being done, and Zenas left him sitting just outside the entrance to the work-room, where he might overlook the harbor.

A resting-spell was what the lad needed, for he felt exceedingly weary, and was enjoying this partial repose to the utmost when Sam Downs came into view from the rear of the "hotel."

"Where are the rest of the crowd?" he asked, advancing until he stood by Paul's side.

"On board the yacht," was the curt reply.

"Why ain't you with 'em?"

"Because I'm staying here."

"On watch, eh?"

"Well, perhaps that is what it might be called."

"Didn't I see Zenas Cushing goin' down to the harbor a minute ago?"

"He has just left here," Paul replied as if indisposed to engage in conversation with the lad.

"So? He waited till you got back, so's some of your gang could have an eye out on the tent, eh?"

"That's about the size of it."

"See here, Paul Simpson, I want'er know what all this means? Why is it father an' us boys are barred out'er that 'ere tent? Seems to me mighty funny if we can't go wherever we please on this island."

"That is what you were allowed to do a short time ago, and the aeroplane was destroyed at the very time when you claimed to be on watch. If we count on



building another, the safest plan seems to be to keep you people at a distance."

"Do you mean to say——"

Master Downs was working himself into a fit of anger, when Paul interrupted him by saying sharply:

"Take my advice, Sam, and don't provoke the members of what you call the 'gang' into telling you the exact truth. Remember that we saw you with a basket on your arm, loitering around where John Ed Bingham was hiding, and afterward your talk was enough to arouse suspicions of your knowing more about that precious scoundrel than was honest. The safest plan for you is to keep a close tongue in your head, and obey orders to the letter from this out."

"Don't go to makin' the mistake of thinkin' you can bully-rag me!" Sam screamed angrily, and then on the instant he ceased speaking and beat a hasty retreat, having seen the owner of the *Nera* and Ned coming that way.

"Have you had company?" Mr. Sawtelle asked as he came within speaking distance. "I thought I saw Sam running around the corner of the building."

"He has been here, evidently for the purpose of having an explanation as to why father prohibited his going into the tent," Paul replied laughingly, and then repeated the conversation as nearly as possible.

"It is evident he won't understand any save harsh words," Mr. Sawtelle said when Paul was come to an end of the story. "We have either wronged the boy by suspecting that he would have aided Bingham, or he has in him the makings of anything rather than



an honest man. I'll look after him from this time on."

While the three remained at the door of the tent discussing the possibility that Sam was deeper in the counsels of Bingham than had been supposed, Zenas came leisurely from the harbor, and the work on the *Silver Fox* was resumed.

During an hour or more no word was spoken by those who were so deeply engaged in fashioning a "crow-chaser" intended to make Barren Island a place of note, if not famous, and then Paul broke the silence by exclaiming, as if the idea had but that moment entered his mind:

"If we could only rig a wireless apparatus on this craft!"

"Well, and why can't it be done?" Mr. Sawtelle cried loudly and excitedly, thus showing that such a scheme had not been entertained by him previous to this moment. "We shall have a 25-horse-power motor aboard, which should be sufficient for receiving messages within a limited distance, in addition to propelling the craft, and I see no reason why it might not be arranged."

"Couldn't contrive to take on a movin'-picture machine as well, eh?" Zenas asked in a fine tone of irony. "We ought'er have all the luxuries of the season, an' while the crow-chaser is hoverin' over Seaview we might get mementoes of Capt'in Tobi, Billy Mansfield, an' the rest of the big jimmies."

"It isn't wise, Mr. Zenas Cushing, to make sport of what you don't understand," the owner of the *Nera* said laughingly, as he dropped the slender brace on



which he was working to draw rough plans on a clean board. "Paul's proposition to install a wireless on an aeroplane isn't what can be called wild. It has already been done successfully with the lighter-than-air type of air-ships, and why can't the *Silver Fox* carry an apparatus?"

"I reckon she can, that is, pervidin' it's possible for her to carry anythin'," Master Cushing replied with a grin, and then he bent over his work as if feeling condemned because of having wasted several precious moments, while Paul and Ned, fascinated by this new proposition, watched Mr. Sawtelle as he hastily sketched one plan after another, being wholly satisfied with none.

"We'll leave this last scheme for the evening, lads," he said finally, as he laid the sketching-board carefully aside. "The main object is to get the *Silver Fox* ready for the air, and until that has been done there's no good reason why we should spend our working hours on anything else. You lads know more about the wireless than I, as was proved last summer when, with illy-constructed apparatus, you sent and received as well as we on board the *Nera* could, therefore I propose that you set about making plans when it is impossible to continue the labor here."

Having said this the owner of the *Nera* gave his undivided attention to the task before him, and a full hour passed in silence, Paul and Ned striving as they fashioned the carefully selected wood, to conceive some method of installing the wireless on this



vessel of the air which her designer was so positive would be a complete success.

It was nearly nightfall when Zenas looked up suddenly to say with a grin:

"If so be you folks *could* fit out this 'ere *Silver Fox* with what you call the wireless, an' the contraption sailed through the air as you're countin' on, John Ed would come to grief if he tried to slip off once more in a fog storm."

"I thought you would soon understand the possibilities of an air-ship," Mr. Sawtelle said with a laugh. "While I'm not certain we could follow anyone in such a smother as we had yesterday, I feel positive we've seen the last of your smuggler. He knows that we've learned the secret of his hiding-place, and won't be so foolish as to pay us another visit—at least, not this season while the *Nera* is in port."

"All of which shows that you haven't even been introduced to John Ed as yet," Zenas replied gravely. "Wireless telegraphy, air-ships, or real men-of-war, are all one to that scoundrel when he's got his mind set on mischief. He'll come to Barren Island more'n once 'twixt now an' fall, if so be we don't lay him by the heels mighty soon."

"Once the *Silver Fox* is in sailing trim we'll give him what racing men call, 'a run for his money,' and you shall see how soon we'll bring the old fellow up with a short turn," Mr. Sawtelle said carelessly as he continued his work, and Zenas added in a tone of irony:



"We've had sich good luck at it so far that I don't wonder you're feelin' certain of workin' the trick."

"I haven't really tried *my* hand at it as yet."

"It was kind'er in my mind, sir, that you took considerable of a part in searchin' for John Ed, an' when you give up, feelin' dead sure he wasn't anywhere around, the old villain was livin' off the fat of your land," Zenas said, looking quizzically at the owner of the *Nera*, whose face flushed as he replied:

"I might claim that I didn't know him as well then as I do now."

"An' even though you knew him twenty times over, he'd come at you in some way that would make you need another introduction," Master Cushing added by way of bringing the conversation to a close.

When the evening had come, and it was time for the workmen to go on board the yacht for supper, Paul asked Zenas if he really intended to remain in the tent during each night, as had been announced, and the latter replied emphatically:

"That's exactly what I'm countin' on doin', lad. Here's where I stay till the *Silver Fox* has made her first voyage, if indeed she ever does. One of you will come back, after eatin' supper, to give me a chance of goin' aboard the *Nera*, for whether John Ed is close at hand, or a thousand miles away, I'm keepin' a sharp eye on the crow-chaser."

"Suppose Ned and I stay with you?"

"That's what I'd like, as a matter of course; but you won't be as comfortable here as on board the *Nera*."



"I'm not so certain about that," Ned said quickly, believing it would be possible to have more sport by remaining with Zenas, than if they slept aboard the yacht. "We can bring from the house plenty of bed-clothes, and I fail to see how there would be any discomfort in staying here."

Mr. Sawtelle took no part in the conversation. It seemed as if he had little care how the matter might be settled, and the boys decided that it would be right jolly to remain with Master Cushing.

On this night Paul went first to supper, leaving Zenas to bring from the "hotel" as much in the way of bed-clothing as might be necessary, while Ned stood guard over the tent, for Master Cushing was not willing it should be left unoccupied even for a single moment.

When Paul returned, his comrades went to supper, leaving him alone, and he felt quite confident Sam Downs would come to thrash out the question of his having been disloyal to the interests of Silver Fox Farm; but in this he was mistaken. Neither Sam nor his father were to be seen; the Downs family remained entirely to themselves, and nothing had even been heard of them when Zenas and Ned returned from the yacht.

"Mr. Sawtelle says you an' Ned are to spend the evenin' figgerin' out how a wireless contraption can be rigged on the *Silver Fox*, an' while you're doin' that I'm countin' on takin' a turn 'round the island," Master Cushing announced as he entered the tent, and Paul asked laughingly:



"Have you got an idea that John Ed may be coming back so soon?"

