





WITH PREBLE AT TRIPOLI



"HE LAID HIS HAND ON SETH'S SHOULDER."

WITH PREBLE AT TRIPOLI

*A Story of "Old Ironsides" and
the Tripolitan War*

BY

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WITH PREBLE AT TRIPOLI.

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PREFACE.

“THE *Constitution* was built at Hart’s shipyard in Boston, where Constitution Wharf now is, at a cost of \$302,718. She was made very strong. Her frame was of live oak, and her planks were bent on without steam, as it was thought that process softened and weakened the wood. She was launched on the 21st of October, 1797, in the presence of a great gathering of people. She did not start upon a cruise until the following season, when she was commanded by Captain James Nicholson. . . . She was so staunch a ship that the name ‘Ironsides’ was given her. She was always favored with excellent commanders and performed gallant service. Some years ago the Navy Department concluded to break her up and sell her timbers, as she was thought to be a decided ‘invalid.’ The order had gone forth, when the execution of it was arrested by the voice of public opinion, called forth by the magic wand of a poet, — the pen of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes :” —

*“Ay, tear her tattered ensign down !
Long has it waved on high,
And many an eye has danced to see
That banner in the sky.*

*Beneath it rung the battle shout,
And burst the cannon's roar ;
The meteor of the ocean air
Shall sweep the clouds no more.*

*“Her deck, once red with heroes' blood —
Where knelt the vanquished foe,
When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,
And waves were white below —
No more shall feel the victor's tread,
Or know the conquered knee ;
The harpies of the shore shall pluck
The eagle of the sea !*

*“O ! better that her shattered hulk
Should sink beneath the wave ;
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,
And there should be her grave.
Nail to the mast her holy flag,
Set every threadbare sail,
And give her to the God of Storms,
The lightning and the gale.”*

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CHAPTER I.

MY UNCLE.

WHEN it was learned, in the summer of the year 1801, that the Bey, or Bashaw, of Tripoli had declared war against the United States, and cut down the flagstaff from the front of the American Consulate in his domains, there was not very much of excitement among the people in this country.

It is probable that those in authority, or the politicians who followed closely the events of the day, were considerably concerned, and it is possible that I, Richard Cutbush, and my comrade, Seth Gordon, failed to realize exactly the state of feeling among our elders when it was known that we had only gotten out of one war to be plunged into another. But to us lads, Tripoli was so far away that it seemed almost as if it was in another world, and, besides, there was little

of preparation making for war, in and around Boston, even after a full year had elapsed, during which time our small navy had been gallantly fighting the Tripolitan pirates.

Now and then we lads heard our elders speak concerning the movements of this ship or of that, for both of us had relatives sailing on vessels belonging to the United States Navy.

Seth's cousin was one Captain Richard Somers, who had served with credit as third lieutenant of the frigate *United States*, under Commodore Barry, and my uncle, Jacob Cutbush, who, while not holding a commission, proved himself, I doubt not, whenever occasion demanded, to be as gallant as any, however high their rank, even though he was only a gunner.

Yet on the whole it was to us lads much as if there was no war being waged, until the spring of 1803, when my father's brother, Jacob Cutbush, of whom I have just spoken, visited our home while on a furlough.

He had served in this war under Commodore Dale, and was but lately arrived in the United States, having been sent home by reason of the expiration of his term of service.

As a matter of course, he came directly to my father's

house, and never before do I remember seeing our little dwelling so densely thronged with visitors.

Neighbors, acquaintances, and dozens of people whom we had never seen, called upon Uncle Jacob in order to hear what had been done toward giving the pirates of the Barbary coast such a flogging as they deserved, and we two lads learned more concerning the war than we had ever thought to know, for Seth was so charmed by the stories my uncle told that he remained almost a constant guest of mine.

It was not enough for the curious ones who visited us that Uncle Jacob should tell only what he himself had seen of warfare with these pirates ; but the old man was urged again and again to go into all the details of the business, until Seth and I came for the first time to know why our ships of war were being sent so far from home.

It seemed, according to Uncle Jacob's story, and I have since learned he told no more than the truth, that the United States, and indeed many of the nations of Europe, had been paying the Beys of Tripoli and of Tunis, and the Dey of Algiers, certain sums of money every year as tribute, in order that their piratical ships might leave unmolested the merchant vessels.

In other words, the United States purchased the protection of these pirate kings; for a bey is much the same as a prince, while a dey is of a lesser rank, being perhaps no more than a governor.

As showing how we truckled to these villains, my father afterward read me an account in the *Weekly Newsletter*, of the departure of the *Crescent* frigate from Portsmouth on the 20th of January, 1798, which craft was, as the article stated, "a present from the United States to the Dey of Algiers, as compensation for delay in not fulfilling our treaty stipulations in proper time. Richard O'Brien, Esq., who had been ten years in prison at Algiers, took passage in the above frigate, and is to reside at Algiers as Consul-General of the United States to the Barbary States. The *Crescent* has many valuable presents on board for the dey, and when she sailed was supposed to be worth at least three hundred thousand dollars. Twenty-six barrels of dollars constituted a part of her cargo. It is worthy of remark, that the captain, the chief of the officers, and many seamen of the *Crescent* frigate, have been prisoners at Algiers."

As a matter of course, Seth and I already knew how many Americans had been held as slaves by the pirates of Barbary.

We had been told many times, that in 1785 the schooner *Maria* of Boston was seized while outside the straits of Gibraltar, by corsairs, and her crew carried into slavery. Five days later, that is to say, on the 30th of July in the same year, the ship *Dolphin* of Philadelphia was captured with all her people, and in 1790 there were then living as slaves in that country fourteen unfortunate Americans.

No less a man than John Paul Jones was appointed, in 1792, as agent to effect the liberation of the captives; but he died before it was possible to enter upon his duties, and a second agent was named, who was also overtaken by death before he could begin the work assigned him.

Both Seth and I knew full well that in the year 1793 these pirates captured no less than one hundred and five Americans, all of whom were made slaves, and yet, as I have just set down, as late as 1798 we were sending out to these ruffians a beautiful tribute, the chief consideration of which was that they should make no more slaves of our people; instead of which, as Uncle Jacob said during his visit, we ought to have shown proper spirit when the schooner *Maria* was seized, by speedily convincing the villains that it

was safer for them to keep their hands off sailors hailing from the United States, as might have been done had we known our power.

It was not my purpose, when I sat down to write out what Seth Gordon and I did and saw while on board the good frigate *Constitution*, to wander from the subject by telling of these things which are known to every one; but yet it seemed well to repeat the story Uncle Jacob told, as to why we were finally come to a war with these pirates, instead of continuing to send them gifts.

The Bey of Tripoli, who had declared war against us, when the boot should have been on the other foot, was by name Jussup Caramalli, who had murdered his father and one brother, and driven another brother from the throne, in order to come into power. He was even more of a murderer than pirates usually are, according to all accounts I have read concerning such brutes, and had decided to fight us because he learned that the governors of Tunis and of Algiers received larger bribes from the United States than had he.

Now it appears, according to Uncle Jacob's story as he told it to our neighbors, and I will make no attempt at following his words lest I fall into error,

that the government of the United States had reason to believe there would be trouble with this pirate of Tripoli, even before he had proceeded to extremities, and a small squadron under Commodore Dale was sent out to look after our shipping in that portion of the world. • It was under this officer that my uncle sailed. He captured one of the piratical craft, and protected many American merchant ships.

In 1802 another expedition was sent to the Mediterranean under Commodore Morris, and now, at this time of which I am writing, that is to say, on the first of May, 1803, the government had decided that it was necessary to make more show of strength against these Barbary pirates.

To such end Commodore Edward Preble was appointed to the command of a squadron made up of the *Constitution*, *Philadelphia*, *Argus*, *Siren*, *Nautilus*, *Vixen*, and *Enterprise*. These last three vessels carried twelve guns each; the *Argus* and the *Siren* sixteen guns each; the *Philadelphia* thirty-eight; and the *Constitution* forty-four.

During Uncle Jacob's story Seth learned for the first time that his cousin, Captain Richard Somers, was appointed lieutenant commandant of the *Nauti-*

lus, and would accompany this expedition; and we also came very soon to know that the old gunner himself counted on sailing in the flagship, having been promised by Lieutenant Dent, who was acting captain under Commodore Preble, that he should be given charge of a gun.

I failed to understand all that Uncle Jacob said, because of ignorance in naval affairs; but I knew, as did Seth, that this squadron under Commodore Preble would be the third sent out from the United States to punish the pirates, and because of so many ships being necessary to do the work, it appeared much as if the job was more difficult than had at first been believed.

It puzzled both us lads no little that our people had failed in whipping the scoundrels off-hand; but, later, we came to understand somewhat of the difficulties in the way.

At that day, however, we were inclined to believe, from not having seen anything whatsoever of other portions of the world, that ours was a mighty nation, else how had it been possible for us to gain independence from such a strong power as England?

“Surely, we Americans ought speedily to get the best of those pirates,” Seth said thoughtfully when,

Uncle Jacob having left the house on a short visit to Master Downing, we were alone.

“There are very many of them,” I suggested, jealous lest my comrade should have it in his mind that Uncle Jacob had not shown proper courage, and was thereby prolonging the war.

“Well, and what of that?” he asked in surprise. “They cannot have as many men as serve under the British flag, and yet we have whipped the redcoats handsomely.”

During a moment I was at loss for an answer to this remark, and then I bethought me of the cause.

“The Britishers came here, so that we could get at them conveniently, while the pirates persist in staying on the other side of the world, where we cannot well send all who would fight.”

This silenced Seth, at least so far as regarded the courage or ability of our people, and for a long while he remained mute, as if in deep thought.

Then he said suddenly, looking straight into my eyes as though he would read all that came into my mind:—

“There are very many Americans who cannot well leave their families to go so far away; but we are not of them.”

“What do you mean?” I asked, failing utterly to understand his meaning.

“Why should we not do what lies in our power to put those pirates out of the world?”

“We lads?” and if Seth could have looked into my heart at that instant he would have had good cause to call me a coward. “How can *we* do anything?”

“Think you that boys are not needed, Dick? My cousin, who is now in command of a vessel, was only twelve years of age when he first smelled burning powder on shipboard, while we are full sixteen, strong, and knowing enough of seamanship to warrant our doing good duty on board any small craft.”

“A frigate of forty-four guns is different from any vessel we were ever aboard,” I objected, unwilling to let him understand that the thought of regularly going to war frightened me, and hoping to find such objections as would put an end to his ridiculous idea.

“We are not so dumb but that it would be possible to learn during the voyage, so that by the time the squadron arrives we could give a good account of ourselves.”

“Do you think your cousin would take us on board his ship?”

“It might be, if we could come at him, which I misdoubt; but your uncle is here to speak a good word for us with Commodore Preble, whom he knows right well.”

I began to fear Seth might succeed in proving that there was no good reason why we should remain at home when there was fighting to be done, and I brought up the strongest argument that came into my mind:—

“You know full well that neither your parents nor mine would consent to our leaving home,” I replied, using every effort to prevent my voice from trembling in sympathy with the fear that had suddenly sprung up in my heart.

“I am not so certain as to that, Dick. If we proposed to go alone, among strangers, it might be different; but with your uncle to have an eye over us, I am positive it can be arranged.”

I shook my head, no longer daring to speak lest he should discover my cowardice.

“We will talk with Master Cutbush when he returns; and once he promises to lend his influence toward having us taken on as members of the *Constitution's* crew, there will be little question as to the consent of our parents.”

It is more than possible that I might have betrayed my timorousness had not the return of Uncle Jacob put an end to the conversation for the time being.

Then my mother called upon me for some trifling task about the house, and when I was come once more into the room where Seth sat talking earnestly with my father's brother, the mischief had been done.

“So you've come to realize that you can do better aboard than by idlin' around home, eh?” Uncle Jacob asked cheerily, and my tongue was tied with fear, for I understood without the need of further words that he favored Seth's ridiculous plan. “I'm pleased that a nephew of mine should show so much spirit,” the old man continued, taking me by the hand affectionately. “The navy is the place for stout-hearted lads like you and Seth, and I promise you shall have every chance to prove your courage.”

I could have proven my courage, or, rather the lack of it, had I been able to speak just then, and the old gunner would probably have refused longer to own me as a relative. But he was so enthusiastic on the subject of our shipping aboard the *Con-*

stitution as to give no heed to my downcast looks, and as the moments passed, I grew so ashamed of being faint-hearted that almost anything was preferable to admitting myself a veritable coward.

There was only one hope in my mind, and I kept it constantly before me while Uncle Jacob was picturing the delights of a sailor's life, or dilating upon the glory and honor to be won in time of war, which was, that something might yet occur to prevent our leaving home.

It was possible we would not be received on board the *Constitution*, because of her already being supplied with a full crew; Seth's parents or mine might refuse to consent; one of us might suddenly fall ill. In fact, there seemed at the moment so many chances against our being forced away from home that I grew quite comfortable in mind, and determined to put on a bold air as if the scheme pleased me immensely.

The only thing which caused me uneasiness of mind was that my uncle appeared so certain there would be no question in the matter of our being received aboard the *Constitution*, at least in the capacity of "boys," and thus, for the first time, I learned that in war-vessels are a certain number of

men or lads who are regularly shipped at such rating.

As if the matter was already settled, my uncle began to make us acquainted with the ship on which he proposed to sail, and that we might know all the details regarding her construction, he began with the fact that the *Constitution* was modelled by Mr. Joshua Humphries of Philadelphia; that she was built in Boston on a newly adopted plan of so far lengthening frigates as to give them on one deck the guns that had formerly been distributed on two; that she was launched on the 20th of July, 1797, and given into command of Captain Samuel Nicholson. She first put to sea in July of 1798, with batteries of thirty 24-pounders on her gundecks, being appropriately rated as a forty-four.

As to who might make up the list of officers, he was not so well informed; but assured us on his word as a skilful gunner who had seen much service, that there would be none aboard under whom a gentleman might not be proud to serve.

Regarding Commodore Preble, my uncle knew that he was born in what is now Portland, Maine, on the 15th of August, 1761, but which was then the District of Falmouth in the Province of Massachusetts.

In 1779 Master Preble entered the naval service as midshipman aboard the ship *Protector*, was promoted to lieutenant of the sloop of war *Winthrop*, and continued in her during the remainder of the Revolution.