"No; I don't reckon he'll snoop 'round this way for quite a spell, an' that's jest why I'm goin' out for a tramp. The old scoundrel allers does jest what you don't suspect, so it's safe to go straight agin your own belief in anythin' that concerns him."

When Zenas had set off on his self-imposed task the two boys spent no little time making up beds at one end of the tent where they would not be exposed to too much of a draft, and after that was done to their satisfaction, Paul proposed that both draw plans for the wireless, working independently of each other.

They were busily engaged in this labor when Master Cushing returned, threw himself on the ground with the air of one who is weary to the verge of exhaustion, and began filling his pipe.

"Well, did you see anything out of the ordinary?" Ned asked as he laid aside his work without having accomplished anything to his satisfaction.

"Wa'al," Zenas replied drawlingly, "that's 'cordin' to how you look at it. Old Daniel an' Sam are down on the southerly point, kind'er half hidin' in the bushes as if afraid some of us might see 'em, an' it 'pears to me as if they were on watch for somethin' or somebody."

"It is probably their time for standing guard," Paul said, looking up carelessly from his work.

"Wa'al, an' if it is, why ain't they patrollin' the shore, instead of takin' it easy there in the bushes? Your father has told 'em a dozen times over that he



counted as them who were on duty should keep movin' so's they could have an eye on all parts of the island, an' also, to prevent any chance of fallin' asleep."

"I don't suppose Sam and his father can work us any harm so long as John Ed remains at a respectful distance," Ned suggested, and Master Cushing replied grimly:

"If I knew the old smuggler wasn't anywhere near, it would be all right, I reckon, an' even then I'd advise that Daniel an' his son be watched; but it struck me they might be hangin' 'round to signal Bingham in case he hove in sight."

"I'm not going to trouble myself about what they or John Ed may do. Father and Mr. Sawtelle are here, and so long as they're not worrying, I shan't," and then Paul gave his attention once more to devising some means by which a wireless apparatus could be attached to the aeroplane.

Half an hour later the owner of the *Nera* came into the tent to see what progress the boys had made, and Zenas stole softly out, as Paul and Ned believed, to spy upon Sam Downs and his father.

Now to set down all that was done and said on the island during the building of the *Silver Fox* would make dry reading, therefore the story shall be told in the fewest possible words.

Never once did Zenas Cushing relax his vigilance, although he saw nothing tangible in the way of treachery. His suspicions as to what Sam and his father would do if an opportunity offered, were not lessened because they apparently did all that was re-



quired of them, but no more; nor did he cease to fear that Bingham might at any moment attempt to gain a foothold on the island.

One or more of the workmen remained in the tent during every moment of the twenty-four hours, and when the *Silver Fox* neared completion, even Mr. Sawtelle shared the watch. Mr. Simpson, with the Downs family, and the two men from the *Nera* to aid him, took full charge of matters outside, remaining awake throughout the night, and leaving the engineer of the yacht in command from sunrise to sunset.

Nothing whatsoever was seen or heard to betoken that such vigilance was necessary, yet it was never relaxed a single moment, and the workmen in the tent were not disturbed even by Sam. Ernest took good care, as did his father, to remain in that portion of the "hotel" assigned to the family while off duty, and when the day came that the *Silver Fox* was completed and hanging in the slings which had been prepared for her, it was as if every person outside of Barren Island had forgotten that such a place existed.

It was only natural there should be great excitement among all concerned on the evening Mr. Sawtelle announced that if the wind was not too strong next morning, it was his intention to make the trial trip, and the two boys were not a little disappointed when he added:

"It is my intention to go alone on the first flight, and until I am in a certain degree accustomed to managing the craft. After that has been accom-



plished we'll ship the wireless apparatus, and set sail for Seaview, one of you lads remaining here to work the telegraph while the other accompanies me."

Then, and while the elders of the company were discussing this matter or that concerning the proposed voyage, the question arose between Paul and Ned as to which should have the honor of going with the aviator.

Singularly enough, it was Zenas who settled the question, and he did it in this manner:

"S'posen the crow-chaser, instead of sailin' jest inside the clouds 'cordin' to plans, takes a dive inter the sea? Now, if Ned is aboard the *Silver Fox*, Paul can manage the Hampton boat an' help pick up the bodies so's we can have a funeral. But if Paul goes, Ned can't make sich a good fist at workin' the motor, so it seems to me you lads have no need to talk very much about it. Ned ought'er have the chance to get drowned first, an' when that's over an' done with, Paul can take a whack at the same kind of an endin'."

"I'm not agreeing that it is to come out as you figure, Zenas; but I'm willing to take turns with Ned. He shall go first, and then I'll try it, the two of us changing places on each voyage."

"It ain't dead certain the first won't be the last; but that's the best way to settle the matter. Have you agreed where that 'ere wireless contraption is to be hitched on?"

"We're to hang it from the bottom of the frame, and the operator is to sit directly behind the aviator——"



"The what?" Zenas interrupted.

"The aviator—meaning the man who navigates the aeroplane."

"I'm glad you've got somethin' new in the way of a name for him; but I'm allowin' we can call him mud by to-morrow night."

There was no reason for the boys to spend any time striving to convince Zenas why the *Silver Fox* should not work exactly as her builder intended, and the conversation ceased as Mr. Sawtelle gave Master Cushing orders for the morrow.

"I am not expecting there will be any trouble," the owner of the *Nera* said, and Zenas indulged in a grin; "yet at the same time I propose to take every precaution as if this was the first attempt ever made to navigate the air. You will get the yacht under way, following as nearly as possible my flight, so that you may be able to render assistance if it is needed."

"Ain't you goin' to give her a little spin across the island first?" Zenas asked, now beginning to look worried.

"If the wind blows from the south or west, as is probable, I count to rise directly from the bluff, heading toward the mainland; but with the intention of finally circling around the island. The engineer will be in readiness to get under way when you give the word, and you'll try to keep pace with me."

"Keep pace?" Master Cushing repeated laughingly. "To do that we'll have to hold her down to half-speed, if not less. The *Nera* can do twelve miles an hour!"

"And I count on sailing nearly three times as fast.



Take my word for it, Zenas, you'll need to push the little craft, and even then I shall distance you easily—unless I come to grief."

"An' that's exactly what he will do," Master Cushing whispered to Ned. "I've allers thought Mr. Sawtelle had wheels in his head when it comes to sich things as these 'ere crow-chasers; but never before did I believe he was quite so far gone as to take so many chances. He'll be a drowned man before knowin' what's happened to him," and from that moment until after the trial trip, Master Cushing went around with an expression of gloom and dissatisfaction on his face.

Paul had an idea that even Mr. Sawtelle himself was unusually silent and anxious on the evening before the proposed trip, when the four who had built the *Silver Fox* were alone in the work-tent.

"If we have a calm day!" the owner of the *Nera* repeated again and again as he went to the flap of the tent to look out for some indications of the morrow's weather, and each time Zenas would whisper to one of the lads:

"The longer it blows half a gale the longer he'll live."

There was little sleep for the occupants of the tent that night, and it was a positive relief when the darkness had been dispelled by the gray light of coming dawn.

Mr. Sawtelle was the first out of doors, and he shouted joyously:

"Not a cloud in the sky, lads, and there isn't wind



enough stirring to lift the *Nera's* vane! We couldn't have a better day for the trial, and I count to get off as soon as the sun rises. Bear a hand to let down the tent; but for your life be careful! We can't afford the time to build three aeroplanes this season."

There is little need to say that all hands obeyed the summons on the instant. Daniel Downs and his sons, who until this moment had had no opportunity to see the *Silver Fox*, came out of the "hotel" at full speed, followed closely by Mrs. Downs, and from the shore of the harbor could be heard cries which told that Mr. Simpson and the crew of the yacht were hastening to the scene.

The tent had been so made that by using what on a vessel would be called "downhauls," the canvas might be pulled apart at the top and then lowered, or furled, on either side, until the aeroplane, supported only by the slings of braided rope, stood out alone, looking wonderfully fragile even for air navigation.

When this had been done not a breath of air was moving. The sun rose out of the sea clear and bright, while not the faintest trace of a cloud could be seen in the sky. The smoke from the chimney of the "hotel" mounted straight into the ether without wavering, and, pointing to it, Mr. Sawtelle said to Paul in a tone of triumph:

"We've got the kind of weather that is needed, and I am almost sorry I didn't decide to go as far as Seaview on the trial trip."

"I'm fearin' the furthestest he'll go will be to the



bottom of the sea, for it don't stand to reason that kite of a crow-chaser can carry him through the air," Zenas whispered to Ned, and then he walked slowly toward the harbor, as if not willing to countenance by his presence such folly as that about to be exhibited by the designer of the *Silver Fox*.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE TRIAL VOYAGE

To release the aeroplane from its slings was but the work of a few moments where were so many willing hands, and when it was resting on the starting wheels Mr. Sawtelle climbed into the navigator's seat, while Paul took station at the propeller where he could "crank up" when the word should be given.

"This 'ere is what you might call riskin' a man's neck for the sake of a whim," Ned heard Daniel Downs mutter, and one could have understood by the tone, without looking at the old man's face, that now, when the moment for making the trial had come, he was absolutely frightened because of believing a human life was about to be sacrificed.

"All ready, Paul?" Mr. Sawtelle cried, and the lad replied:

"Whenever you say the word, sir."

"Start her!"

By turning the propeller twice the motor was set in motion, and as the crackling explosions followed, Mr. Simpson and the engineer of the *Nera* who stood at one side of the aeroplane, while Zenas and Ned were opposite, held back the light machine as the propeller began to revolve swiftly.

When the motor had attained sufficient speed Mr. Sawtelle gave the signal to let go.

Ned had expected to see the air craft show some



sings of bouyancy when released; but was by no means prepared for what followed. The *Silver Fox* glided forward thirty feet or less with the wheels resting on the ground, and then, gently as a bird rises from the earth, it began to mount upward at an angle of forty-five degrees, soaring directly over Swallow-tailed Cove as steadily as the *Nera* would have glided out of the harbor.

"He's crazy to steer that course, 'cause when he comes down it'll be inter the breakers where we won't be able to lend a hand!" Zenas cried angrily as he set off at full speed toward the cove where the yacht was riding with her anchor hove short, ready to be got under way, and the engineer followed close at his heels, both men believing the trial trip was destined to come to a disastrous end before it had well begun.

Paul and Ned were so excited and elated as to have forgotten entirely that there might be any danger for the aviator, who appeared to be perfectly at his ease, and all the while the *Silver Fox* rose higher and higher in the air until she was an hundred feet or more above the loftiest trees on the island, when her course was changed until the craft swung gracefully around to the eastward, and then toward the south.

"Sawtelle counts on flying around the island!" Mr. Simpson exclaimed, simply giving words to the thought in his mind, rather than with the purpose of enlightening those around him, and all the little company, including Mrs. Downs, stood gazing in open-



mouthed astonishment at the odd craft which obeyed the helm as does a racing boat.

Mr. Simpson had been the first to break the silence born of surprise and admiration, and it was as if the sound of his voice aroused the spectators to the fact that the Barren Island air-ship was an accomplished fact. It was Paul who began to cheer, and instantly the others joined him, sending into the clear air ringing sounds of triumph, until Mr. Sawtelle raised and waved his cap in token of having heard.

Not until the *Silver Fox* was rounding the southerly end of the island, still moving through the air steadily and swiftly, did Paul give heed to the movements of the *Nera*. Then he saw that she had left the harbor headed for Swallow-tailed Cove at the very moment when the aeroplane gained the opposite point, and the lad exclaimed, without really being conscious that he was giving expression to that which was in his mind:

“The *Silver Fox* can sail three miles to the *Nera’s* one, and I reckon by this time Zenas has come to understand that there is little need for him to slow down in order to keep the pace!”

Around the island came the aeroplane, and the yacht had no more than gained the northerly point when the aviator brought his craft inshore, making a short sweep around the “hotel,” after which the *Silver Fox* settled down within fifty feet of the starting place, coming to the ground so gently that, as Ned said enthusiastically, “not a drop would have





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been spilled from a full glass of water if so be Mr. Sawtelle had had one with him."

Then what a cheer went up as those standing near seized the cross-section to hold the craft steady while the aviator dismounted! It was as if everyone, with the single exception of Daniel Downs, was doing his best to expend the full strength of his lungs on noise.

The old man stood like one in a dream, staring at the *Silver Fox*, until Mr. Sawtelle had alighted, when he exclaimed with a long-drawn breath that was like a deep sigh:

"Wa'al, I'll be jiggered if I ever expected to see sich a sight as that in this 'ere world!"

"What about it?" the designer of the *Silver Fox* asked triumphantly as his partner clasped him by the hand. "What about building an air-ship as well? That is what we can readily do, now we have shown our ability to fashion an aeroplane that works as smoothly as does this one."

"It is wonderful, truly wonderful!" Mr. Simpson exclaimed, hardly less excited than was old Daniel. "I had believed it possible to rise in the air, because we know it has been well demonstrated; but I never fancied such a craft could be handled so readily. It is much like sailing a yacht."

"Or steering an automobile," the owner of the *Nera* added. "Now that I have proven the value of my model, I shall not be content until we on Barren Island have accomplished very much more in the way of navigating the air, and, as I predicted last



summer, we will make the people of this country sit up and take notice before another year has passed."

"Shall we put her in the slings, sir?" Paul asked, and Mr. Sawtelle, after one searching glance at the sky, replied decidedly:

"Not a bit of it. We will never have more favorable weather for a long flight than to-day, and I propose that we make the voyage to Seaview. Bring out the wireless apparatus, boys, and we will give our *Silver Fox* a thorough trying out."

By this time the *Nera* had been put about and was returning to the harbor. The *Silver Fox* had been made ready for a second voyage, with the wireless attached, before the yacht came to anchor, and Zenas hurried ashore at full speed, saying breathlessly when he approached the "hotel":

"I've got nothin' more to say agin the crow-chaser from this time out! My! didn't she fly like a daisy?"

"Do daisies fly?" Paul asked laughingly, and Master Cushing added emphatically:

"It makes no difference whether they do or not, she's one, an' a whole flock of birds inter the bargain! What's goin' on now?"

Paul explained that it was Mr. Sawtelle's intention to make the voyage to Seaview, and Zenas, who had declared again and again that he "wasn't fool enough to trust his body on a crow-chaser," exclaimed enviously:

"Jiminy! But I wish I had a chance to go in her! I'd like to see Capt'in Tobi's eyes stick out when she comes flutterin' down inter that bloomin'



town. He'll think the last day is here for certain, when she first heaves in sight."

"And you're willing to say that, after all the sport you have made about sailing in the air?" Ned cried.

"I showed myself to be a fool, that's what. I've been a good deal as Daniel an' his boys were when you rigged up the wireless here, an' they figgered that words couldn't be sent from one place to another without wires for 'em to go on. What do you think of it, Sam?"

Master Downs made no attempt to reply. With his hands thrust deep in his trousers pockets he stood gazing intently at the aeroplane as if still doubting the evidences of his own eyes, and Zenas added in an odd tone:

"What chance will John Ed have in a fog now? I'm allowin' this 'ere machine is a wrinkle or two above him, eh?"

"I never expected to see sich a sight as her sailin' 'round the island, an' it don't seem possible even now that it was really done!" old Daniel exclaimed to no one in particular, and Mr. Sawtelle added laughingly:

"Perhaps you'll believe it better when we set off once more. The world has been moving, Daniel, during all the while you have vegetated on this island, and it is barely possible your friend Bingham won't be able to keep up with the procession. Burning buildings, and running to and fro in a dory propelled only by oars, is a little behind the times even in the committing of crimes."

"He's no friend of mine," Mr. Downs made haste



to say as he looked meaningly at Sam, and the latter shifted his weight from one foot to the other as he continued to gaze like one in a daze at the *Silver Fox*.

"Are we to run the *Nera* again, sir?" Master Cushing asked. "We can't hope to keep anywhere near you, after the speed that's been shown."

"You may as well get under way now, and head in a direct line for Seaview. I count on passing over the yacht before you are many miles away; but, as a matter of course, it is impossible to say that we shall get along without trouble, therefore keep a sharp eye out for the aeroplane."

"I'll do that, sir, an' from this on, instead of tryin' to be a sailor, I count on fittin' myself for a first-class high flyer."

Then Master Cushing and the engineer hastened back to the harbor, and this time Paul noted that they made all speed to get under way, for there was no longer any question in their minds of driving the *Nera* too fast.

To make ready for the second voyage was but a short task after the wireless had been swung in place, and, looking very proud, Ned took his seat on the aeroplane just behind the aviator, as Paul asked:

"Are you to send me the first message, or shall I keep on calling you?"

"Ill telegraph when we pass the *Nera*, and again after we come within sight of Seaview."

"How long do you reckon it'll take you to fly across?" Mr. Downs asked, having partially recov-



ered from the stupefaction caused by the successful flight of the *Silver Fox*.

"We'll make the voyage easily within an hour, if the motor works as it should, and be back here in time for an early dinner," Mr. Sawtelle replied as he seated himself and gave the signal for Paul to let on the power by turning the propeller.