He was the first lieutenant appointed in the new navy established in 1798, and soon afterward made two cruises in the brig *Pickering*, as commander. In 1800 he was made captain, and placed in command of the *Essex*, in which he sailed to the East Indies to convoy American vessels, afterward withdrawing from active service until the present time, when he was appointed commodore, and would sail in command of the third squadron leaving these shores to punish the Barbary pirates.

Now Seth appeared deeply interested in all these details, listening eagerly to every word the old man spoke; but I gave little heed to the recital because there was in my mind the thought born of hope, that we would not be allowed to enter the naval service of our country.

Perhaps had I been as eager as Seth, we two lads might have been disappointed; but as it was, he gained his wish, and I soon learned, much to my alarm and discomfiture, that there would be no im-

pediment placed in our path which was supposed to lead on to glory.

Uncle Jacob lost no time in speaking to Seth's father and mine concerning what he was pleased to call our "heart's desire," and they, never for a moment dreaming that I might be as averse to the scheme as Seth was eager, gave immediate consent.

But for the shame of it I could have cried like a baby on learning that the permission had been so readily granted, and after tossing about in my bed fully half that night following the day when the matter was settled so far as our parents were concerned, I contrived to gain a little consolation from the thought that we were not regularly shipped—that a gunner on board the frigate would have little or no influence, and that when the moment arrived for signing the articles Commodore Preble, or whosoever should have charge of the enlistment, might refuse to accept us.

Our parents, however, had no such ideas, and my mother set about filling a canvas bag, which had been presented to me by Uncle Jacob, with much care and many a tear.

If I had dared to tell the dear soul how timorous I

was; if I had but opened my heart to her, then would she have put an end to all these preparations for war which weighted me down with grave forebodings.

Never dreaming, however, but that my heart was set on the venture, she continued her labor of love, and while listening to her words of advice as to my future course, I was inwardly praying that I might never be called upon — at least not for many years — to leave her side.

All this while Seth was in high glee, counting positively upon our being allowed to ship through Uncle Jacob's influence, and he troubled me again and again with his speculations as to the rare sights we would see, the wonderful adventures to be met with, or the possibility that we might return home at least with the rank of midshipmen.

All my acquaintances in Boston professed to be envious of what they were pleased to term my good fortune; and if words were to be depended upon, there was hardly one among the lads I knew who would not have been overjoyed at the prospect of changing places with me.

Of a verity I would have exchanged with any of them right quickly, save that I was ashamed to write myself down before my father and Uncle Jacob as a

coward who dared not do what his country seemed to demand of him.

Perhaps even now I ought to be ashamed of setting down such thoughts, and yet, having served my time satisfactorily, if not with some degree of credit, I may, after so many years, since there is in my mind the intention of enlisting in this second war against England, — for it appears now as if before the year 1812 should come to an end we would be once more fighting Britain's navies and armies, — I say, that after all this service, it is well I make a clean breast, and declare that no lad ever left home so unwillingly as did I in the year of grace 1802.

And I did leave home, whether because Uncle Jacob had influence with the officers of the *Constitution*, or the ship lacked her full complement of boys, I cannot say; but this much is true, that on a certain day came the word that we would be allowed to sign the articles, and while Seth danced around in a perfect fever of joy, I stole softly up to the room under the roof which I called my own, and wept bitter, scalding tears at the thought of leaving my mother, for now that we were so near to being enlisted in the navy, I forgot the possible perils in the sorrow of going away for so long a time from those whom I loved, and who loved me.

All this, however, is but idle so far as concerns the story of what Seth Gordon and I saw and did while on board the *Constitution*, and therefore there shall be no further mourning over severed home ties, no account of the tears I shed, nor any of the cowardice which filled my heart.

It is enough if I say that on a certain day in May my mother kissed me good-by, while I mingled my tears with hers, and then Seth and I went away with Uncle Jacob, to enter upon a life so vastly different from what we had previously known, that it was as if we went into a new world among a different race of beings.

That new world was the good frigate *Constitution*, which I came to love as much as one can an inanimate object, and that "different race of beings" proved warm, honest friends who would, had it been possible, have made up to me all I missed of the old life.

CHAPTER II.

THE "CONSTITUTION."

IF I should set down all that we said, did, or thought from the time I bade my mother good-by until having been assigned to our quarters aboard the *Constitution*, there would be no space for anything concerning the frigate, or her commander, who I believe of a verity was as brave an officer as ever lived.

When we set out, convoyed by Uncle Jacob, I was mentally in the lowest depths of despair, while Seth hardly kept within bounds the joy which overran his heart.

I remember that even in my sorrow I asked myself how it could be possible that one lad should be so happy while another was plunged into such deep grief over the same matter, but failed of answering my own question.

I mistrusted, even before we left home, that Uncle Jacob had guessed somewhat of the truth concerning myself and my cowardice, and this suspicion grew to

be very nearly a certainty once we had set out, ere the echo of my mother's words ceased to ring in my ears.

"We may as well start fair," the old man said, with a certain clearing of his throat which I had come to understand was in his opinion the putting on of dignity. "We may as well start fair, and then there will be less likelihood of our comin' to grief before the voyage is ended."

"What is wrong with the start, Uncle Jacob?" Seth asked, he having by this time come to consider that my father's brother was his uncle as well as mine, and the lad surveyed first himself and then me as if to learn whether we might not have set out in some ill-becoming manner.

"So far as our having got under way is concerned, we are all right," Uncle Jacob said stiffly; "but from the moment of leaving Isaac Cutbush's house the situation is changed. You two lads are, so to speak, reg'larly shipped on board the *Constitution*—the matter of signin' your names is only a form. Well, that bein' the case, what are you now compared with what you was five minutes ago?"

Seth and I looked at each other in bewilderment, failing entirely to understand the question, whereupon

Uncle Jacob repeated the words, and then gave his own answer:—

“So long as you stood under Isaac Cutbush’s roof, you two were lads over whom I had no control; but once we stepped outside the door, you became, accordin’ to my way of thinkin’, reg’larly shipped boys aboard the *Constitution*, an’ I, instead of bein’ an uncle to either of you, am the captain of No. 8 gun.”

Uncle Jacob paused, and we two lads looked at each other in perplexity and bewilderment, failing to so much as guess what he might be trying to come at.

“As captain of a gun,” he said, after waiting a few seconds as if to give us an opportunity of guessing at his meaning, “I am considerably above you two lads in station, an’ the discipline of a man-o’-war demands that each holds to his proper rank. I ain’t meanin’ to say but now an’ then in our watch below I’d be willin’ to yarn it with you two youngsters; but even at such times, there is to be no Uncle Jacobin’. So long ’s you are boys aboard the *Constitution*, an’ I’m the captain of a gun, you’re to speak to me as Master Cutbush, an’ not presume upon such relationship as can only be claimed ashore.”

I began by this time to have an inkling of what the old man was driving at, and with the knowledge came a certain sense of injury, which was beneficial at the moment, because it blunted the sorrow and lessened the cowardice in my heart to a slight degree.

It seemed to me an unwarranted assumption of authority for him thus to cut off all familiar ties, simply because of chancing to be in a station aboard the ship higher than ours; and for the time I was angered against him.

Seth, however, would not allow anything of the kind to dissipate the great joy in his heart, and he asked with a familiarity of tone, which was unbecoming any lad who speaks to his elder:—

“Suppose Dick and I should perform some marvellous deed, and thereby be promoted on the instant to midshipmen, or even lieutenants, how would it be then about calling you Uncle Jacob?”

“Although I am not agreein’ that either of you youngsters have metal enough to admit of anything of the kind, yet for the sake of an argument we’ll suppose it did happen, an’ then to ‘Uncle Jacob’ the captain of a gun would be even worse than while you served as boys. When you had the right to the quarter-deck, I should be only old Jacob Cut-

bush, an' you Master Gordon an' Master Cutbush. I am givin' you this kind of talk now, so you shan't shame yourselves an' me once we're aboard, for among a crew of four hundred an' over, there's always plenty who will pick up anything that'll serve to make sport, an' —”

“Do you mean to tell me that there will be four hundred men aboard the *Constitution*?” Seth asked in surprise, forgetting for the instant the lesson which Uncle — I mean Master Cutbush — was trying to teach us.

“Ay, lad, four hundred or more.”

“She must be quite a vessel.”

“Hark you, lad. That's no way to speak of a frigate. You will hear the officers call her a *fabric*, but never a *vessel*. She's a matter of one hundred and forty-two feet long, with a little more than thirty-eight-foot beam, an' it'll cost nigh on to five thousand dollars a month to pay the salaries of them as handle her.”

This sum was to me so enormous that I believed the gunner was playing upon our credulity, and Seth must have been of much the same opinion, for he said with a laugh, —

“At that rate, I take it the wages are generous?”

‘Them as live forred ain’t overly burdened with money, that I can answer for. Able seamen are paid ten dollars a month, while a marine, who is neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, is counted to be worth only six.’

“What is a marine?” Seth asked, and I pricked up my ears, for until this moment I could not have told whether the term applied to a human being or some fitting of the ship; but I afterward found this printed article concerning marines.

“The men of a public armed ship are divided into two distinct bodies: the portion of the people that do the ordinary duty of the vessel, which includes the petty officers, seamen, ordinary seamen, landsmen, and boys, and the marines. The former pass under the general name of sailors, while the latter are always known by their own distinctive appellation. The marines are strictly infantry soldiers, who are trained to serve afloat; and their discipline, equipments, spirit, character, and *esprit de corps* are altogether those of an army. The marines impart to a ship of war, in a great degree, its high military character. They furnish all the guards and sentinels; in battle they repel, or cover the assaults of boarders; and, at all times, they sustain and protect the stern and necessary dis-

cipline of a ship by their organization, distinctive character, training, and, we might add, nature. It is usual to place one of these soldiers on board a ship of war for each gun, though the rule is not absolute. It is not, however, to be understood by this that the marines are regularly dispersed in the ship, by placing them at the guns, as, unless in cases that form exceptions, they act together, under their own officers, using the musket and bayonet as their proper weapons."

"Well, he ain't much of anything in the eyes of the sailormen, an' the only way I can describe him is by sayin' that he's a soldier what ships aboard a man-o'-war," Uncle Jacob said in reply to Seth's question. "He has to stand guard an' look after the prisoners when there are any on hand; but ain't called upon to do seaman's duty."

"Is he obliged to fight?" I asked, thinking, perhaps, this might be a more desirable branch of the service for one who was as timorous as myself.

"Ay, lad, of course he does when it comes to close quarters; but he ain't looked upon with any great favor, that I can answer for, so we won't spend our time an' breath talkin' about him. You are first to understand that I'm Master Cutbush from this out, an' then, that whenever you are spoken to by an

officer, you must call him 'sir,' an' touch your cap somethin' after this fashion."

Whereupon Uncle — I mean Master Cutbush — tugged at a stray lock of hair just over his forehead, as if bent on pulling it out by the roots, and kicked one leg behind him in what seemed to me a most comical fashion.

"Of course it will be understood that one of you is a blood-relation of mine when we are ashore, so I'm postin' you up in these matters to prevent your bein' made a laughin'-stock of. Remember to keep to your own end of the ship, unless called aft by them as are in command. If it so be an officer takes it into his head to give you a taste of the rope's end, swallow your medicine like a man, an' you'll get it less often."

"Do you mean to say we're like to be flogged without deservin' it?" Seth asked; and that I was secretly gratified by seeing a look of dismay on his face is proof that I was less manly than a boy of sixteen should be.

"I reckon you'll deserve it often enough; but there may be times when it'll seem to you as if there was no real need of such argument, an' then is when you're bound to keep your mouth shut, for there's no more serious offence, short of downright mutiny, than givin'

back talk to your superiors. Howsomever, have your eyes open, your wits about you, an' I'll guarantee that after once learnin' the ropes, so to speak, you'll not be in much danger of carryin' a sore back."

Seth's face was a study by this time, and I decided in my own mind that if such conversation had been held a week previous, I might at that moment have been at home with my mother, instead of on the way to ship aboard a frigate of war.

Perhaps Master Cutbush understood somewhat of the misgivings in which Seth was indulging, for he said, much as if to change the subject: —

"You are lucky, lads, to enter the service on board such a frigate as the *Constitution*, officered as she is. The commodore is every inch a sailor, an' the first lieutenant, Isaac Hull, is bound to make his mark in the world if the war lasts long enough, or I'm mistaken. In 1798 he was a fourth lieutenant under Commodore Nicholson, an' two years later promoted to first lieutenant under Commodore Talbot, all of which is good proof that he earned his rank. Them as could serve under Commodore Nicholson an' come out with any satisfaction to themselves or others must have had the makin's of men in 'em. Hull's cuttin' out the *Sandwich* shows what weight of metal he carries."

"When was that?" I asked with mild curiosity, not because I cared very much at the moment to know, but Master Cutbush had ceased speaking as if waiting for some reply.

"In 1800, when we were fightin' against the French."

"Why don't you tell us the story?" Seth asked, with just a shade of petulance in his tone, and I believe he was eager to hear it only to keep his mind from dwelling upon the unpleasant and newly discovered fact that it was quite possible he might receive a taste of the rope's end whenever the desire for such exercise came into the minds of the *Constitution's* officers.

"It's a yarn well worth the hearin,' lad, an' I'll tell it in as few words as may be, although you're like to have the same repeated forty times within the next month. Sailors are master hands at chewin' on the good or bad deeds of their officers, as well they may be, for upon them who command the ship depends the success of the voyage."

"Was Mr. Hull an officer on board the *Constitution*?" I asked, beginning to feel a certain interest after what the gunner had said.

"Ay, that he was, lad, with rank of first lieutenant, an' the frigate was flyin' Commodore Talbot's broad

pennant, while cruisin' on what is known as the St. Domingo station."

"Were you on board?"

"No, lad; but I've heard the yarn so many times that I reckon I can tell it in proper shape. The commodore learned that a valuable French letter of marque, which was formerly the British packet *Sandwich*, was lyin' in Port au Platte, a harbor on the Spanish side of the island of St. Domingo, and he determined to cut her out."

"What is a letter of marque?" I asked.

"An armed merchant vessel with a commission from her government authorizin' her to seize property belongin' to citizens of the opposing nation—in other words, a privateer. The *Sandwich* was clipper-built, an' knowin' that there was little chance of overtakin' her on the high seas, Commodore Talbot made up his mind to cut her out of the Spanish port, although it was not what you might call a legal transaction, as the crew of the *Constitution* soon afterward learned to their cost."

"In what way?" Seth asked at random, and I knew by the tone that his mind was more on what might come to him in the future, than upon the yarn Master Cutbush proposed to tell.