Once more the machine rose gently but surely into the air. Ned, believing there would be felt some violent shock as the *Silver Fox* left the ground, took a firm hold of the braces near at hand, and much to his surprise would not have been able to say when the aeroplane ascended, so imperceptible was the motion. He hardly felt the jar of the wheels as the fabric was propelled on land forty or fifty feet, and then it was as if the island had dropped out from beneath him, for he could no longer see those who had assisted in setting the air-ship in motion, save by looking downward.

He had expected to be dizzy on gazing at the earth after having risen a considerable distance, and hardly dared turn his eyes earthward; but again he was mistaken. It was quite different from being on the top of a high building, for he had no sense of insecureness, and the rush through the air exhilarated instead of causing fear.

Involuntarily he shrank backward when they passed over the line of white water which marked the entrance to Swallow-tailed Cove. It seemed for the moment as if they must of necessity fight their way through the foam-crested waves, and then came a



strange, exultant sensation as of being superior to those on the earth.

Mr. Sawtelle remained motionless, his hands resting lightly on the levers, after the *Silver Fox* had attained the desired height and was sailing on what sailors might call an "even keel," and, understanding somewhat of that which was in his companion's mind, asked laughingly:

"Well, what about it, lad? Do you find any reason for being afraid?"

"Not a bit of it, sir, and the odd part is that I can look down without growing dizzy, as would be the case if I was on the topmast-head of a large vessel."

"It is the perfection of sailing," was the enthusiastic reply. "I've been up in an aeroplane many times; but only on two occasions have I done the navigating. I formerly believed the *Nera* couldn't be improved upon; but surely this machine which we have built is her superior in every way."

"Except that in case of a wreck you haven't much chance to battle for your life. It is a matter of falling to be dashed to pieces."

"Death is no more certain in event of the wreck of an aeroplane, than if you were on the water. Suppose the *Nera* struck the reef that shows in front of Swallow-tailed Cove, at low tide? You wouldn't be in any danger of falling; but the chances are as an hundred to one that you'd be dashed to death against the rocks, or sucked beneath the surface to drown. In this machine, if the motor becomes dis-



abled, we still have the fabric itself to bear us up, and should descend without any great velocity."

"Do you believe that Paul and I could make and sail such a craft as this?" Ned asked, his thoughts soaring far into the future.

"Why not? To navigate her is simply a matter of keeping the motor at work, as on the *Nera*, and to become familiar with the levers which direct the rudder and the raising or lowering of either side. But what about telegraphing? There's the yacht, and Zenas is waving his hat as if believing we needed encouragement."

It did not seem possible to the lad that they could have sailed far enough to overtake the *Nera*, for the yacht had left the harbor a full fifteen minutes before the *Silver Fox* was got under way, and yet there was the little craft, looking now like a toy boat, just beneath. A moment later she lay far astern, and by the time Ned had his instrument working, was almost lost to view in the distance.

Then it was that Paul, in the telegraph-room of the "hotel," received these words from out the clear air:

"Just passed *Nera*. Looked as if standing still; but from the wake I knew Zenas was pushing her for all she was worth."

"How does it feel to fly?" Paul asked by aid of the key which sent the series of dots and dashes as sound waves through the ether.

"Great. A fellow can't be afraid. It is simply a case of sitting still and feeling the air rush past you. Will send word when we make Seaview."



Mr. Simpson was in the telegraph-room waiting to hear some news of the air voyagers, and shortly before Paul received the message from Ned, Mr. Downs and his two sons crowded into the doorway without actually daring to enter, each still looking dazed.

Just then the world on Barren Island was moving so swiftly that they had, so to speak, no opportunity to catch their breath.

"Do you allow your chum can send any word by this 'ere contraption while he's in the air?" the old man asked, speaking slowly and with a certain unusual tone of respect, as if the success of the aeroplane caused him to stand in awe of those who had had a hand in the making of the wonderful machine.

"There is no reason why he can't," Paul replied cheerily, and at the same instant came the crackling and snapping noises which told that the antennæ had caught certain sound waves such as had a meaning to the initiated.

Then, later, Paul repeated what Ned had sent, and Mr. Downs was again overwhelmed by amazement.

"To think I was fool enough to call that 'ere machine a crow-chaser! Why it must have sailed like a bird to catch the *Nera* so soon."

"You have seen how fast it can go," Mr. Simpson suggested, and old Daniel replied slowly:

"I allow I saw the thing sail 'round the island, an' yet I can't make it seem more'n a dream. To think I called it a crow-chaser! Jest to think I showed myself sich a fool!"

"That is not the only way in which you have given



evidence of folly within the past few weeks, Daniel," Mr. Simpson said gravely. "You must come to realize that there are people in this world besides John Ed Bingham, and that while he and you have been standing still, others have taken part in the progress which is being made from day to day."

"An' to think I called it a crow-chaser!" the old man repeated as he turned to leave the building.

Ten minutes later Paul received the following from the operator on the aeroplane:

"Within sight Seaview. *Silver Fox* sailing like a bird. Great sport this flying. Nothing like it."

"Are you counting on stopping at Seaview?" Paul asked, and Ned replied:

"The captain says we shall. He thinks—— We have just passed over John Ed in his dory entering harbor."

Regarding this last bit of information Paul would have made some comment; but repeated calls failed to provoke any reply. Communication seemed to have been shut off suddenly, and, since the weather conditions were all that could have been desired for wireless telegraphing, he could do no better than guess that the journey had come to an end.

"They have most likely alighted," he said to his father who yet remained in the room to hear the messages sent by the voyagers. "What a commotion it must have caused when they settled down into Seaview! I'd give considerable to see Captain Tobi's face just now!"

"One can readily fancy how he looked, and what



he said," Mr. Simpson replied laughingly. "Now since Sawtelle has demonstrated his ability to build an air craft that can be navigated, the possibilities seem limitless, and Barren Island will show up as a place of more importance than simply a farm for the rearing of silver foxes."

"How can that be when the aeroplane is hardly more than a plaything, like the *Nera*?"

"Sawtelle has it in mind to establish here a large factory for the building of air craft of all kinds. The *Silver Fox* has been made simply to demonstrate the value of his model, and there can be no question as to its success, therefore you may reckon with reasonable certainty that this island will soon be a busy place."

"Meaning that all hands of us are to turn air-ship builders rather than fox farmers," Paul said with a laugh, unable to realize the full importance of his father's words.

"We shall hold on to the foxes, my boy; but they have become of secondary importance now the aeroplane works so well. What may be the result when twenty or thirty men are living here I am unable to say; but fear——"

"Why should so many men come?" Paul asked in astonishment.

"I have just told you that Sawtelle counts on establishing extensive works here, and a large number of laborers will be necessary for the carrying out of his plans. We can prevent the employés from going on that part of the island where are the foxes;



but I fear that the noise and confusion consequent upon the building operations will go far toward ruining my project. Call Ned again; they should have brought their visit to an end by this time."

Paul did as his father directed, and was not a little concerned because he had failed to receive any reply at the end of ten minutes' almost incessant calling.

"Very likely Sawtelle is giving the astonished inhabitants of Seaview ample opportunity of viewing the aeroplane," Mr. Simpson said as if he failed to see anything to cause alarm in this prolonged silence; but Paul was not so comfortable in mind.

"If they were to stay there many minutes surely Ned would run up to our station and send some word, for of course the wireless on board the aeroplane is useless while the machine remains on the ground. He promised to keep me posted as to what was going on," the lad said nervously, and his father replied laughingly:

"Sawtelle probably finds it hard work to get away from such men as Captain Tobi and Mansfield. It is only natural they'd want the general construction of the craft explained, and he may be expecting each minute to get away, therefore Ned wouldn't be allowed to go up to your station."

Paul was forced to be satisfied with this explanation, since it was not possible to get any other; but he was more than worried because of the silence, and continued to repeat Ned's call from time to time until half an hour more had passed, when he was overjoyed at hearing the letters p—l sounded twice.



“O. K. p—1,” he replied, and continued with, “I have been wondering why——”

He was not able to finish the sentence, for instantly Ned attempted to send a message, and, switching on the receiver once more, he was startled at reading from the instrument:

“Bring your father at once in the Hampton. Bingham has made trouble. Where is the *Nera*?”

“Haven’t seen her since she left, before you started. What is the matter?”

“No time to explain. Hurry your father over.”

Paul waited for further word while one might have counted twenty; but the instrument remained silent, and it was reasonable to suppose Ned had ceased sending because of some serious trouble.

Mr. Simpson had left the building five minutes before Ned’s urgent summons was received, and without saying to what part of the island he intended to go.

Paul ran to the door and looked hurriedly in every direction; but without seeing anyone until Sam lounged into view.

Just for an instant the thought came that this lad had some knowledge of what Bingham might have attempted in the way of injuring the aeroplane, and was now loitering around in the hope of hearing that the plot had been successful.

Paul dismissed the suspicion, however, almost as soon as it had been formed in his mind, knowing full well that there could have been no communication



between the old smuggler and this member of the Downs family since the voyage to Seaview was decided upon, and said to the boy, speaking in the tone of one to whom even seconds are precious:

“Go as fast as you can toward the spring to find my father. Tell him it is of the greatest importance he meet me at the harbor without loss of time. I’ll run around this end of Swallow-tailed Cove to see if he may be there. Hurry, Sam, for this is the time when you can make amends for the past.”

“What’s started up so awful sudden?” Master Downs asked with a drawl, seemingly not one whit disturbed by Paul’s excitement and alarm.

“Don’t stop to talk now; but hurry! I’ll tell you about it later. Go, do you hear? Move quickly!”

It is not certain Sam would have obeyed until after his curiosity had been satisfied; but, fortunately for Paul’s purpose, Mr. Downs came out of the building at this moment, and when the lad hastily said it was necessary his father be sent to the harbor at the earliest possible moment, the old farmer was stirred to immediate action. Master Sam was packed off as rapidly as he ever moved before, and Paul ran around the northern end of the island.

Not less than ten minutes elapsed before Mr. Simpson appeared on the shore of the harbor, and then Paul was in the Hampton boat with the anchor hove short, ready to get under way at once.

“What is the trouble?” Mr. Simpson asked in surprise, and Paul shouted hurriedly:



“Jump aboard and I’ll tell you after we have started. Ned telegraphed that you were to come at once.”

Mr. Simpson was in the dory before his son had ceased speaking, and instantly he gained a footing on the Hampton boat Paul started the motor at full speed.

Then was repeated the message which had come by wireless, and the owner of Silver Fox Farm looked decidedly troubled as he muttered half to himself:

“How has it been possible that Bingham could do any harm to the aeroplane? Ned must have made some mistake.”

“You can’t believe he would send such a message without having been ordered to do so by Mr. Sawtelle?”

“No, no, I hardly knew what I said. Yet how can we be of any assistance? It will take us nearly two hours to run over there if the motor works well, and by that time Bingham could have done the mischief, or been beaten off. But where is the *Nera*?”

“That seems to be about as mysterious as the rest of it,” Paul replied as he held the little craft straight on her course. “Ned telegraphed that they had passed *over* John Ed, and in such case I fail to understand what he could do. Then again, the *Nera* had time to go to Seaview and come back before the last message regarding her was received.”

The longer father and son discussed the matter the more bewildered and perplexed were they. The only part of the day’s work which was not in the



highest degree mystifying, was the behavior of the Hampton boat, and she was doing her full duty in a manner that could be understood as well as admired.

With a big bone in her teeth she sailed at full speed on the most direct course to Seaview, with never a slip nor a catch of the motor, as if bent on giving her crew an opportunity to solve the mystery at the earliest possible moment



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE ATTACK

IN order the better to understand why Ned had sent out what was neither more nor less than a cry for help, it will be well to go back in the story to the beginning of the trial trip, when the *Silver Fox* left Barren Island.

The wonder of that journey, which was so enchanting to Ned until it came to an abrupt end at Seaview was, that he had no sensation of fear even when Mr. Sawtelle sent the aeroplane high in the air, and again allowed her to descend until it was as if she simply skimmed over the tops of the lazy waves. There was to him such a feeling of confidence in the stability of the machine; so great a faith that it was possible to make her do whatever the steersman desired, that he could not have felt more secure from disaster had he been on board the well-tried *Nera*.

The exhilaration of passing swiftly through the clear air, with neither reefs nor shoals to cause anxiety, was so great that it was only with difficulty he prevented himself from crying aloud in triumph and joy. The possibility of danger had no place in his thoughts, and the single regret was that Paul could not be with him to share in the wondrous happiness.

It was not quite a simple matter to work the wireless from his narrow perch, for the passenger accommodations of the *Silver Fox* were limited; but he



so far succeeded that Paul, as we know, had no difficulty in deciphering the dots and dashes.

Then came the first glimpse of Seaview, and he mentally hugged himself as he thought of the excitement that would ensue when the aeroplane, hovering a few moments above the little town, settled down like a bird seeking rest, in the open common back of Captain Tobi's home.

He was mentally patting himself on the head because it had been his good fortune to take part in this trial trip, when Mr. Sawtelle said sharply:

"Look just beneath us at the dory!"

"Why it's John Ed!" Ned cried as if it was the most astonishing thing in the world that the old smuggler should be there, and as he began telegraphing the surprising fact to Paul, Bingham stood up in his boat in order to see the better, rubbing his eyes in bewilderment.

"The fog wouldn't have helped you if this machine had been built at the time you gave us the slip," Ned shouted as he finished the message to Paul, and because the aeroplane was no more than an hundred fifty feet above the water at that time, Mr. Bingham had no difficulty in understanding all the boy said.

It surely seemed as if he must have heard considerable regarding the progress made in the navigation of the air, for on the instant his look of surprise vanished, and allowing himself to drop back on the thwart the smuggler cried in a tone of rage:

"I'm not needin' a fog to square matters! Don't crow too soon, for it may be that the time is close



by when I'll wipe off the score that was run up by you folks goin' out'er your way to send me to prison!"

John Ed added very much more, as could be guessed by his gestures; but the *Silver Fox* was sailing so swiftly that only these words could be distinguished, and Ned said with a laugh which bespoke the confidence he had in the staunchness of the aeroplane:

"He's beginning to understand that we can no longer be harmed by what he may try to do. It is an easy matter to bore a hole in the hull of the *Nera*; but a craft like this, flying so far beyond his reach, is a bit too much for him."

"The only injury he may do is by coming ashore on Barren Island, as when the first machine was wrecked; but now his snug hiding-place has been found, thanks to Zenas, there's little fear he could succeed in his villainy even though the entire Downs family conspired to aid him," Mr. Sawtelle replied confidently, and then he laughed heartily, for at that moment the inhabitants of Seaview were swarming out of their houses and shops like bees from a hive, as they gazed and pointed at the strange craft directly above their heads.

The owner of the *Nera* was bent on giving the good people of the village an exhibition of the aeroplane's qualities, for instead of alighting immediately he swooped down until the antennæ of the wireless nearly dragged on the roof of Mansfield's shop, and then rose again while the excited citizens shouted themselves hoarse in a frenzy of fear or admiration.



"I can hear Captain Tobi's voice above all the rest," Ned said laughingly, for taking part in such a performance was much to his liking. "He'll try to make out that this is no new thing to him, and yet it's certain he never saw an aeroplane before."

"They shall know what it is to sail in the air," Mr. Sawtelle replied grimly, steering the light fabric in circles above the heads of the people, and handling her as readily as he would have handled a water craft.

"Ahoy!" came in tempest notes from the earth below, and there was no need for Ned to say that Captain Tobi was shouting. "Does that 'ere contraption come from Barren Island?"

"The *Silver Fox*, from Barren Island, on a cruise. Report us," Mr. Sawtelle cried merrily.

"Heave to an' let's have a look at yer! I've heered of sich things; but by the great James I never expected to see one! Heave to an' let go your anchor. We'll haul you down."

"We're not needing help when it comes to making harbor," the helmsman cried laughingly, and again the *Silver Fox* was sent nearly to the earth; but only to rise again and mount higher and higher in circles until she must have been a full eight hundred feet above the astounded throng.

"Now we'll show Captain Tobi how to make a landing," Mr. Sawtelle said gleefully, swinging the machine around as if to sail out to sea, and then, circling again, made preparations to alight on the common.

The *Silver Fox* was yet two hundred feet or more



from the ground when Ned heard what sounded like the snapping of a fire-cracker, and, involuntarily looking down, he saw a tiny puff of smoke at the same instant that a second report came to his ears.

"What is it?" he asked without the faintest suspicion that these noises betokened danger to the machine.

"Someone is shooting at us," Mr. Sawtelle replied sharply, as he strove to change the course of the aeroplane with a view to fleeing from the peril.

"Shooting at us!" Ned exclaimed. "Surely they wouldn't do a thing like that!"