"That will all come in in proper time, lad. Let me give you the account of it first. It seems that Mr. Hull was sent in at night in one of the frigate's cutters to reconnoitre the harbor, an' found that the *Sandwich* was only waitin' to take on the balance of a cargo of coffee before makin' a start for France. Of course the frigate could not be run in boldly, an' because of that fact the commodore took possession of the American sloop *Sally*, puttin' into her a party of seamen and marines, givin' command, as I've said, to Mr. Hull.

"All this was done at sea, so the French shouldn't get an idee of what was goin' on, an' the *Sally* parted company with the frigate at such a time as, allowin' for the wind, would bring her into Port au Platte about noon on the next day. That same night, when they were runnin' in for the land under easy sail, with it so dark you couldn't see a wart on the end of your nose, the report of a gun was heard, an' a round shot whistled over the sloop. Whereupon, as may be supposed, Mr. Hull hove-to, considerin' that was about the only thing left for him under the circumstances, because, you understand, the *Sally* wasn't fitted up for any sea fight, havin' no guns aboard.

“Well, pretty soon a boat came alongside, an’ then it was found that an English frigate had signalled for the sloop to come about, an’ when the boardin’ lieutenant come on deck he was considerably mixed up at findin’ so many men an’ officers in naval uniforms. We were at peace with England then, an’ after Mr. Hull told him what they counted on doin’ the Britisher was mightily disappointed, explainin’ that his frigate had been waitin’ off an’ on two or three days, with the idee of catchin’ the *Sandwich* herself. Howsomever, Mr. Hull was the first at the business, an’ the English lieutenant couldn’t interfere if he wanted to, so the *Sally* was put on her course once more, an’ ’long about noon the next day she was in sight of the Port.

“The *Sandwich* was moored with her broadside to the entrance of the harbor, an’ on shore at no great distance away was considerable of a battery to protect her. Now it wasn’t any fool trick to run within range of all them guns, any one of which would have sunk the little sloop with a single shot; but Isaac Hull ain’t the kind of a man to back down because of danger. When the *Sally* was closin’ in with the land he sent all his force below, got the anchors fore an’ aft, so’s to hold the sloop after the

work of boardin' was begun, an' steered her straight for the bow of the *Sandwich*, gettin' ready meanwhile a boat, in order to land such marines as had been brought, for an attack on the battery.

"Everything went slick as grease. The frog-eaters on the privateer didn't suspicion what was up, an' the *Sally* run alongside the *Sandwich*, lettin' go both anchors jest as she got there, before one of the enemy had an idee that comin' so close aboard was anything more'n careless seamanship. Then up rushed the men from the hold, an' at that very same minute the boat was launched, filled with marines, who paid no attention to what might be happenin' on their craft, but pulled straight for the battery ashore."

"Did they capture the *Sandwich*?" Seth asked, as Master Cutbush ceased for an instant.

"Ay, that they did, lad, an' without losin' a single man. Of course there was a bit of a scrimmage, an' them as was on shore got terribly excited; but the marines did their work well; the battery was captured about the same time the captain of the *Sandwich* surrendered, an' the whole job was done in what you might call a proper, shipshape fashion. Before sunset the *Sandwich* was stripped to her girt-

line, an' everything was below, although it took mighty lively work from all hands to do the job, with them expectin' every minute that there'd be trouble from the shore. It wasn't yet dark before the royal yards were crossed, the guns scaled, a new crew aboard the prize, an' she beatin' out of the harbor to join the frigate. Take it all in all, accordin' to what I've heard from them as were there, it was the neatest bit of cuttin' out ever known. But it cost the crew of the *Constitution* mighty dear, for when they come to settle the matter in the courts, seein' 's how the *Sandwich* was taken from a Spanish port, not only was the vessel given up, but all the prize money that had been earned on the cruise had to go to pay damages."

I was entertained by this story, all the more so because there was in it no tale of dreadful wounds or sudden death, and when Master Cutbush ceased speaking I tried to imagine how I should behave if called upon to take part in any such enterprise, where danger must necessarily stare one in the face.

This last was impossible, because, as yet, I had no idea of what life aboard a frigate might be, or how great a share a "boy" on a man-of-war would be required to take upon himself at such a time; but

it was not quieting to think of being mixed up in such a scene, and I wished quite as fervently as ever that I was back in my father's home with never a thought of enlisting in the navy.

Seth's enthusiasm had received a sudden check when he learned that punishment might be dealt out to him by any in command, and we two recruits, if such a name can be applied to those who count on learning the trade of sailors, were sorry company for Master Cutbush from that moment, until we were arrived on board the frigate which was to be our home during even a longer time than either of us had imagined.

Despite my announced intention of refraining from setting down anything not immediately concerned with this voyage we were to take, I have run off again to the extent of many pages, and must cut short that which is of no moment to any save Seth and myself.

Therefore all else shall be omitted until the time when we three came over the side of the *Constitution*, Master Cutbush being received in a most friendly fashion by many of the crew, and at least two of the officers, while we lads were left to stand near the rail amidships like a couple of abandoned babies.

It was a strange sight to Seth and me.

The enormous ship with her wilderness of ropes and spars; great guns on the forecastle deck; soldiers, which I afterward learned were marines, pacing to and fro with muskets over their shoulders; and what appeared like a great throng of men, moving here and there in obedience to orders which were as mystifying to us as though spoken in a foreign language.

“Surely, we shall never be able seamen on board a ship so large as this,” Seth whispered to me, drawing a long face at thus discovering how different was the reality from his anticipations. “In a whole lifetime I never could learn the names of so many ropes, and as for remembering what all these different commands mean, it is quite out of the question.”

“Think what it must be in a battle, Seth,” I rejoined, by no means averse to improving upon the mental pictures which he had previously drawn, and in the doing thus forced me to leave home on the most perilous ventures. “Fancy all these guns being fired at once, and the men running here and there trying to obey a half a dozen orders at the same time! Think of the noise, and the groans of the wounded; the blood on the deck, and the —”

"Hold your tongue, Dick Cutbush! It's bad enough when a lad realizes that even while the frigate is in port he couldn't so much as begin to do his duty, without your adding to it the worst that may happen."

"And what of the glory you allowed we should win? Unless there be bloodshed, and plenty of it, how may you earn a midshipman's berth, as you counted on doing before we left home?"

"I wish we were back there now," Seth cried emphatically, and I was quite of the same opinion, although I did not choose to put it in words just then.

CHAPTER III.

ABOARD SHIP.

IT would be possible to make up from such a voyage as was ours in the *Constitution* a most entertaining book, and yet because of the fact that I had begun this poor tale simply in order to set down what we two lads saw of the fighting with the Tripolitan pirates, no more than a passing mention can be given to the cruise until we were come to Gibraltar.

Strange as it may seem to him who bears in mind how despondent I was at being in a certain measure forced to leave my home, and timorous as I felt at the idea of finding myself in the midst of a battle, I came to rejoice, in a very short after time leaving port, that Seth had led me to this venture.

The first two or three days of the cruise were without exception the most wretched I ever spent.

Seth was no less sick than I, once the huge fabric was tossing about like a plaything for the enormous

waves, and it was to my mind a certainty that death must speedily overtake me.

He who has ventured upon the ocean knows to a dot how great were our sufferings, and he who never sailed beyond sight of land can have no idea of the misery which beset us, for in good truth it is indescribable.

Master Cutbush might have been my worst enemy, instead of my father's brother, for all the heed he gave to me during these wretched hours.

It is true he stood by the side of my hammock two or three times, but uttered no word of sympathy. In fact, he jeered at our misery, and made the suffering yet harder to bear by offering food when the mere name of it caused one's stomach to revolt.

During those three days I considered Seth and Master Cutbush the direst foes I had in the world, and of the two I classed my comrade the worst, for had he but held his tongue, so I argued, this foolish venture would not have been made.

If Uncle Jacob had refused, as an honest man should, to have any part in dragging us away to sea, then would I have been home with my mother, instead of lying on board the frigate in a hammock which swung to and fro until it seemed that one was

turned upside down every sixty seconds, while weeping bitter, scalding tears of grief because his mother was so far away.

I might have been homesick but for the terrible malady of the sea that beset me so strongly as to leave no room for any other sensation, and, as I have said, there was in my mind a firm belief that before many hours had passed, death would come to my relief.

Then speedily, as it were, all happened as Master Cutbush had predicted.

On the third night I fell asleep, and, awakening with the break of day, was assailed by a most ravenous hunger.

Save for the weakness which had come upon me, I was none the worse than when I came aboard.

The sudden change from deathly faintness to a love for life, the difference in my feelings when I no longer loathed, but desired, food, was so great as to cause me the utmost surprise.

The frigate was rolling from this side to that, taking great leaps now and then, during which it seemed as if she stood literally on end, and yet the motion was in no wise disagreeable.

Clambering out from the hammock as best I might, I started to go to the forward end of the gun-deck,

where I could see a large number of the watch eating breakfast.

Clutching at this gun-carriage or at that stanchion to steady myself, I made reasonably good headway until the frigate gave another of those desperate plunges, just as I was shifting my hold from one object to the next, when, like an arrow sent from its bow, I shot forward, striking full in the back with my shoulder, Uncle Jacob, whom the rules of the service demanded I should call "Master Cutbush."

It was not a seemly method of announcing my recovery, that I am willing to admit; but I shall at the same time claim that he was not warranted in losing his temper over what was simply an accident.

Yet so he did, and, recovering himself from the unexpected blow that had hurled him headlong against a gun-carriage, he caught me by the coat-collar, cuffing my ears until it was as if an hundred bells rang inside my head.

It was only natural I should howl with pain and anger, whereat those of the crew that were below laughed uproariously, and while their mirth was at its height, forward came Seth as the frigate sank into the hollow of the waves, rolling and bumping along the deck even as I had, until he brought up

against No. 2 gun with a force which must have literally knocked the breath out of his body.

Surely this second accident was no affair of Master Cutbush's; but yet he took it upon himself to pull Seth to his feet and cuff his ears quite as vigorously as he had mine, after which he set calmly about finishing his breakfast without inquiring whether we might be hungry.

Luckily, I did not shed tears, and yet can claim no credit for such show of manliness, because during the past three days I had cried so heartily that most-like there was no longer any moisture left in my body. I dare venture to say my cheeks were as red with anger even as were my ears from the force of the punishment administered, and, standing there with clenched fists looking upon the man who denied my right to call him uncle simply because we were aboard a ship, I would have given all the wages that might possibly be coming to me when the voyage was at an end, had I been able to repay him in kind for his inhuman treatment.

Seth clutched me by the arm to steady himself, and I was holding lightly to a stanchion, when the ship lurched to port, and we went rolling across the deck like a couple of parched peas, provoking yet



“ I SHOT FORWARD, STRIKING FULL IN THE BACK WITH MY SHOULDER
UNCLE JACOB. ”

greater mirth from those who must at some time in the past have occupied positions similar to ours.

This second mishap was not so serious as the first, owing to the fact that we disturbed none of the high and mighty members of the *Constitution's* crew, and they permitted us to scramble to our feet as best we might.

Left to our own devices, I question if it would have been possible for us to have remained in any place, save where we might find good holding ground for both hands and feet; but one of the sailors, who did not appear to be more than twenty years old, and whom we afterward learned was named Barry Thomas, came to our relief.

“You young cubs are havin’ a precious lively time of it,” he said with a grin, as he laid hold of my shoulder to steady me. “The first thing you need is to get your sea legs on, and that never’ll be done by tumblin’ about in this fashion.”

“What do you mean by sea legs?” Seth asked piteously, whereat the man laughed heartily, after which, checking himself suddenly as if realizing that we were not in the mood just then for mirth, he explained:—

“It is knowin’ how to use the same legs that are

managed so easily on shore. Have an eye for the movements of the ship, an' don't try to brace yourself stiffly against them. It is easy enough to get about once you know how — ”

“I never should be able to walk around here while she's pitchin' so badly,” Seth said, with a long-drawn sigh.

“Nonsense, lad. In twenty-four hours from now it will be to you the same as if she was layin' at the dock. Hungry yet?”

“It seemed to me I could eat a bushel before Uncle — I mean Master Cutbush — cuffed my ears for what I couldn't help, and then the thought of being hungry left me,” I replied, allowing anger to get the best of me once more.

“A bit of a shakin' up like that don't do boys any harm, else I'd have been dead long before this,” Thomas said, with a laugh. “I've served a pretty long apprenticeship, an' know just how you two feel. Come with me, an' we'll see what the cook has had left over. After this it will stand you in hand to be ready for grub when the word comes, else you may find yourself on short commons, for this 'ere crew are good feeders.”

“Are you one of the officers, or a gunner?” I

asked, whereat Master Thomas laughed yet more heartily.

“Wait till you see them as lives aft, rigged out in gold lace an’ cocked hat, an’ then you’ll never mistake me for an officer. As for bein’ a gunner, why, bless your soul, lads, I’m only shipped as ordinary seaman. Is Jacob Cutbush your uncle?”

“Yes, an’ after what he’s done this morning I’m ashamed to admit being kin to such as him.”

“Don’t let anything of that kind rankle in your mind, lad; for if you do, life aboard here will be mighty disagreeable. Jacob Cutbush is one of the best gunners aboard, although I know from past experience that he’s no ways tender in handlin’ an apprentice. Don’t let the old man suspect you’re layin’ up a grudge for what’s been done, or he’ll make it all the harder; but there’s this much you can count on, that once he takes a boy in hand the lad’s in luck, for the officers ain’t apt to meddle with them as are under the charge of the old man. An A 1 seaman, and a gunner that can’t be beat, is Jacob Cutbush!”

Having said this, Barry Thomas half led, half assisted Seth and me to where we were given breakfast that was more remarkable for its quantity than

its quality, and seated on the gun-deck with our backs against a bulkhead, we two lads managed to remain in one position sufficiently long to devour the meal — I say “devour,” because that best expressed our actions at the time, so ravenously hungry were we.

Looking back now on that time, I can say that the most disagreeable of our experience was over.

Before this day of which I have been speaking had come to an end, we could move around the decks of the frigate with reasonable ease and certainty, and had taken our first lesson as naval apprentices.

Master Cutbush began the teaching by showing us our stations when the crew was called to quarters, giving me the berth of powder monkey at No. 8 gun, of which he was captain, and allotting Seth to No. 6, on which our friend, Barry Thomas, served.

From that out we had little leisure time save when it was our watch below, for not only Master Cutbush, but Thomas and half a dozen others took it upon themselves to give us instruction in a seaman's duties, and I believe there is no boast in it when I say that we learned with remarkable rapidity.

Before the *Constitution* had been three weeks at sea that wilderness of cordage and spars which had

seemed to us so mystifying was plain as the nose on one's face, and we could give every rope its proper name. In fact —

But there is no need why I should set down here that which we learned, lest it seem that I am given to blowing my own trumpet. It is enough if I say that Master Cutbush appeared reasonably well satisfied with the progress we made, and did not attempt to drive knowledge into our heads with the rope's end on our backs oftener than once in every twenty-four hours.

As for the officers, we saw little of them save the midshipmen, and to my mind those young gentlemen lorded it over the sailors in a most ridiculous fashion. Seth and I were of so little consequence as to be entirely beneath their notice.

We came to know some of the marines, however, and very decent kind of men did we find them, much to my surprise, for Master Cutbush had ever spoken of them in such a disdainful fashion, claiming that they were neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, that I thought of a verity they must be the very offscourings of the earth, whereas those with whom Seth and I became acquainted were companionable men, many of them having more tender hearts than could be found in the bosom of my father's brother.

The only man I felt particularly eager to see was Lieutenant Hull, and it was once my good fortune to be near at hand when he was in need of a messenger, therefore I not only saw, but had the pleasure of hearing him speak to me in a most friendly fashion.

A pleasant-faced gentleman he was, handsome, according to my idea, and withal exactly such an officer as one would fancy him to be, after hearing of his cutting out the *Sandwich* in such brave fashion.

The commodore we saw from time to time, but I could never bring myself to look upon him as belonging to the ship, so entirely apart from the others did he appear.

Later, when we came into action, there was no question as to his being a stranger.

It was said among the crew that the commodore was a man who held his officers to the strictest discipline, and many disliked him; but that which I saw when we were nearing the end of our voyage caused me to believe Commodore Preble was a man who would make a great name for himself and for the ship.

We were close by the Straits of Gibraltar; it was a dark night, and all of the watch were on the lookout, knowing that at last we were where it was reasonable to suppose other vessels might be encountered.

I heard two of the midshipmen talking together in the waist regarding the commodore's standing his own watch, and by that I knew he was on deck.

Then came a cry from the lookout on the forecastle deck, and on the instant a large ship loomed up out of the blackness close alongside, as if bent on boarding us.

“Ahoy! What ship is that?” one of the lieutenants cried; but there was no reply, and again and again one or another of the officers vainly hailed the stranger, until it was as if the commodore suddenly lost his temper.

By this time I had come to know his voice among the others, and it startled me to hear him performing the duties of a lieutenant, as he cried:—

“I now hail you for the last time! If you do not answer, I will pitch a shot into you!”

Then it was the stranger replied; but in a tone of menace.

“If you fire, I will return a broadside!” came from her decks.

“I should like to catch you at that,” roared Commodore Preble, evidently in a rage. “I now hail for an answer! What ship is that?”

“They will find their tongues after that, I reckon!”

Master Cutbush said with a low chuckle to the man standing nearest, and indeed he was right, for after one might have counted ten came the reply:—

“This is Her British Majesty’s ship *Donegal*, 84, Sir Richard Strachan, an English commodore. Send a boat on board.”

The last words were spoken in a tone of command, and every man aboard our frigate listened eagerly to learn how our commodore would take what was hardly less than an insult.

“This is the United States ship *Constitution*, 44, Edward Preble, an American commodore, and I will not send a boat on board any ship! Blow your matches, boys!” he shouted to us, and in an instant all was confusion as the men rushed to quarters, although once we were at our stations it was understood that there could be little likelihood of an engagement while England and the United States were at peace.

When we were on the gun-deck it was impossible to distinguish what was said immediately afterward; but we were told that Commodore Preble made no bones in declaring to the Britisher that he did not believe his statements; but would lie by him until morning in order to learn who he really was, and

this we did, strict watch being kept lest the stranger should give us the slip in the darkness.

Until the sun rose not a man of the crew had thought of turning in, for the commodore had shown so decidedly of what stuff he was made that there was yet a possibility we might be called into action.

“There’s no fear of our running away from anything that floats while such a man as he holds command,” Master Cutbush said to one of his cronies, and the latter replied in a tone of satisfaction:—

“There will be no Barbary pirate nor bloomin’ Englishman either, for that matter, who’ll pull the wool over his eyes; an’ I’m tellin’ you what it is, Jacob, we should be able to tassel our handkerchiefs well with prize money this cruise, if the frigate turns out to be anywhere near what you might call a lucky craft.”

Nor were the seamen the only ones who found an immense deal of satisfaction in our commodore’s sudden showing of himself, so to speak.

I heard two of the midshipmen talking in much the same strain. Before the sun rose there was not a man aboard the ship who did not feel every confidence in his commander, and was willing to admit that stiff and severe as he had heretofore appeared, there was about him that which gave token of great bravery and ability.

Even Seth and I, who were not supposed to know anything whatsoever of such matters, felt an immense satisfaction because of what had occurred, trifling though it might be, and while I was yet exceeding timorous regarding the prospect of a battle, I felt as if all must go well with us while Commodore Preble was at the head.

Well, as I have said, our commander declared that he would hold by the stranger until morning; and this he did, when we discovered her to be the English frigate *Maidstone*, a 36, whose commander was no longer inclined to insist that we send a boat off to him.

It puzzled me not a little to make out why the Britisher should have deliberately told a lie. I failed to understand why he did not on the moment declare the truth, since it would amount to much the same thing, and went to Master Cutbush for an explanation.

“I reckon the Englishman was as much startled at seeing us, as we were at running afoul of him so suddenly,” the old man said, giving due deliberation to his words. “Like enough the commander of the frigate refused at first to answer, and afterward tried to stuff our commodore, so that he might gain time in order to clear the ship, and get his people to quarters, seein’s his is the smaller fabric. There is no other reason for

it, lad, and for my part, I'm mighty glad he whiffled about in the way he did."

"Why?" I asked in surprise.

"Because, you see, my boy, it gave us a chance to find out what there is in the commodore, although all that he has done in the past ought to have told us; but there's nothing like having a thing proved to yourself, like as we got it last night."

The Britisher went his way, and we ours, the commodore heading a straight course for Gibraltar, and before I tell of what we saw there it seems right to say that the *Philadelphia*, which belonged to our squadron, had left the United States early in July, while the *Nautilus*, which craft was commanded by Captain Somers, Seth's cousin, was under way nearly a week in advance of us.

Now must be told what our officers learned immediately on making port, and which was sifted down to us in some way. I cannot explain how news which reached the quarter-deck always came into the fore-castle in a very brief period of time.

The *Nautilus* had arrived at Gibraltar on the 27th of July, and the *Philadelphia* on August 24; the *Constitution* on September 12, leaving the *Vixen*, the *Siren*, and the *Argus* still at sea.

Now it appeared that the *Nautilus* had been sent out to convoy some merchantmen up the Mediterranean ; and the *Philadelphia*, on arriving at Gibraltar, heard that two Tripolitan pirates were cruising off Cape de Gatt.

Captain Bainbridge, who was in command of the *Philadelphia*, immediately set off in quest of the enemy, and after cruising forty-eight hours came alongside the ship *Meshboha* of twenty-two guns, which was showing nothing but a fore-course, and a brig that apparently was keeping her company.

Captain Bainbridge deceived the pirate by claiming to be an English frigate, and the Tripolitan admitted that the brig in company of the ship was an American craft.

As can well be understood, Captain Bainbridge at once sent an armed force aboard the brig, which he found to be the *Celia* of Boston, with the master and crew prisoners in her hold.

Something after the same fashion of man as our commander was Captain Bainbridge, and without further parley he seized the ship, her crew of one hundred and twenty men not so much as venturing to fire a gun.

Then it was he learned that she was a Moorish

vessel, and after considerable threatening on his part, the commander was induced to show his commission, which had been given him by the governor of Tangiers, and with it were orders to capture all American vessels he might fall in with.

The *Philadelphia* went back to Gibraltar, left her prizes, and set off at once in quest of the Moorish frigate that was said to be cruising thereabouts.

Thus it was that immediately upon our arrival Commodore Preble found himself with a very nice question on his hands, and but one of his squadron, the *Nautilus*, waiting to receive him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE "PHILADELPHIA."

IT is necessary that I set down here much which Seth and I heard rather than saw, in order that all which follows after we were come in front of that stronghold of pirates shall be well understood, and it can be told during such time as the *Constitution* spent in the Bay of Tangiers settling that which had been discovered by the capture of the *Meshboha*.

Having brought the Emperor of Morocco to terms, the *Constitution* returned to Gibraltar, when she made a run to Cadiz, and from there to Malta, having in her company the *New York*, 36, *John Adams*, 28, *Nautilus*, 12, and *Enterprise*, 12, meaning by these figures that each vessel carried that number of guns.

Now it was at this last-named port that we heard such news as came nigh to striking dismay into the hearts of all, and once more aroused my timorous-

ness to such an extent that one might in good truth have called me a veritable coward.

Commodore Rodgers was the officer who had been in command of the station to which the *Constitution* was ordered, and on returning to Gibraltar to meet his successor, our commodore, he left the frigate *Philadelphia*, a 38, blockading the harbor of Tripoli. She was commanded by Captain William Bainbridge, and it was believed would be able to fulfil the duty assigned her.

All this am I setting down for dry detail as if the situation had been studied by me carefully, when, as a matter of fact, such was not the case. What I have written here is the substance of that which Seth and I learned through the conversation and yarn-spinning of the *Constitution's* crew, and altogether too much time and space would be occupied in writing it out as we heard it.

Therefore am I making of it what seems a dull yarn; but one which is necessary in order that all our adventures shall be understood in the regular course of occurrence.

It was on the last day of October, when we were lying at Cadiz, believing Captain Bainbridge was holding the Tripolitan pirates fast in their harbor, that

the *Philadelphia* sighted a small craft standing in for Tripoli, and, as a matter of course, sail was at once made in order to cut her off, according to the story which was afterward told on the *Constitution's* gun-deck by some of the seamen who shared in the disaster.

From nine o'clock in the morning until near noon the chase was continued, the *Philadelphia* constantly firing at the pirate in the hope of cutting something away, and then the port of Tripoli was in plain sight no more than a marine league distant, or, in other words, as Master Cutbush explained, three miles off.

The water was shoaling rapidly; and Captain Bainbridge had stood nearer the land than seemed prudent, whereupon the helm was put hard down, the yards braced sharp up, and while the frigate was coming up to the wind, before having lost any headway, her bow struck a reef.

The force of the wind, and the impetus which she already had, forced her high on the rocks, until all the after portion of the hull was lifted five or six feet out of water.

As I have said, not more than three miles away was Tripoli, in the harbor of which lay gunboats and piratical craft like spiders watching for flies, ready

to dart out and work mischief whenever it might be done without too much danger to themselves.

No American vessel was near at hand to lend assistance. The wind was blowing strong from the west, and the situation on board the frigate as desperate as it well could be.

The *Philadelphia* was on the reef fore and aft in a twinkling, and on sounding around the ship it was found that the deepest water lay astern, therefore the yards were braced aback, and the guns run aft in the hope of causing her to slide off from the sloping rocks.

While this last work was being done, nine small Tripolitan gunboats came out from the harbor, followed by a host of other craft, all bent upon making a prize of the frigate which had already caused them so much annoyance.

As might be expected, fire was immediately opened upon the stranded ship, and while thus exposed to the shot of the enemy, the *Philadelphia's* crew set about throwing overboard the guns to lighten their ship, holding on to three with which to defend themselves at the final moment.

The anchors, spare spars, chains, ammunition, in fact, everything movable, was cast into the sea in the vain effort to lighten her.

For a time the pirates remained at a respectful distance, being ignorant as to the desperate position of the *Philadelphia*; and then, gathering courage, they crossed the stern of the frigate, taking a position on her starboard or weather quarter, where it was impossible the stranded ship could bring her guns to bear upon them because she was so far heeled to port that not a single piece could be used.

While the shot of the pirates poured in upon them, the American sailors continued their efforts at saving the ship by staving the water casks in the hold and pumping the water out.

The foremast was cut away, bringing down with it the maintopgallant mast; but yet the *Philadelphia* remained immovable, and Captain Bainbridge, brave man though he was, knew that the moment was near at hand when he must surrender in order to save the lives of his crew, otherwise all would be killed beyond a peradventure.

The last act was to flood the magazine, bore holes in the ship's bottom to render her a still greater wreck, choke the pumps to prevent their being used in case she should slide off the reef, and, in fact, do everything toward wrecking the gallant craft before hauling down her flags.

It was near to sunset before the stars and stripes fluttered from the masthead, and lay in a mass of color upon the deck.

On the instant the pirates swept alongside, and, seizing the officers as well as seamen, bound them in cruel fashion, after having stripped nearly all the clothing from every man.

Captain Bainbridge was treated with no more courtesy than had been shown the sailors; he was robbed of his epaulets, gloves, watch, and money, and even the cravat was taken from his neck.

Late that evening the prisoners, three hundred and fifteen men, were carried into the city, and it was said that the governor, who had been getting rather chary as to his determination of holding out against the Americans, now grew exceeding bold, for in addition to the few captives which the United States government had been trying to liberate, he had the entire crew of the frigate to hold as hostages.

It was, as Master Cutbush said when all the news came to us, "the unluckiest, contrariest thing that could have happened to us in the beginning of our work."

With none to molest them, and all the force necessary, the pirates succeeded in pulling the *Philadelphia*

from the reef, plugging up the holes which had been bored in her bottom, clearing the pumps, and carrying her into the harbor, where she was moored stem and stern within a quarter of a mile of the governor's palace.

Not only had the Americans lost a fine frigate, but the pirates had gained a ship which would be of immense advantage to them in their fight against us, once she was restored to proper trim.

Such was the condition of affairs in the harbor of Tripoli when we of the *Constitution*, in company with the eight-gun schooner *Enterprise*, under Lieutenant Commander Stephen Decatur, arrived off the port on the 17th of December, 1803; and it is from this point that the story which I am thus lamely trying to tell really begins.

Once more was the port of Tripoli blockaded, and it can well be fancied that if any craft slipped by us it was not because we failed to keep a strict watch.

Knowing that the crew of the *Philadelphia* were prisoners in the hands of the pirates, and that the frigate herself was being made ready to take part in the piratical work, every man aboard was on the alert; and even green boys, like Seth and myself, went through the form of standing watch on our own account.