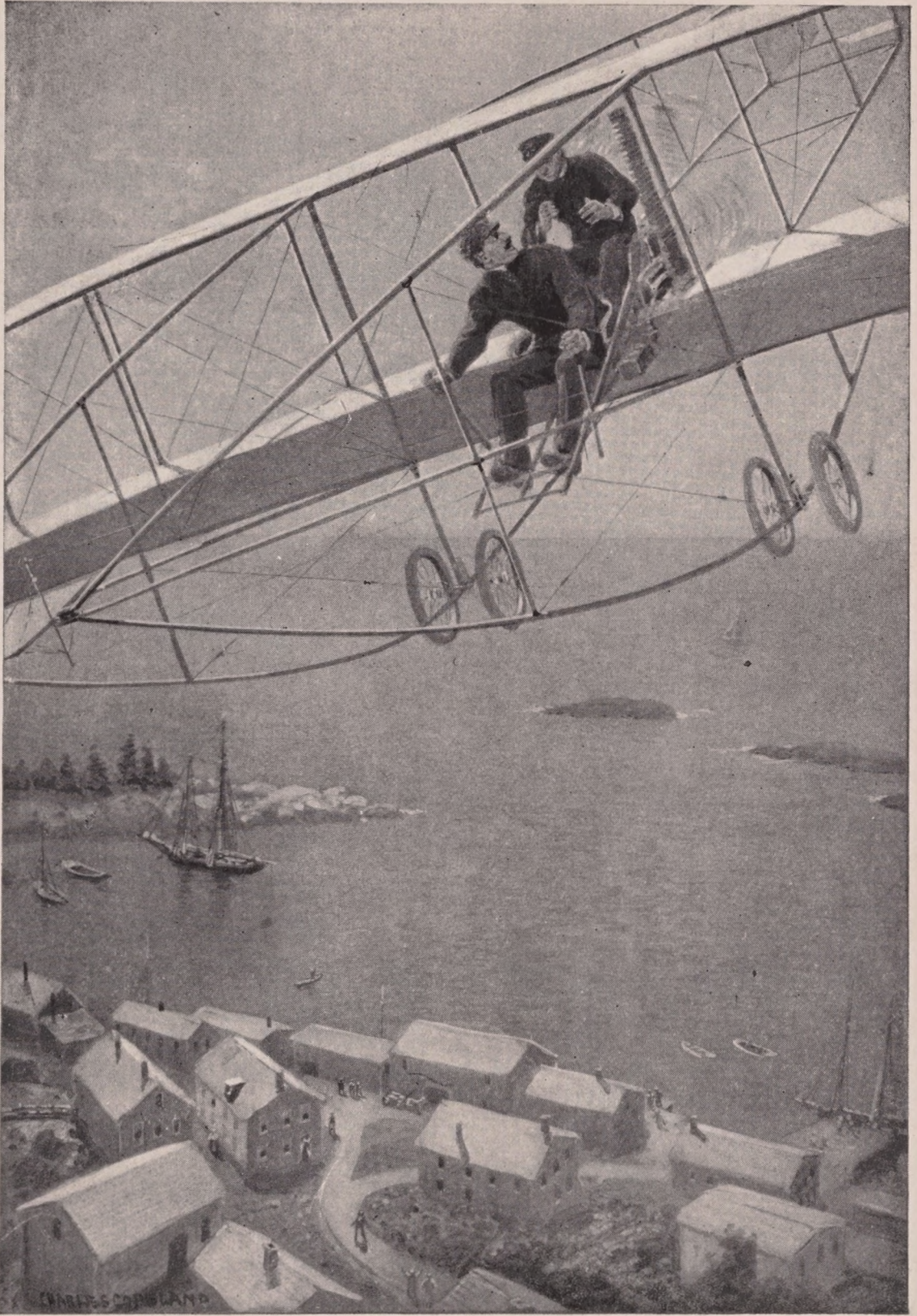
Then could be heard the hum of voices raised in anger, loud shouts, and hoarse commands, while again came that crackling noise which told that a fire-arm of some kind had been discharged, and it seemed to Ned as if the *Silver Fox* swayed to and fro like a wounded bird.

"Look out for yourself, lad! That villain has disabled the steering gear! Don't jump until we are close to the ground, and not even then unless the machine is settling too rapidly."

The shouts of rage from below increased. Paul could see that the people were running to and fro as if in pursuit of someone, and then a word from the steersman warned him that the moment of peril was close at hand.

"Keep your wits about you, lad! [We should be able to come down all right; the danger is at the instant we strike, when the machine will be crushed. Strive to keep clear of the wreckage!"]





"KEEP YOUR WITS ABOUT YOU, LAD!"







The words were no more than spoken before the *Silver Fox* was plowing her way along the common toward a small hill crowned by a stone wall, against which it seemed certain she must strike.

"Stand well out on the lower braces, and then jump!" Mr. Sawtelle cried as he stood up ready to act upon his own suggestion, and then Ned felt himself hurled through the air until his body came in painful contact with some unyielding surface, after which all was a blank.

When the boy next became conscious of his surroundings, someone was bellowing in his ear and at the same time tugging at his arm.

"Perk up, lad, there's nothin' the matter with you, though you may be a bit shook up. Come around, I tell you, an' let this be a lesson that you'll remember to your last day, for when a man tries sailin' on air he's likely to come to smash somehow or other."

As a matter of course Ned understood it was Captain Tobi who thus shouted and pulled, for there was no other man within an hundred miles of Seaview who had such strength of lungs, and when the lad opened his eyes it was to ask:

"Did somebody try to shoot us?"

"I reckon that's what they did, lad, an', 'cordin' to the looks of things, come mighty nigh hittin' the mark. How'er you feelin'?"

"I'll be all right in a minute," Ned replied as he rose to a sitting posture with Captain Tobi's vigorous aid. "Who fired the gun?"

"That miserable sneak of a smuggler, John Ed



Bingham. He's tryin' mighty hard to land in jail agin, an' we'll put him there next time he comes 'round this way, even if I never see a cent of the money he owes me for the *Zoe*."

"Where is he now?"

"'Twixt here an' Barren Island, I reckon. He was headin' that way last time I saw him, an' he wouldn't have got off sound an' whole if any of this 'ere crowd had had sense enough to put after him in Mansfield's power boat."

"We passed him when we were nearing the town, and I can't understand how he got here so soon," Ned said half to himself, and Captain Tobi roared:

"He can handle a pair of oars better'n any other man I ever saw. I reckon he had the rifle with him in the boat, an' made up his mind that the time had come when he could do a little more'n the ordinary run of mischief. He came to anchor at the head of the dock, an' began firin' while the man what owns the *Nera* was cuttin' capers in the sky as a way of showin' off, I allow. You see, Bingham was so far away by the time we got our wits about us enough to give chase, he'd winged that 'ere contrivance of your'n, an' was headin' for open water in that old dory of his'n."

"Where is Mr. Sawtelle?" Ned asked, not fully understanding all that Captain Tobi had said, for his head was humming too severely to admit of connected thought.

"Yonder, pickin' up what's left of his bird. That man must be the same as a nat'ral born fool, to think



he can go flyin' here an' there like an old maid loon what's swore off on swimmin'."

"The aeroplane would have worked all right if Bingham hadn't disabled the steering gear," Ned cried hotly, not minded that anyone should attempt to belittle the performance of the *Silver Fox* without remonstrance from him.

"It's goin' clean agin nature to build them 'ere flyin' machines," the old sailor roared as if in anger, and then, suddenly remembering what the aeroplane had done, he added in a more subdued tone; "but I must admit, lad, that she stood off an' on in a way to have done credit to the best ship ever built. Tell me, did you on Barren Island put the thing together?"

"We built her, of course, and we'll build another if she is wrecked past repair. I must find Mr. Sawtelle, and then send word to the island," Ned replied, rising to his feet and staggering not a little as he made his way toward the stone wall on the hill where he could see a large number of people clustered closely together.

Captain Tobi followed close by his side asking so many questions that the lad, yet dizzy and faint from the effects of the fall, failed to understand any of them.

He had hardly more than come up to the outermost of the curious ones who had gathered around the wounded air craft, when Mr. Sawtelle saw and hailed him with the question:

"Have you been hurt much, lad?"



“No, sir; I’m all right, or will be after my head gets a little more steady.”

“Can you go over to your station and telegraph to the island?”

“Yes, sir; but Bingham——”

“Never mind about that scoundrel!” Mr. Sawtelle cried hotly. “Get word across as quickly as possible, and tell Simpson to come over at once in the Hampton boat. Where the *Nera* can be I fail to understand.”

“But when Bingham——” Ned began, intending to make Mr. Sawtelle aware of the fact that the old smuggler had put to sea heading for Barren Island; but that gentleman was too excited to have all his wits about him, and cried angrily:

“Do as I have told you! Don’t attempt to explain to them what has happened, for it will take too long; but let Simpson understand that he must get here at once.”