After having seen an exhibition of the commodore's temper on the night when we ran alongside the Britisher who refused to answer our hail, it was in the mind of every one that some steps would be taken toward cutting out the *Philadelphia*, even if nothing might be done in the way of releasing the unfortunate prisoners; and during their hours of enforced idleness the elder members of the crew — meaning the common seamen — discussed hotly what our commander should or should not do toward striking an effective blow.

Of all these sea-lawyers who argued so loudly, Master Cutbush stood foremost; and Seth and I were oftentimes filled with wonder because even the hottest tempered of the men calmly submitted to his most savage remarks regarding the mental capacity of those who ventured to differ with him.

"You old shellbacks can argify an' wrangle all you like, an' it won't change my opinion by so much as the shortest hair," he said on the second morning after we had arrived at the station, when the watch whose time of idleness had come was on the gun-deck, the men sprawled here and there where a breath of air might be found to temper the heat. "Commodore Preble ain't the kind of an officer

who'll be willin' to hang 'round on a blockade when one of our own frigates is to be cut out."

"There's no show of our bein' able to do it in this port," Barry Thomas ventured to say. "Cuttin' out a craft when she's layin' under the guns of a well-manned fort, an' with ten or a dozen gunboats hoverin' 'round all the time, is somethin' that can better be talked about than done. I'm told that the bashaw of this 'ere country has a habit of floggin' the commanders of his vessels who fail to win an engagement, an' after they are well whipped, he sets them on a jackass, paradin' 'em through the city for the mob to hoot at. Such tricks as this is apt to help the pirates do their duty right up to the dot."

"If that's the kind of discipline that sailormen need, then the sooner you get a round dozen, the better, if you hold to it that American sailors can't do a little job like cuttin' out the *Philadelphia*," Master Cutbush retorted angrily. "It's youngsters like you, who are whipped before a gun is fired, that do harm to the service."

In an instant every man of nearabout Barry Thomas's age sprang to his feet, and Seth and I retreated aft, for it seemed certain that at last Mas-

ter Cutbush's sharp tongue had provoked a hand-to-hand fight.

Some of the older men interfered, however, and, while the gunner leaned on the carriage of No. 8, apparently indifferent to what might happen, these sober heads soothed the angry youngsters into at least partial quietness.

Outside of such bickerings as I have just set down, we of the *Constitution* passed six lazy days, and then it fell to the little *Enterprise* to do the first work.

Timorous though I was, and much as I feared an actual encounter with the enemy when it would be their purpose to kill me among the rest of the crew, I came to long most ardently for action of some kind.

I had never believed it possible that cruising to and fro in front of an enemy's port, watching constantly for a sail, but without seeing anything larger than a sea-bird's wing, could be so monotonous; and yet it came to pass that I would have welcomed danger simply that we might have somewhat of a change.

Then it was, two days before Christmas, that the *Enterprise* came proudly sailing up from the eastward, having in company, as prize, a small craft

called a "ketch," with somewhat the appearance of a schooner, save that she carried a main and mizzen-mast, instead of a foremast.

The stars and stripes were floating above the green flag with its three crescents, and our men literally went wild with joy and envy.

Surely it was strange that Lieutenant Decatur should have made a capture with his small ship, while the frigate, commanded by a commodore, had remained idle.

However, as Master Cutbush said, it was better our consort did a bit of work than for all hands to loaf the time away, and the prize was no sooner well up with us than all save joy was forgotten.

The ketch was named, the *Mastico*, and she had been a French gun-vessel in Egypt. On board were seventy people, the greater number of whom were female slaves sent as presents to the Sultan at Constantinople.

The prisoners were at once transferred to the *Constitution*, and this had no more than been done before a gale came upon us from the northeast.

Being on a dangerous coast with the wind in that quarter, it was necessary to run across to Syracuse for shelter.

"I'm beginnin' to believe that the commodore has deceived us all," Master Cutbush said grumbly, as we stood away from the African coast, the frigate staggering wildly even under the small amount of canvas she showed to the howling blast. "He can sharpen his tongue now an' then; but he don't seem to be over eager for fightin'."

It was to me that he addressed this remark, and I asked wonderingly:—

"What would you have, sir?"

"Have? Why, go at the pirates, to be sure, and a chance to get back our own, meanin' the *Philadelphia*."

"But I heard Master Morris and the surgeon talking of the danger the frigate would be in if she stayed on the station during a northeast gale. It was said that Commodore Preble feared she might not weather it."

"Well, we didn't come out here on a pleasure excursion, an' if the commodore counts on makin' a port whenever there's a capful of wind, we shall only fool our time away until another commander is appointed to take charge of this 'ere squadron."

If Master Cutbush called that only a "capful" of wind, it surely would have distressed me to be afloat in one of his gales.

The frigate was being flung about like a cork; everything not properly belayed had gone adrift, pounding from one side of the gun-deck to the other until cared for; and while I counted myself somewhat of a sailor by this time, it was difficult to make my way about.

Seth had given up trying to keep his feet, and wedged himself in between the bulkhead and one of the arms, chests.

“We won’t have a show of lendin’ a hand to the crew of the *Philadelphia* while layin’ off the coast of Sicily.”

Clearly it was useless to argue with the old gunner while he was in such a disagreeable frame of mind, and I gave over the task to join Seth in his secure retreat.

It was a full month before active work began, and then the mild season was near at hand.

Of that dull, monotonous time there is no reason why I should set down the doings of each day, for one was as much like the other as are two peas, and the crew did not cease complaining even for a single hour.

In fact, such men as Barry Thomas, grown weary with inactivity, joined the older ones in complaints

against the commodore's idleness, and to Seth and me it seemed much as if all hands were on the verge of mutiny.

Then came the day when work was begun, and from that time until the war was well-nigh at an end we did not spend many idle hours.

Before our task was begun, however, we were joined by the *Siren*, under command of Lieutenant Stewart, and with three ships it appeared to us two lads, ignorant as we were of such work, that the force was amply sufficient to warrant us in making a direct attack upon Tripoli.

When we had returned to our blockading station, sometime in January of the year 1804, I observed that the commanders of the *Siren* and *Enterprise* were much in the company of Commodore Preble, and, as if this fact had direct effect upon their tongues, our men ceased their almost mutinous grumbling.

One day I made bold to ask of Barry Thomas why he had so suddenly grown satisfied with the situation, and he replied with a grin:—

“Because there's that in the air, lad, which gives token of sharp work. We won't be idle a great while longer.”

“Why?” and I looked around as if expecting to see some strange sight, whereupon he laughed heartily.

“Are you reckonin’ on a glimpse of the pirates? It’s nearer to us than the shore, this change we’re countin’ on. Do you allow that the commanders of the consorts are spendin’ their time in the frigate’s cabin swappin’ yarns? There’s trouble brewin’ for the pirates, an’ we’ll soon be takin’ a hand in it.”

More than that he would not say, and Seth and I puzzled over his words in vain, until the day when Master Cutbush was summoned to the cabin.

Lieutenants Stewart and Decatur were both there at the time, and the old gunner appeared wonderfully tickled when a marine brought the word that he was wanted aft.

To have seen the old man as he primped and twisted before a three-cornered bit of looking-glass that was nailed to the bulkhead, one would have believed him a regular dandy making ready to go ashore.

He even went so far as to put on his best togs, and with cap tilting on three hairs he went aft, gay as Cuffee, leaving the other gunners in a fine frame of the greenest kind of green envy.

Seth and I watched him toddle down the deck, giving no heed to the unfriendly criticisms to be heard on every side, and then we joined a number of our watch who were discussing the matter in no friendly spirit.

It was agreed by all that he had been summoned for some special service; and the general opinion was that he would be so puffed up with pride because of the fact that it would be next to impossible for his mates to live with him in harmony.

Master Cutbush's ears must have tingled during the half-hour he remained in the commodore's cabin, and when he came out it could readily be seen that the men had not been mistaken regarding his being rounded out with pride.

"I'm countin' on takin' you two lads with me, to the end that you may have an idea of what can be done," he said stiffly, as he passed Seth and me on his way forward, and both of us followed to learn the meaning of his words; but never once did he speak until he had changed his dandified rig for everyday clothes, although half an hundred of the crew were plying him with questions.

One might well have believed that he had suddenly been given command of the squadron, so many

airs and graces did he display, and such a mighty air of importance did he wear.

Finally he condescended to speak to the captain of No. 6 gun; but it was only to say in a tone which would lead you to believe that the plan, whatever it might be, was all his:—

“We’ll try our hand at the *Philadelphia* before many hours go by; an’ I count on bein’ in the thickest of it.”

It was a statement well calculated to excite every one of us, even poor timorous me, and questions were hurled at him like volleys of grape and canister.

“I’m not countin’ on lettin’ my tongue run away with my head,” he said gruffly, and more than that we could not get out of him, except when he repeated that Seth and I were to go with him.

“Need a couple of slaveys now you’ve come into a commission, eh?” Barry Thomas asked, in a most disrespectful tone; and I fully expected to see Master Cutbush turn upon him in a fury, instead of which he did no more than smile, which was most exasperating to us, who were burning with curiosity.

Then, as if still further to anger us, the old man set about getting out fuses and sharpening his cutlass,

as if he counted on going into Tripoli alone, smiling whenever his mates became abusive because of not being able to learn anything from him; and the forward portion of the gun-deck was filled with a crowd of sailors who appeared bent on wreaking what I at the time thought would be a just vengeance, because of his remaining silent as to the work on hand.

When it seemed as if the crew could no longer restrain their temper, and would fall aboard of the stubborn old gunner, an undersized marine, putting on as many airs as did Master Cutbush, came to the hatch and called out:—

“Boat alongside, Master Gunner!”

With that Master Cutbush, buckling on his cutlass, said gruffly to Seth and me:—

“Follow me, lads, an’ see to it that there’s no skylarkin’, or it’ll be the worse for you.”

“Look here, Jacob,” the captain of No. 6 cried imploringly, “can’t you give us the least little hint as to what’s up? It’s one thing to hold your tongue accordin’ to orders; but a mighty scurvy trick for a man to sneak off in this fashion, leavin’ his messmates all in the dark.”

Master Cutbush turned, slackening his pace for an instant, as he said with a mysterious air:—

“We’re bent on cuttin’ out, or destroyin’, the frigate them pirates have pulled off the reef, Moses, an’ what’s more, we’ll do it!”

“The *Philadelphia!*” some one cried; and then it was as if every man had suddenly lost his senses, so great was the uproar and rage because out of all that ship’s company of tried men, only one had been selected to take part in such a piece of work.

As for me, I did not fully understand the meaning of what Master Cutbush had said; but I was by no means so dull as to fail of knowing that some desperate venture was near at hand, and a cold chill ran down my backbone at the thought that I was to be in the thick of it.

CHAPTER V.

THE "INTREPID."

OUT of all our ship's company I do not believe there was one, save perhaps the commodore himself, who failed to look at Master Cutbush, Seth, and me, as we walked to the starboard gangway where was waiting the boat as reported by the marine.

I fancied then, and have since come to believe it true, that even the lieutenants were envious of what they considered our good fortune; but to me it was very like being led out for execution, and only a sense of shame prevented me from begging Master Cutbush that some other of the ship's boys might be allowed to go in my stead, if it so be two lads were needed from the *Constitution*.

As we neared the gangway, Joseph Foster, a boy who served the captain of No. 4 gun, shook his fist in my face as he whispered, taking good heed none else might hear the words:—

“You are too lucky! When a greenhorn such as

you gets all the plums in the duff, it's time somebody laid him by the heels, and that's what I'm countin' to do when you come back, if the pirates haven't made mincemeat of you before then."

It hurt me that this lad, who until now had been friendly, should indulge in such threats at a time when I was probably going into great danger, and I whispered in reply:—

"Why do you say that, Joe? Haven't you and me always been friends aboard this ship?"

"Ay; but that was before I knew you for such a sneak as to take advantage of your relationship with Master Cutbush to the extent of being chosen from among all the *Constitution's* boys."

He was envious, and I filled with amazement that the lad could be thus angry because another, rather than himself, was to venture into the very presence of death.

How gladly would I have exchanged places with him! But to make such a proposition would be to bring upon myself the contempt of every man and lad aboard the *Constitution*, and better any number of piratical bullets than that.

After we three had gone over the rail into the cutter, which lay alongside, Lieutenant Decatur came down the ladder, taking his seat next the cockswain,

on the port side, which brought him directly opposite us.

Therefore I knew that whatever disagreeable situation we might be plunged into, he would be the commander, else had he stayed aboard the frigate; and I scanned his face narrowly, but not gaining great satisfaction thereby, for he appeared to be one who had more of fighting blood in him than I could ever hope would flow in my veins.

Although in command of the schooner, he did not hold himself aloof like our commodore, but seemed disposed to be friendly with those beneath him in station, for he said to Master Cutbush, once we were pushed off from the frigate:—

“It would have been better, Master Gunner, had the lads remained behind. My own crew will claim the right to join in the undertaking, and yonder ketch is not as roomy as we might wish.”

“As I said, sir, it was my desire that these lads, whom I have been tryin’ to lick into shape, should have a taste of service, an’ both you an’ the commodore were so kind as to give permission that they might go with me,” Master Cutbush said solemnly, putting on more airs, as I thought at the time, than any three commodores should have done.

“A promise is a promise, my man,” Lieutenant Decatur said cheerily. “Your boys will go with us, although it may cause severe heartburnings to those who must be left behind because of them.”

“How many of the crew of the *Enterprise* will be taken, sir?”

“All save those needed to care for the ship. The crew will number about sixty, as I have made calculations, and that should be sufficient to do the work thoroughly well.”

“Ay, sir, if it so be every man does his duty, which I reckon he will, seein’s how we’ve been kept so long in idleness on this ’ere station that it’s the rarest kind of a treat to have somethin’ in the shape of a scrimmage.”

All this conversation was like so much Greek to me, and Seth was equally in the dark, as I understood when he whispered cautiously:—

“Can you make out, Dick, what it is we’ve started in on?”

“Indeed I can’t, lad. The more they talk, the darker it seems, and I only wish Uncle Jacob hadn’t been so eager in our behalf, for there’s more of danger than pleasure ahead of us, accordin’ to my way of thinkin’.”

Then it was that for the first time I noticed the cutter was headed for the ketch instead of the schooner, and this fact but added to my bewilderment.