Ned realized that it would not be well to linger in the hope of imparting information regarding John Ed, and, promising himself that he would insist on Mr. Sawtelle’s hearing the story after he had sent the message, hurried away, while Captain Tobi remained with the throng of curious ones, striving in vain to get reply to the many questions which he literally hurled at the head of the *Nera*’s owner.

Five minutes later the lad had sent those words which caused Paul so much alarm, and then, believing it was of the utmost importance Mr. Sawtelle should be forced to know of Bingham’s movements, because the island would be deserted, save for the Downs fam-



ily, after Mr. Simpson and his son had started, he hastened toward the hill where was the disabled aeroplane.

It was fully half an hour before he could gain the attention of his employer, so excited and angry was that gentleman, and then, after many futile attempts, he repeated what Captain Tobi had said.

“Yes, he may be heading for the island,” Mr. Sawtelle said in a tone of irritation, after considering the matter a moment; “but we are powerless to check him just yet. Simpson should be here within an hour, and then, after having put what is left of the *Silver Fox* aboard the Hampton, we’ll do our best to get back before the smuggler has very much time in which to worry the foxes. Why the *Nera* isn’t here I fail utterly of understanding. Zenas had orders to come directly across, and there is no good excuse for his absence when we are needing him so sorely.”

Ned turned away in disappointment. Although having no idea as to what could be done, he believed that Mr. Sawtelle, on learning there was danger Bingham might land within a very short time on the island, would be able to do something toward blocking the old smuggler’s game, if so be he had one.

Now it seemed as if John Ed would succeed in working all the mischief he had in his wicked head. The *Nera* was at sea, Ned could not so much as guess where, and on board her was Zenas Cushing, the one man among all the employés who had shown that he might be able to thwart the designs of the man who was bent on paying off an old score.



Mr. Simpson and Paul were between the island and the mainland, doing their best to reach Seaview within the shortest possible time, and none remained to guard the farm but the Downs family, all four of whom stood in mortal fear of Bingham. That mischief-maker could sail boldly into the harbor without fear of meeting with opposition, and then work his pleasure upon the foxes, to say nothing of the evil that might be wrought in and around the "hotel."

"I can't understand why Mr. Sawtelle should have sent for Paul and his father, when we might have hired Mansfield's power boat to take the wreck of the aeroplane across, in case the *Nera* doesn't put in an appearance before we are ready to start," Ned muttered disconsolately. "Mr. Simpson ought to have been left on the island to keep the Downs family straight, and surely Paul's place is in the telegraph-room so that the two partners may be in communication. We have played directly into Bingham's hands by bringing everyone over here."

Ned could effect nothing by thus scolding to himself, and soon came to understand such fact. Mr. Sawtelle was busily engaged directing the movements of those whom he had hired to carry the wreck of the *Silver Fox* to the pier, that it might be loaded on the Hampton boat immediately she arrived, and there was really nothing the lad could do in the way of bettering the situation.

He sauntered leisurely toward the pier, and, once arrived, seated himself on a pile of lumber where he watched for the coming of Paul, for there was no



longer any hope in his mind that Zenas would appear in time to be of any assistance.

It was useless to make any attempt at guessing what might have delayed the *Nera*. It seemed certain something out of the ordinary must have happened; yet his wildest flights of fancy failed of hitting upon any solution that seemed probable.

The citizens of Seaview arrived on the pier with the wreck of the *Silver Fox*, and at first glance it appeared to Ned that the destruction was so nearly complete it would be impossible to repair the craft; but he soon came to understand that Mr. Sawtelle had detached all movable parts for greater ease of transportation, and the only real injury was to the steering gear, which could readily be restored to its former condition.

When Mr. Sawtelle had made certain there was nothing more his volunteer assistants could do, and it was now only a question of waiting with such of patience as might be possible, for the arrival of the Hampton boat, or the *Nera*, he came up to where Ned was listlessly watching the proceedings, saying as he wiped the tiny streams of perspiration from his face:

“We have come out of it better than we had any right to expect, lad. Neither you nor I are seriously hurt, and the damage to the aeroplane can be repaired by a day’s labor. That scoundrelly smuggler counted on killing us, as it appears to me, else he was so excited at having an opportunity to do mischief that he failed to realize what might be the result of disabling



the machine. This time he can be arrested for having committed a murderous assault, and the charge is a serious one."

"In the meantime he is free to do as he pleases on Barren Island," Ned replied bitterly. "None of the Downs family would dare to oppose him in whatever he might attempt, and before we can run the Hampton boat back, the foxes will have suffered."

"All of which could have been prevented had Zenas obeyed orders," the owner of the *Nera* cried angrily. "If he had come straight across, it would have been possible for him to set off in pursuit of Bingham with every chance of overtaking the villain. As it is, we must make the best of a bad matter, if indeed there is any best to it, consoling ourselves with the promise to soon serve John Ed out as he deserves."

"Where do you suppose the *Nera* is just now?" Ned asked, and Mr. Sawtelle replied sharply as he gazed seaward:

"A dozen miles to sea, most like, on some pleasuring or experimental cruise of Cushing's. When next I see that young man, he will have a very good idea that it is his duty to obey such orders as are given him."

Then the owner of the *Nera* relapsed into silence, and no word passed between him and the lad until a tiny black dot on the waters, far away to the eastward, told that the Hampton boat was nearing the town.

Half an hour later Paul was on the pier listening to Ned's story of what John Ed had succeeded in ac-



complishing, and when the hurried recital had come to an end Master Simpson asked in surprise:

“Wasn’t Zenas anywhere near to take a hand?”

“The *Nera* hasn’t arrived here. Mr. Sawtelle thinks Zenas has put to sea, bent on some foolish experiment, and it is safe to say that young Mr. Cushing will get the wiggling of his life when he next comes within hail of the yacht’s owner.”

The boys were allowed but little time for private conversation. Before Paul could comment upon the news imparted by Ned, Mr. Sawtelle called for the boys to bear a hand in putting the disabled aeroplane on board the Hampton boat, and no sooner had this been done than the craft was gotten under way at once, Captain Tobi calling in tempest note as she glided swiftly away from the pier:

“Next time you people get ready to fly, take care there’s nobody nigh to shoot the tail feathers out’er your bird.”

“The way to avoid anything more of the kind is to put Bingham where he can’t be so free with fire-arms,” Mr. Sawtelle replied grimly. “In that task I’m expecting you people of Seaview will do what you can to aid me. It is a disgrace to the entire state that a man like John Ed should be allowed to make a deliberate attempt at murder.”

“We’re with you in that, all right; but before he’s clapped inter prison agin I’m countin’ to make the rascal pay what he owes for the *Zoe*, an’ when he has squared up you shall have a whack at him.”

By this time the Hampton boat was too far from



the pier to admit of further conversation with the citizens of Seaview, and the owner of the *Nera* said bitterly:

“Captain Tobi can’t be made to believe that Bingham has committed any greater crime than that of refusing to pay for the boat he bought so long ago, and I’m inclined to believe the old sailor would forgive him for this day’s work if paying the debt was to be the price of the pardon.”

“The people of Seaview have a very clear idea that Bingham should be punished for his many crimes,” Mr. Simpson replied; “but, like Daniel and his family, they are afraid to take a very active part in running him down, lest he work them a mischief later. Have you any idea as to where the *Nera* can have gone?”

“I wouldn’t try to guess,” was the angry reply; “but it is certain Zenas Cushing won’t make any more independent cruises in her—that is,” he added laughingly, “if I ever get an opportunity to give him my views on the subject.”

No one ventured to speak of what might be happening on Barren Island. All had reason to believe John Ed was on his way there, if he had not already landed, and there was too much of anxiety in their hearts to admit of discussion regarding the possibilities.

It was as if each took good care to avoid the subject, and the last portion of the journey was made in silence, save for the churning of the screw and the detonations of exploding gas in the cylinders.



When the Hampton boat rounded the northerly point of the little harbor every member of her crew strained his eyes to see some evidence of mischief done by the old smuggler, and all believed, since they had failed to see him during the voyage, that he must be on the island.

Silver Fox Farm had never looked more peaceful than when the Hampton boat swung to her moorings and the owners of the island, with the two boys, went over the rail into the dory which had been towing astern.

No other craft was to be seen. It was as if the *Nera* had gone to the bottom of the sea, and in case John Ed Bingham had really landed on the farm, both himself and his dory were well hidden from view.

Daniel Downs and his two sons, who had evidently seen the arrival of the Hampton boat, were coming leisurely down to the cove from the "hotel," wearing a look of serenity that could not have been assumed if they had had any knowledge of the happenings at Seaview.