If I have not set it down before, it shall be told now that shortly after the *Mastico* was captured her name had been changed to the *Intrepid*, as I could see when we pulled around under the stern where the word was painted in bold letters.

The cutter pulled up to the ladder, and I was surprised to see Master Cutbush forget, as I supposed, his station, when he clambered over the rail in advance of the commander.

Seth and I remained on the thwart until the lieutenant said cheerily : —

“Up with you, lads. There must be no loitering now, for there’s a tidy bit of work to be done before to-morrow morning.”

When we had obeyed this command the cutter was at once pulled toward the *Enterprise*, and Seth and I found ourselves on the deck of the pirate craft, where were not more than seven men, two of whom eyed us narrowly.

Master Cutbush displayed no desire to make acquaintances, but walked forward with the air of a

commodore at the very least, evidently bent on inspecting the fore-castle.

“It is not possible there can be anything so very desperate undertaken in a craft of this size,” Seth said, looking about him disdainfully, and indeed the fifty-ton ketch did appear small to us who were so lately come from the deck of a frigate.

His words cheered me wondrously.

At the first I was inclined to fear an attack on Tripoli might be intended; but now it seemed positive, as my comrade had said, that we were not in for anything of a desperate nature, since this small schooner and the few guns she carried would be poor tools with which to attack a well-fortified, well-protected port.

We two lads, Seth and I, were much like cats in a strange garret, as we stood amidships leaning against the port rail, with nothing better to do than look out over the heaving sea to where the *Constitution* formed as beautiful a picture as it was ever my good fortune to behold.

The crew of the *Intrepid*, as I have said, gave no heed to us; but when Master Cutbush emerged from the fore-castle they went forward as if to have speech with him, and we were comparatively alone.

Then it was that Seth directed my attention toward the *Enterprise*, from which craft we saw three boats putting off laden with men, and, as we watched them, I noted that the *Constitution's* cutter was also in the water.

"They are counting on fitting this ketch out with a good-sized crew," Seth said, half to himself. "If all those men come aboard there won't be room in which to turn around."

And they were coming aboard, as we speedily saw.

Having nothing better to do, I counted as the fellows came over the rail—sixty-two in round numbers from the *Enterprise*, and five midshipmen from the frigate.

These last, as I well knew, were Masters Izard, Morris, Laws, David, and Rowe.

When all this crowd was aboard there came a boatload of officers from the *Enterprise*, and these, as I learned later, were Lieutenants Lawrence, Bainbridge,¹ and Thorne, Master Thomas McDonough, midshipman, and Dr. Heerman, the surgeon.

Now, as you may suppose, there were so many

¹ Lieutenant Joseph Bainbridge of the *Enterprise* was a relative of Captain Bainbridge (of the *Philadelphia*) imprisoned in Tripoli.

on the *Intrepid's* deck that it seemed much as if it would be impossible to go fore or aft, and I speedily began to lose the little courage which had come with Seth's proposition that nothing very desperate could be contemplated in so small a vessel.

“Surely there must be some important venture near at hand, otherwise the ketch would not be so overladen,” I whispered to Seth. “It is time we knew the meaning of being thus transshipped from the frigate. Let us look about until finding a friendly seeming man who appears disposed to give ear, and question him. I warrant you that we are the only ones aboard who remain in ignorance of whatsoever plan Lieutenant Decatur may have in mind.”

The ketch was hove to, her commander having gone on board the frigate once more for the final consultation with Commodore Preble, I had no doubt; and therefore those newly come aboard had nothing whatsoever to do, while the greater number appeared quite as strange to their surroundings as were Seth and I.

We were not long in singling out a sailor from the *Enterprise* who seemed likely to give ear to lads like ourselves.

A round, jolly red face he had, with a fringe of beard the same color as his uncombed hair, which gave him much the appearance of looking through a wreath of oakum; a long body; short, bowed legs; arms that reached nearly to his knees; and hands that were misshapen and begrimed with tar until they looked rather like twisted roots than fingers and a palm.

An odd-looking sailor he was; but I fancied it possible to read in his face more of friendliness than in any other whom we approached, and going boldly, yet at the same time respectfully, up to him, I ventured to ask:—

"If it please you, sir, can you tell me where we are bound?"

"It does please me, lad, mightily, seein's how this 'ere ketch is ordered into the harbor of Tripoli, where we'll come alongside the *Philadelphia*."

"Tripoli!" I repeated, conscious that my face was growing pale because of the fear that seized my heart. "What can so small a craft do there?"

"I ain't allowin' that she'll do very much, save carry us all into the harbor, an' bring back so many as are left alive after the work has been done," he said, with a hearty laugh, much as if there was some-

thing comical in the idea that one or more of us might never return.

“What is the work, sir?” Seth asked.

“How does it happen that you two lads are here, when many a man would give up the prize money that may be comin’ to him at the end of this cruise, to stand in your shoes, an’ yet knowin’ nothin’ of what’s in the wind?”

As well as might be in a few words, I explained to him why Seth and I were ignorant, and I having finished, he said, half to himself:—

“So Jacob Cutbush has been singled out as one of the men that’s fit to take part in this ’ere excursion, has he?”

“Do you know him, sir?” I asked.

“Know him, lad? Why, I’ve sailed with old Jacob these four years, an’ but for believin’ that Stephen Decatur is a man as will give his crew the best show for prize money, I would have been aboard the frigate when she left the United States. What’s he to you that he should put himself out to give lads a berth which every man jack of us is wild to fill?”

It was necessary that I should explain the relationship between the captain of No. 8 gun and myself, after which the sailor was seized with another spasm

of mirth, while there came into his throat a choking, gurgling sound which caused me to fear he might be strangling.

"Well, there is one thing about it, lad," he said finally, "if Jacob Cutbush has taken you in hand I'll venture to say you'll learn a sailorman's duties; but I am not thinking your lot will be an overly easy one. Where is he now?"

"He went forward when we first came aboard, sir. But won't you please tell me what the work is we are to do at Tripoli?" I cried, fearing lest this odd seaman would immediately start in search of his old messmate.

"Why, it's neither more nor less than to blow up or set fire to the *Philadelph*y. You see Commodore Preble ain't of the mind that them Barbary pirates shall have the sailin' of her, an' Stephen Decatur was just the man to do the commodore's bidding. We'll run into the harbor quietly as may be, lay alongside the frigate, an' after that the job will be done in a twinkling, providin' them piratical heathen don't make us spend too much time fightin'."

"But I've been told, sir, that the frigate is moored close under the guns of the fort; that between her and the entrance to the harbor is the Tripolitan fleet."

“Ay, lad, an’ you’ve been told rightly. If she was outside where it would be easy to come at her, this ’ere little excursion wouldn’t amount to much; but why is it that every man jack of us is crazy to set out on the venture? Why, because the work that’s planned is like to be what you might call reasonably difficult, an’ them as lives to finish it will have reason to be proud.”

“It appears to me as if all aboard the ketch would be finished before the work is,” Seth said; and I wondered why he could speak so steadily, for I was speechless with amazement and terror once the sailor had outlined the venture.

“You’ll see how much difference there is between a Tripolitan pirate and an American sailor before we come alongside the *Constitution* again,” the seaman said, with another gurgle in his throat which but added to my terror. “The *Philadelph*y is the same as destroyed once we get under way, unless it so be that them heathen meet us in full force before we gain an entrance to the harbor. That much I’m telling you for the truth, lads, and you may count on it jest so sure’s my name’s Bart Jenkins.”

Having thus spoken the odd little man went forward, evidently believing he had given us all the information

necessary, and I doubted not but that he was gone in search of Master Cutbush.

In silence I gazed at Seth, and perhaps it would have been impossible for me to speak had I been so minded, because of the fear which had taken possession of me.

It was not in my mind, however, that he should know how cowardly I had become, therefore I questioned him only with my eyes.

While one might have counted twenty he looked at me earnestly, showing but little trace of fear, and then said, as if speculating upon something which was of no particular importance to himself : —

“It strikes me that it’s a reasonably big contract to go close under the guns of Tripoli in this craft.”

Cowardly as I was, his manner of speaking provoked me, and I replied harshly : —

“A big contract! It can be little else than certain death for all of us. Fancy what havoc a single shot would make when plowing its way along a deck crowded like this!”

The mere suggestion was sufficient to make him feel uncomfortable in mind, and it gratified me that he should be so.

“Why do you want to talk of such things?” he

asked sharply. "There is no sense in crossing bridges before you come to them."

"It strikes me that we have already come to this bridge, Seth Gordon. We are embarked, and it is not likely that the officers will turn back, once having started. Think of what they propose to do! Enter the well-fortified and well-guarded harbor of Tripoli in a fifty-ton schooner which could do little or no execution if she was loaded with guns, and there attempt to destroy a frigate which is anchored under the guns of the fort! We have come to the bridge, Seth, and according to my way of thinking there are but few of us who will live to cross it."

His face paled ever so slightly, and he turned on his heel to hide, as I believed, evidences of fear, saying in a petulant tone as he did so : —

"If it please you to seek out dreadful things with which to occupy your thoughts, continue as you have begun. I am minded to put the matter from me so far as possible, until the moment really comes that we must face the danger."

Then he walked away with the air of one who considers himself injured, and I was about to call him back, dreading to be left alone, when the odd-looking sailor, Bart Jenkins, came toward me.

"Jacob Cutbush is givin' himself a good many high and mighty airs, it seems," he grumbled; but the cheery look did not fade from his face. "Simply because Lieutenant Decatur chose only him from among the crew of the *Constitution*, he thinks it's because he's fitted to take charge of the whole boilin'."

"Didn't he receive you kindly?" I asked, smiling despite my fear.

"Receive me! Ay, lad, that's just about what you can call it! If he had been the commodore and I a powder monkey, the way he held himself would have been nearabout right."

"He is said to be an able gunner, sir," I ventured to remark.

"Ay, lad, there's none better; but that doesn't give him the right to hold himself above a messmate."

My mind was in such a whirl that I had no inclination to listen to the sailor's grumbling, and sought to change the subject of the conversation by saying:—

"Tell me, Master Jenkins, —"

"Who has brought you up to 'master' a sailorman?"

"Master Cutbush, sir. He says that a boy should speak respectfully to those above him, and doesn't allow me to call him uncle."

"Oh, he don't, eh? Well, I'm plain Bart Jenkins,

an' that's what you're to call me if you want to get an answer. There's no 'misterin'' for me."

I began to like this man immensely, and believed that in time of danger, such as we must expect soon to come at, he would be one upon whom a lad could safely lean.

"Then tell me, Bart Jenkins, if it is supposed that this ketch will live to go as far into the harbor as where the *Philadelphia* lies moored?"

"That's what is counted on, my boy, and I don't see any reason why she shouldn't. Once we make the land, an' it must be after dark, I reckon the *Intrepid* will pass for a tradin' craft till we'll be able to get close alongside the frigate. It is when we start to come away that they'll pepper us, for with the *Philadelphly* on fire, it stands to reason the harbor will be decently well lighted."

"But suppose we fall in with an armed vessel before arriving there?" I asked, almost hoping that even such a disaster might prevent our hazardous venture.

"Bless your soul, lad, we are to be convoyed by the *Siren*, an' with her sixteen guns she should be able to stand off almost anything that the pirates have got afloat."

As he spoke I glanced toward Lieutenant Stewart's brig, which lay some two miles away, and saw she was making ready to come down upon us.

"Do you know when we are to sail?" I asked faintly, for my last hope had been dashed.

"As soon as Lieutenant Decatur comes on board, an' I reckon he won't hobnob with the commodore any longer than is necessary, for twenty-four hours will be needed, accordin' to the way this craft sails, before we can make the Tripolitan coast."

He had hardly ceased speaking when I saw a number of officers gathered at the frigate's port gangway, and knew that the fatal moment had come.

"Yes, that's the lieutenant," Bart Jenkins said, as I called his attention to the group on the *Constitution's* deck. "I allow we'll be under way in five minutes' time, an' when next we see yonder frigate, if we ever do, his high mightiness of Tripoli will have had such a lesson as none but American sailormen can give him."

CHAPTER VI.

TRIPOLI.

BART JENKINS was in the right when he said that we would soon be under way, for the *Constitution's* cutter brought Lieutenant Decatur on board without delay. In a twinkling after he came over the rail the ketch was under way, following the *Siren*, who was to convoy her, and I thought then, as I do even at this late day, that it was the most hazardous undertaking of which one could well conceive.

Later I came to know that there were seventy-four souls on board the *Intrepid*, but so thronged were her decks that I should have guessed the number to have been twice as many.

We had been under way fully half an hour before I saw Seth Gordon again, and from the expression on his face I came to believe that others beside myself had been making predictions concerning the voyage, which it did not please him to hear.

He had parted company with me in anger because

I persisted on looking into the future where it seemed death awaited us; but the lad returned in a most friendly manner, and there was in my mind the thought that he had suddenly discovered his need of sympathy.

But for his having been dazzled by the stories of Master Cutbush, we two lads would not have been on board this little schooner running into the very jaws of the lion; and realizing this more keenly, perhaps, than ever, I was not minded to make any attempt at soothing him.

“Did you know that we had a Tripolitan pilot aboard?” he asked, with the air of one who seeks to heal a breach of friendship, and, without admitting my ignorance of such fact, I inquired:—

“Is he one of the prisoners taken when this ketch was captured?”

“Ay; his name is Salvatore Catalano, and it is said that he knows the water of the harbor as well as we might know our own dooryards. See! here is a drawing such as he made for Commodore Preble.”

As he spoke Seth handed me a bit of soiled paper which afterward came into my possession, and I have copied it here for the better understanding of whoso-

ever may read this poor tale of what we did before Tripoli.

“Does the man speak English that you could have held so much of converse with him?” I asked, after studying the rude chart, and finding in it but little to give encouragement.

“No; but Master Cutbush understands somewhat of the lingo, and was doing a tremendous lot of jawing with the fellow when I borrowed the paper that you might see it.”

I should have thanked my comrade for his thoughtfulness, instead of which I held silent, my heart yet sore at the thought that through his folly we were brought into such sore straits as it appeared must soon be upon us.

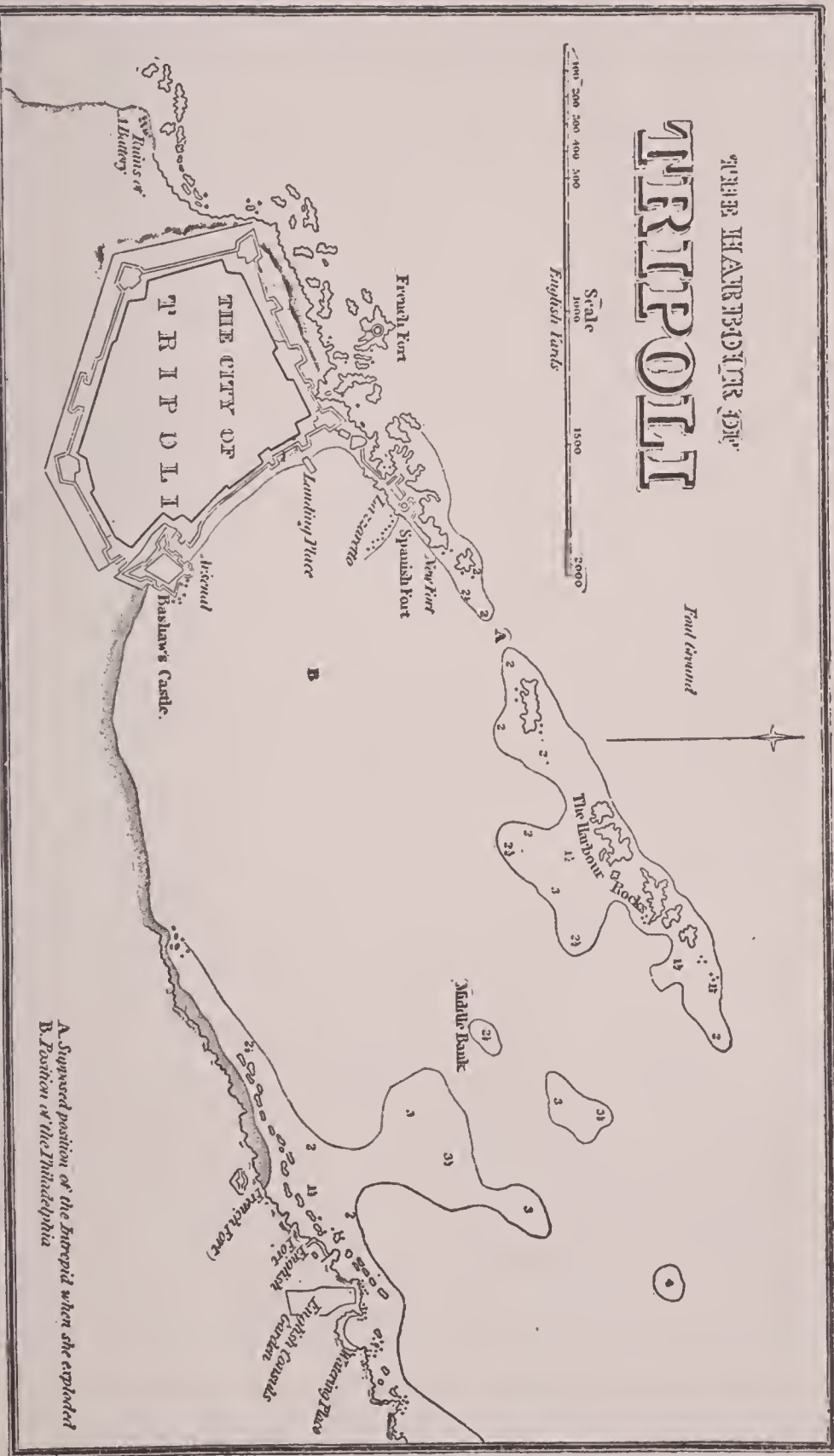
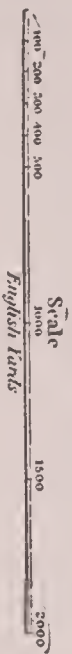
“If he has marked out the position of the *Philadelphia* correctly, then we are to run into a trap which has shoals on one side and rocks on the other, where will be found all the piratical fleet, and it is expected this little ketch, overladen with men, will succeed in making her escape,” I said, half to myself, noting as I spoke that the words rang disagreeably in Seth’s ears.

“All on board seem to think it can be done, although perhaps there will be much loss of life.”

THE HARBOUR OF

TRIPOLI

Town viewed



A. Supposed position of the *Indulephta* when she exploded
B. Position of the *Indulephta*

The dotted lines mark the extent of shoal water.

“Perhaps!” I repeated angrily, for the cowardice in my heart rendered me impatient and fretful. “There can be no question but that all of us will be killed before we shall have come within musket-range of the frigate. But who is to lead us into this trap? One of the pirates himself! We have made him a prisoner, and yet intrust all our lives in his keeping. What is more natural than that he should pilot the *Intrepid* into the most dangerous portion of the harbor, from which it will be impossible to make even an attempt at escape?”

Seth was silent for a moment, and then said quickly, as if finding great consolation in the thought:—

“The fellow would never dare to do that, because when we are fired upon he is in even more danger than we. It has been told him, so I heard one of the men say, that he would be closely guarded, and shot at the first sign of treachery.”

Such precaution gave me very little satisfaction, for of what avail would it be to kill the pirate after we had been conducted so far into the harbor that escape was impossible?

It was a most dismal picture to look forward to, view it from whatever side you might, and by this time I had succeeded in making Seth quite as miserable in mind as was I.

It was the third day of February when we parted company with the *Constitution*, and that date should be borne in mind, together with the fact that we numbered seventy-four on board a fifty-ton craft, having set out on a voyage which it was believed would last no more than eight and forty hours at the longest.

Not until after the mess kids had been filled for supper—and a difficult time did the cooks have in trying to provide for so many while working in such limited quarters—did I go below, and then my anger against Seth had given way to an intense desire for close companionship with my comrade.

I found him looking with an expression of dismay upon his face at the scene below, where surely one watch must turn in if any sleep was to be had, and seeing me, he said ruefully:—

“However it will be possible to stow so many men down here puzzles me.”

“If all the officers count on remaining aft, they must be packed in even snugger than we,” I replied, with a laugh which had in it nothing of mirth. Then, seeing that fully one-third of the space was occupied with odd-looking bundles and bales, I asked curiously: “Is it possible we are carrying a cargo to be delivered at Tripoli?”

Seth, who, instead of foolishly mooning over the future after my example, had been making himself acquainted with all the details of the venture, readily replied to my question by saying:—

“These bales are made up of light wood smeared with tar, odds and ends of rope soaked in oil, oakum plentifully besprinkled with powder, and such other combustibles as will serve to start a blaze quickly on board the frigate, if it so be we are fortunate enough to lay alongside of her.”

“Is it believed that we shall have time to transship all this cargo?”

“I heard Master Morris say that just before entering the harbor these bales would be broken open, and after the pirates whom we find on the frigate are overpowered, each of us will carry the stuff on board by the armful. We are to be told off in detachments, each crew to a certain portion of the work, and, from all I can learn, the men themselves are satisfied that the plan will be a success.”

“Do you know in which watch we are?”

“The men who have been on board the ketch since her capture are to look after the craft, and nothing is asked from the remainder of the force save to keep out of the way.”

Well, we talked long and mournfully concerning what was to be done, saying much which was foolish, and should have no place in this story.

Seth and I found lodgement for the night on the starboard side of the hold behind a bale of combustibles, where we were wedged in like sardines, and not likely to be flung about however the craft might labor.

Despite the fact that my heart was so heavy, I slept soundly, and was somewhat cheered next morning at learning that the wind had hauled around, forcing us to run to the eastward, as if bent on making port at Alexandria or Cyprus, instead of Tripoli.

As I have said, I was cheered, because, by thus going out of our way, was the evil hour deferred, and just then anything seemed preferable to such a dangerous, reckless venturing into a well-fortified, well-protected harbor.

It was destined that the dreaded day should be deferred until, wearied by the suspense, and worn out by the hardships we were forced to endure through being so crowded, it was almost a relief to me when the hazardous work was really begun.

We ran up to the eastward and then back, learning before eight and forty hours had passed that the salt meat which had been put on board for our sub-

sistence was spoiled and unfit food even for the strongest stomachs, while of bread and water, we had such a scanty supply as to be put on short allowance almost as soon as the voyage was begun.

Not until the afternoon of the ninth, six full days of discomfort and even misery, did we come in sight of Tripoli, and while we were yet five miles from the shore the *Siren* hove to, lest the fact of the two vessels being in company should excite suspicion in case we were sighted, and the ketch went on alone, as I believed, to sure and speedy destruction.

Shortly after dark we stretched in quite near the coast with the breeze from the southwest, and anchored no more than a mile to windward of the town, all hands save four or five being ordered to remain below in hiding.

The lights of Tripoli were plainly to be distinguished.

We could see to a certainty where nearly every craft lay in the harbor, and my teeth chattered so merrily that I dared not attempt to speak so much as a single word, lest the cowardice in my heart be made known to those around.

As it seems had previously been agreed upon, the *Siren*, disguised until she might have been mistaken

for a peaceful trader, came in and hove to half a mile to seaward of us.

Now it seemed as if everything was ready for the undertaking, and thus far, apparently, the pirates were unaware that an enemy was so near at hand, although the ketch unquestionably had been seen, but was probably mistaken for one of their own craft.

The night promised to be as dark as men in our position could desire. The sky was overhung with clouds, and the wind howled mournfully through the rigging.

Seth and I felt the decisive moment had arrived, and wondered why we lay at anchor so long, for to our minds the work ought to be begun sufficiently early to admit of our making an effort to escape before daylight had come.

It was Bart Jenkins who relieved our suspense, by volunteering the information that the pilot had said it would be too risky to venture in among the rocks while the wind was so fitful, because the sea must be breaking entirely across the channel.

“Then, having starved for six days, we’ll go back without making the attempt,” I said, and despite my best intentions there was a certain ring of joy in my tone.

“Not so, lad. Lieutenant Decatur is not the man to climb a hill and then go back without having done anything. He has just given orders that Lieutenant Morris and the pilot shall put out in one of the boats to have a look at the entrance. Yonder are the crew muffling the oars.”

“What think you, Bart Jenkins? Shall we run alongside the *Philadelphia* this night?” Seth asked.

“No, lad, accordin’ to my way of thinkin’ we’ll put to sea precious soon. I ain’t sayin’ anything against the commander of this ’ere ketch; but if I was captain, there’d be mighty little time spent in nosin’ ’round the rocks, for before them as are about to start can get there, we’ll have wind enough an’ to spare, or I’m a Dutchman, which I ain’t.”

We learned, Seth and I, before the boat was launched, that the pirate pilot had declared again and again against the wisdom of attempting to run into the harbor, and when finally the little craft was sent off on her spying expedition, the wind had increased to such an extent that the ketch tugged and strained at her cable until at least one out of every three waves swept clean over us.

I thought of a verity that we should be swamped, and had little hope of ever seeing Lieutenant Morris

again, for if his boat was not stove among the rocks which guarded the entrance of the channel, the pilot might find a way of delivering him over to the enemy.

Because of the danger that many of us might be swept overboard by the angry waters, orders were given that all hands, save the regular crew of the ketch, remain below, and we had no means of knowing what might be taking place outside, until the men who had been sent out in the boat returned, wet to the skin, and fatigued to the verge of exhaustion by their severe labors.

They reported having advanced as far as the entrance to the channel near the Spanish Fort, where was found the surf rolling in such height as to prevent a passage, and again was the venture postponed.

According to their story, the *Siren* had hoisted out and armed her boats, which were intended to cover our retreat, before our men put off from the *Intrepid*; but now the wind was coming down upon us with such violence that the brig was endeavoring to get under way, Lieutenant Stewart understanding only too well that there would be no conflict with the pirates that night.

“She’s rollin’ rail under while they are tryin’ to get the anchor,” one of the men said. “Accordin’

to my way of thinkin', it'll be a case of cuttin' the cables before she can be gotten clear of the land."

"I am not certain whether to be glad or sorry that we are forced to run for it this night," Seth whispered to me. "The thought of being cooped up here much longer, starving and cramped, is not pleasant."

"But you will be forced to take what comes, like the rest of us," I replied, quite convinced that there was less of suffering to be met with in the hold of the *Intrepid* than the harbor of Tripoli.

Well, the ketch was got under way, although we had no share in the task, nor could we see what the others did; but when the motion was changed from that jumping and straining at the cables, to the long bounds, the climbing up one wave only to descend again until it seemed that we were bent on going to the bottom, did we in the hold know that the *Intrepid* was clear of her ground tackle.

As we learned some time later, the *Siren* had a hard battle of it before leaving the coast, so violent had the gale become.

No less than three hours were spent in the vain attempt to get her anchor, and eight of the crew, together with Lieutenant Stewart himself, were seri-

ously injured by the capstan's running away with the bars.

Then, as the sailor had predicted, they were forced to cut the cable, and scud for it.

As one or another of the crew who worked the ketch came below for a few moments' rest, we learned that the wind was hauling to the northward and increasing in force.

Then followed six terrible days and equally terrible nights, during nearly all of which time we were forced to remain in the hold, no less than fifty-five of us, and when we ventured on deck for a breath of fresh air, it was at imminent danger of life.

The oldest seamen among us believed firmly that the ketch would founder, and I question if there was one who had an idea she could outride the gale.

The brightest prospect before us was that we might drift upon the coast a wreck, but it seemed almost certain we should go down in deep water, where there would be no chance of saving life.

It is impossible for me to attempt to describe, however faintly, our mental and bodily condition during those six long days, which seemed fully a month, when every instant death stood close beside us.

Try to fancy a week's imprisonment in a dark,

noisome dungeon, which is tossed hither and thither until one is forced to clutch desperately at anything immovable in order to avoid being hurled forward or aft, to port or to starboard! Add to that such food as brutes would disdain to eat, and a supply of water so limited that it barely sufficed to moisten one's lips.

If such a situation can be pictured, then may be had some idea of what we, who had left homes far behind in the hope of liberating our countrymen from slavery, endured while powerless to aid ourselves.

All the dismal forebodings proved to be groundless, however, and on the morning of the 7th we ran into the Gulf of Sidra, where we were fairly embayed.

Most likely when the gale began the *Constitution* had run over to Malta for shelter, and we were farther away from the proposed point of attack than was the frigate.

Surely, I had given way to my cowardice without due cause.

What a relief it was to come on deck once more, and be able to stand there in comparative safety, drinking in the pure air!

Yet we were liable to attack, for the Gulf of Sidra is on the coast of Tripoli, and not more than four

miles away could be seen half a dozen piratical craft, which would surely open fire on us once our true character was known.