"Did you get tired of flyin'?" the old man asked innocently as the voyagers stepped ashore, and instead of answering the question, Mr. Sawtelle inquired sharply:

"Have you seen anything of the *Nera* since she left port?"

"Wa'al now, I can't say for certain I did; but me an' the boys kind'er reckoned she went by, hull down, to the nor'ard more'n two hours ago. I didn't give any great heed to her, 'cause it wasn't reasonable to



believe she'd be so far away. Anythin' the matter with the flyin' machine?"

"Bingham amused himself by shooting at us while we were in the air, with the result that our steering gear was disabled, and we were forced to come back by boat," Mr. Sawtelle replied curtly, and Paul fancied that an expression of fear came over the faces of Sam and his father. "Has anyone landed here since we left?"

"Not a single soul, sir," was the emphatic reply. "Except for the craft I've been tellin' you about, we haven't sighted anythin' in the shape of a boat near here, an' we've been what you might call on watch all day, countin' to see you come back jest as perky as when you left."

Both the owners of Barren Island looked scrutinizingly at the old man and his two sons, as if to convince themselves of the truth or falsity of his statement, and then Mr. Simpson said abruptly:

"You and your sons are to load the sections of the aeroplane into the dory, and bring them ashore. We'll bear a hand when they are on the beach."

Mr. Sawtelle had already started toward the "hotel," and Paul and Ned followed, eager to be where they might gain some rest, for the excitement and adventures of the day had wearied them to the verge of exhaustion.

The owner of the *Nera* apparently forgot that he had had nothing to eat since early daybreak, and, disregarding the information given by Mrs. Downs to the effect that there was "somethin' left over from



dinner that would kind'er fill their stomachs," he led the way to the work-tent, or, more properly speaking, to where the canvas lay on the ground as it had been dropped to admit of the exit of the *Silver Fox*.

"It is my intention to repair the machine that has been disabled, and then build an air-ship on somewhat the same lines as those used by Count Zeppelin," he exclaimed, throwing himself on the ground wearily. "Nothing will be done in that direction, however, or in the way of silver fox farming, until we have laid Bingham by the heels. From this moment my sole purpose shall be to catch that scoundrel. When he is taken care of by the ministers of justice, we will do as I have said. There is no reason why we can't continue the work even after winter has come, and I do not intend to leave this place, save in order to procure materials, until we have so much in the way of a fleet of air craft as will astonish the majority of aviators."

Half an hour later, when Mr. Downs and his sons came, each carrying some portion of the wounded aeroplane, Mr. Simpson set them to work raising the tent once more, and after the work-room was in shape all hands began the transportation of the crippled *Silver Fox* to the place of its birth.

The sun had set before this was done, and for at least the hundredth time Ned asked Paul in a whisper if he believed Zenas would dare remain outside all night, when Sam Downs cried excitedly as he pointed seaward in the direction of Swallow-tailed Cove:

"There's the *Nera*, an' it looks as if she'd been



runnin' a good bit, else why is she comin' from the east'ard?"

Paul and Ned shouted with joy, for both had been more distressed regarding the possible safety of the little yacht and her crew than they would have cared to admit; but Mr. Sawtelle's face took on an expression of sternness as he walked slowly toward the harbor, causing Ned to whisper:

"Zenas is in for a mighty rough time, unless he can give a good reason for putting to sea instead of going to Seaview."

"And how can he do that? The order was to stand straight across to the mainland, and it's certain he didn't even make a try at doing it."

"But he must have some kind of an excuse," Ned persisted, and Paul replied in a tone of irritation:

"It will have to be a mighty good one, and there's nothing that could have happened to warrant his running off contrary to orders. If he'd had anybody aboard who could work the wireless, then it might be he got a call for help; but we know that neither he nor the engineer understands anything about telegraphing."

The *Nera* bore toward the island as if eager to be at anchor once more, and when she rounded the point, coming into full view of those who had gathered at the harbor, Paul cried aloud in triumph:

"He's been chasing John Ed, and what's more, he has caught him! Look astern, and you'll see the old dory!"

Although the sun had set, it was not so dark but



that the little company on shore recognized the weather-beaten dory owned by the old smuggler, towing in the wake of the yacht. Every member of the party had seen the battered craft so often there could be no mistake as to her identity, and during five minutes there was great rejoicing, for all believed that the man who had worked so much of mischief on Barren Island, and who had it in his heart to work still more, was a prisoner aboard the *Nera*.

It seemed well-nigh impossible for them to remain inactive on the beach while the yacht was anchored and Zenas came ashore. Within sixty seconds from the time of her appearance around the point, Paul and Ned had launched a dory, and, with the owners of the island as passengers, were pulling off to the *Nera's* mooring-place.

“Where have you been?” Mr. Sawtelle shouted impatiently even before the dainty little craft had come to an anchor, and Zenas replied, but with no note of triumph in his voice:

“Chasin’ John Ed. I was comin’ up along shore from the south’ard when he pulled in at Seaview, happenin’ to have the glasses at my eyes jest then. I knew it stood to reason he’d try to play some funny trick, an’ when the *Silver Fox* began to fall, I didn’t need to be told he was at the bottom of it all. Then he put off in his dory, an’ we after him. I reckon there was so much goin’ on ashore that nobody saw us—leastways I couldn’t make out a soul on the dock, an’ it wouldn’t have stopped me if I had. There was the miserable smuggler pullin’ at the oars as if



knowin' somebody would give chase, an' I wasn't allowin' he should be disappointed as to that part of it."

"Did you catch him?" Mr. Sawtelle shouted, no longer able to control his impatience, so eager was he to learn the result of the chase.

"No, I didn't, an' it seems as if when that villain is in a tight place somebody allers bobs up to lend a hand."

"But you've got his dory," Paul cried, and Zenas said mournfully:

"I know I have, lad, an' that's the end of the story."

"What do you mean?" Mr. Simpson cried. "How is it the end if you didn't catch him? Is he drowned?"

"No sich good luck," Master Cushing replied. "You see he had a long start of me; but I'd overhauled him if jest at that time, when we was needin' speed more'n we ever did before, one of the motors hadn't gone out'er commission. By the time the engineer got it inter workin' shape agin, John Ed was seven or eight miles out to sea. He'd started for the island at first, as I figgered it; but the minute he got a sight of the yacht he headed for open water, prayin', I reckon, for another fog storm."

"But it has been as clear as a bell, and there is no reason why you shouldn't have overtaken him, if finally the *Nera's* motors were working properly," Mr. Sawtelle cried sharply as he clambered over the rail, the yacht having come to anchor during the conversation.

"Yes; that's the way it seems when you don't know anythin' 'bout the kind of luck we was up against,"



Zenas replied with a sigh. "We went after him in good shape, an' wasn't more'n two miles off when a steam yacht cut across the course in a way that would bring her mighty nigh John Ed. I allowed we had him then, for certain, never thinkin' the fresh-water sailors aboard the stranger would help sich a miserable scallawag. He worked it fine, though, an' that I'm bound to admit. When the steamer was well up with him, while we wasn't more'n a couple of miles away, the old snake capsizes his dory, an' begins to flounder 'round in the water like he was drownin'. Of course them aboard the steamer hove him a line, pullin' the villain aboard like he was a bloomin' lobster, without slowin' down."

"Wasn't you near enough to signal the craft?" Mr. Sawtelle demanded.

"Aye, sir, that we was; but none of us knew how to work them finicky little flags so's to make 'em look like words. I sounded the whistle to beat the band, an' the engineer poked the motors up to do their best; but beyond stringin' out a lot of signals without gettin' an answer from us on account of our not knowin' the trick, the folks on the steamer didn't pay any more heed than if we'd been a lot of shrimps afloat on a shingle. Of course we gave chase; but the other boat could make a good three miles better'n we, an' after trailin' on behind, whistlin' now an' then, till it got so late I didn't dare hold to it any longer, we put about. Then what do you think? We ran plump across John Ed's old dory, an' I took her in tow so's to have somethin' to remember the villain



by in case I ever forget the clip he gave me over the head."

Zenas embellished the story with many details that were of no particular importance; but the owners of the island listened patiently until he had come to an end and was muttering threats as to what he would do to John Ed Bingham in the near future, when Mr. Sawtelle said in a tone of command:

"That will do, Zenas. The smuggler has given you the slip twice this season when it seemed to me you should have caught him. Now we'll leave the fellow out of our calculations entirely, until getting information that he has returned to this vicinity. After repairing the *Silver Fox* so she may be used for voyages to the mainland, I propose to build an air-ship of the most approved type, having become convinced that it is within our power. Before winter comes we'll set off on a voyage through the air that shall have as its purpose the capture of Bingham."

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