I am making what may seem an overly long story of this voyage in the *Intrepid*; but those who were there, sharing all the danger and all the suffering, would say on reading what has been set down, that the matter is dismissed in altogether too few words, for we had spent what was much the same as a full lifetime.

The *Siren* had, fortunately for the ultimate purpose of the voyage, kept us well in company, and when the wind, taking a slant to the eastward, permitted of our leaving the gulf, we came upon her not more than two leagues off the shore.

From that time on we had light, baffling breezes, and every fathom of the distance covered, until the 15th, was fairly earned by hard labor.

When it fell a dead calm we got out kedges, or towed the ketch with the boats, and those on the *Siren* worked in the same fashion, until, thirteen days from the time of parting company with the *Constitution*, we were so near Tripoli that preparations were made immediately for the attack.

The cowardice which previously beset me had passed

away, for hunger and thirst were by this time so great that I could have been induced to take even greater risks in the hope of having done with the suffering.

Master Cutbush himself was not more eager to see the work finished than I, for, although during the run down the coast we had taken from the *Siren* a certain quantity of supplies, we were yet far from being properly fed, and my thirst was great.

On the afternoon of the 16th, as I have said, the *Siren* fell some distance behind the *Intrepid*, lest two vessels should be seen in company, and Midshipman Anderson, with eight men, was sent on board our craft as reënforcement, for it was feared that the pirates, having sighted us, had strengthened the force on board the *Philadelphia*.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when orders were given for all hands to go on deck, and we knew that Lieutenant Decatur was about to give his final orders.

At last we should know how the work was to be carried out, if, perchance, it could be accomplished.

The *Intrepid's* deck was literally thronged with men, and all facing aft, when Lieutenant Decatur came up the cabin companionway looking as cheery and eager

as one might who was about to set forth on some most pleasurable excursion.

It is not possible for me to remember the exact words he used; but in substance this was what he said to us at that moment:—

“Lads, at last, after much of labor and suffering, have we come to the scene of the task that is set us. It is not necessary I should try to animate your courage by words, for I know full well every man is burning with the same desire as I. It is only needed you should understand full well how the task is to be accomplished, for accomplished it will be, of that I am certain. We will sail boldly into the harbor, trusting that the piratical horde may believe us a trading vessel which has been able to run the blockade because of the storm having driven the American vessels away. It is my purpose to lay the ketch, as if by clumsy handling, alongside the *Philadelphia*. The spar-deck must be carried first; then the gun-deck, and after that has been done, the following distribution of the company will be made in order to set fire to the ship. Fifteen men are to be told off to accompany Midshipmen Izard, Rowe, and myself, and the duty of this party will be to hold possession of the upper deck; ten men under command of Lieutenant Lawrence,

Midshipmen Laws and McDonough, are to repair to the berth-deck and forward storerooms. Ten more, under Mr. Bainbridge and Midshipman Davis, will go into the wardroom and steerage. Midshipman Morris will have command of eight, who are to go into the cockpit and after storerooms. Lieutenant Thorne, Dr. Heeman, and Master Cutbush, with thirteen men, are to hold possession of the ketch. To Mr. Izard is assigned command of the launch should she be needed; while Mr. Anderson, with the *Siren's* cutter, will secure all boats alongside the ship, as well as prevent the pirates from swimming ashore, and this last duty is to be performed before they board the frigate. Fire-arms will be used only in the last extremity, and the first object of every one is to clear the upper and gun decks of the enemy. The watchword is 'Philadelphia.' Now, lads, as soon as we have gained possession, see to it that you hold in order under your several leaders, and rouse the combustibles aboard as soon as may be."

Then Lieutenant Decatur told off fifteen seamen who were to accompany him.

Lieutenant Lawrence called ten more, and so on until our company was divided into parties as the commander had said.

Seth and I were under command of Lieutenant Morris.

It was enjoined upon each man that he remember to which party he had been assigned, and we were advised to hold ourselves apart, each division separate from the others, in order that there should be no confusion when the rush was made.

Then came the word for us to go below, leaving only the crew of the *Intrepid* on deck, and the ketch was worked slowly inshore toward the entrance of the western channel.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ATTACK.

DURING all the many disagreeable days we spent aboard the *Intrepid*, Master Cutbush gave but little heed to Seth and myself.

As a matter of course, during the greater portion of the time while we were confined in the hold, it had been impossible for him, or any one else for that matter, to move about to any extent. Even when he did come near where we were, it was not with the manner of a friend, but, instead, he seemed to hold himself aloof, as if the honor of having been selected for this expedition from among all the crew of the *Constitution* had so puffed him up with pride that he could not recognize those whom he had previously known.

More than once during that dreadful time did I promise myself that if by any chance it was permitted me to return home, and if then I should meet this man, who would not allow me to call him uncle, in Boston, I would hold myself even more stiff-necked than he was now.

But at that moment, when everything had been, as it were, made ready for the attack, Master Cutbush seemed to have suddenly remembered that he and I were of the same blood.

Perhaps he was afraid I might prove cowardly, and thus disgrace him; or it may have been that his intentions were friendly, his desire simply to give me a piece of information.

At all events, when, after having been told off into crews, we were ordered below, he came up to where Seth and I were standing, and said in much the same tone that he had used toward us when all three were in my father's house:—

“Do you know, lad, why you and I should set examples to the others in this business?”

“You, being the captain of a gun, should surely display more bravery than boys like Seth or myself,” I replied, failing to thoroughly understand his question.

“There is good reason why those who claim the name of Cutbush ought to do unusual work on this night,” he said, laying his hand on my shoulder and displaying none of those high and mighty airs which had been so disagreeable.

“Why a Cutbush more than a Gordon?” Seth asked, and the old man replied gravely:—

“Because, lad, among the crew of the *Philadelphia* who are now prisoners in Tripoli, and will be sold as slaves unless Commodore Preble can compass their relief, is one of the Cutbush family,—William, a midshipman. That fact, I think, explains why Stephen Decatur singled me out from among my mates, and I know full well it is why you were allowed to accompany me. We shall not only be fighting to prevent the American frigate from being employed in piratical work, but lending a hand in behalf of our own family. Remember that, lad, when the attack begins, and bear well in mind that an honorable death is better than a dishonorable life; by which I mean that one had best prove himself brave, even at the expense of life, than show the white feather for the sake of living in this world a few years longer.”

Then the old man took Seth and me by the hands as if to bid us good-by, and in that moment such act of friendliness fully atoned, so far as I was concerned, for every unpleasant word, and all the assumption of dignity he had shown, since we first went on board the *Constitution*.

Shortly after this I was sent on deck by Mr. Morris, with a message to Lieutenant Decatur, and

when it had been delivered our commander said to me:—

“It is more comfortable up here than in the close hold, I suppose, lad?”

“Ay, sir. Unless one had remained there as long as have we, it would be hard to realize how great is the difference.”

“There is no reason why you should return at once. Stay in the open air, if it so please you, until the men set to work; but then take care to advance with the crew to which you have been chosen.”

I thanked him, and went forward, wondering as I did so why it was that now, when the decisive moment had almost arrived, I forgot my fear.

A curiosity beset me as to what this harbor, where perchance we might meet death, was like, and this time it lay plain before me.

The ketch was five or six miles off shore, moving so slowly, despite the favoring breeze and all her canvas, that I fell to wondering what had made her such a sluggish sailer, until noting that along the rail on either side were made fast tow-lines, and I saw that to each was attached buckets, spare canvas, or such other things as might make a drag upon the schooner.

It puzzled me decidedly, this towing a lot of raffle

astern, and I made bold to ask one of the seamen why it had been done.

“It will not be well for us to arrive within the harbor until after night has come,” the man said with a laugh, “and if we should shorten sail, those on shore might grow suspicious of our movements. We have put out such as will serve to hold us back, while yet we seem to be making every effort to gain the port, and I reckon that as it is we shan’t move through the water any too swiftly.”

“Do you know what time is set for the attack, sir?” I asked.

“So soon as we arrive, which the commander reckons should be nearabout ten o’clock, and it won’t be any disaster to us if we are two hours late.”

I realized full well that in no way can a boy aboard ship make himself so disagreeable as by continually asking questions; therefore, having my curiosity gratified so much as was reasonable, I withdrew from the friendly seaman, remaining by myself, wishing it might have been Seth’s good fortune also to be in the open air.

The evening was warm, not hot. The sea was as smooth as a mill pond, and the wind fining down into the gentlest of breezes.

In fact, before an hour had elapsed we were making no more than two knots' headway, and the drags were taken inboard.

As we approached the land the *Philadelphia* came into view as she lay, so it seemed to be, hardly more than a mile from where we would enter the harbor, riding to the wind directly abreast the town.

Her foremast, which had been cut away while she was on the reef, had not yet been replaced; her main and mizzenmast were hoisted, and her lower yards on the gunwales.

Her lower standing rigging was in place, and I fancied it possible to see here and there a gun in position.

Between her and the Bashaw's palace lay two large piratical ships, five gunboats, and half a dozen or more galleys, all of which craft, I doubted not, carried a full complement of men.

When we made our attack, not only would we be close within range of the guns on shore, but must find near at hand more than a thousand pirates who would ask no better fortune than to have a hand in killing or making us prisoners.

There was a young moon, which afforded sufficient light for us to see with reasonable distinctness

all the harbor, and just before ten o'clock the *Intrepid* had arrived at the eastern entrance of the bay — a channel which lay between the rocks and the shoals.

The wind was nearly east, and as the ketch headed directly for the frigate it was well abaft the beam.

The breeze was slowly dying away, now no more than the lightest cat's-paw, and it appeared as if we hardly moved; but there we were almost inside the harbor, and yet no alarm had been sounded.

The command was given in a whisper for each crew to come up in turn, the men to conceal themselves by lying behind the bulwarks on the weather board, and as they filed up more like ghostly shadows than living creatures who were soon to be engaged in a game of death, I joined Seth, we two lads prostrate on the deck side by side within a few feet of Master Cutbush.

Ten or twelve of all our number alone stood erect.

Lieutenant Decatur was near the pilot; the quartermaster of the *Intrepid* stood at the helm, and I caught the commander's order for the ketch to be steered directly for the frigate's bow, at which place, without doubt, we were to lay the ship aboard.

Master Cutbush afterward told me that we were a full hour making our way from the entrance of the channel to where the *Philadelphia* lay; but it seemed to me, excited as I was, that at least three times as many minutes had passed.

We were within a quarter of a mile of the *Philadelphia* when the pirates hailed us, and the man who was lying just beyond Seth knew enough of the lingo to be able to make us acquainted with the drift of what was said.

When the pirates hailed, the pilot answered, in a most respectful tone, that the ketch belonged to Malta, and was on a trading voyage; that she had been nearly wrecked; had lost her anchors in the gale, and her captain wished to ride by the frigate during the night.

Then came the question as to what we were loaded with, and the pilot made reply; but Seth's companion did not understand the language sufficiently to interpret.

Then followed further conversation which was unintelligible to all hands, and I asked myself whether now might not be the time when the pilot would make known to those on board the *Philadelphia* our real intentions.

He was true to his word, however, else had we been fired into and sunk off-hand.

Surely he must have given such replies as Lieutenant Decatur dictated, for there was no show of alarm on the part of those who manned the frigate, and the current was each moment drifting us nearer and nearer the point where our commander proposed we should lay aboard.

Through that part of our rail which had been stove during the gale, I could see half a dozen pirates on the frigate's deck looking toward us, not curiously or suspiciously, but as if simply because they had nothing better to do.

Then, as a final proof that our pilot had fulfilled his promise to the letter, the Turks lowered a boat, and sent it aboard with a hawser that we might make fast.

At the same instant that the pirate set off from the frigate, one of our boats, which had been towing on the port side of the ketch, pulled out with a line which was at once made fast to the frigate's fore-chains, and, returning, aided in passing the hawser which the enemy brought, all without awakening the lightest show of alarm.

At this moment a southerly puff of wind struck

the *Intrepid*; her head fell off, and before the hawsers could be drawn taut she got a stern-board, the frigate at the same instant trending to the new current of air.

Thus, instead of being able to lay aboard from the bow, we were directly exposed to her broadside, and every one of the mounted guns might have been brought to bear on us in such fashion as would have sunk us like a stone.

The crew of our craft who showed themselves were not sufficiently strong in numbers to warp the ketch alongside the frigate, and the ropes were passed to us who lay on the deck, we hauling in without changing position.

It was not long, however, that we could hope to remain undiscovered, and when the *Intrepid* was so near the frigate that the pirates could see our anchors in the bow, thus proving that the pilot had given false information, one of the Tripolitan officers sharply commanded the ketch to keep off, adding some order in a lower tone, which the man next to Seth explained was a command for the pirates to cut the hawsers.

Almost at the same instant we heard the cry from the frigate:—

“Americanos! Americanos!”

“Pull with every ounce of strength you’ve got in you!” Lieutenant Decatur said, in a low but clear tone, which was heard distinctly by every one of us. “Remain where you are, but pull!”

In a twinkling was the ketch breasted alongside the *Philadelphia*, and until this moment every man among us obeyed the instructions to remain concealed.

Not one of us so far lost his head as to jeopardize the bold plan.

I could see Lieutenant Decatur standing close by the rail, ready to leap, and immediately behind him were Midshipmen Laws and Morris.

That was the last incident which I remembered quite distinctly, until all that dreadful scene of confusion and destruction was come to an end, save that I saw the lieutenant leap aboard the frigate, followed by the midshipmen, and at the same instant give the command:—

“Boarders, away!”

So low did the ketch lay in the water that we could clamber through the frigate’s open ports more readily than over the rail, and many of us took this last road, dashing forward madly, as if there was no such possibility as that all of us might be slain or captured.

It seemed to me as if less than a minute elapsed from the time our commander gave the word before every one of us, save those who were detailed to hold possession of the ketch, were aboard the *Philadelphia*, and so great was the surprise that the pirates, instead of fighting, crowded forward in a dense mass, leaping over the starboard side of the frigate into the water as we came in by the ports.

Here and there was heard the report of pistols and the clashing of steel, as some of the Tripolitans, more courageous than others, attempted to resist; but I saw nothing whatsoever of the fighting, save a few minutes later when I came upon a pool of fresh blood on the gun-deck.

It was as if in the merest fraction of time we had changed our quarters from the *Intrepid* to the *Philadelphia*, and yet not a gun was fired from the shore; not a piratical craft left her moorings.

Had the frigate been in trim for sailing, and the wind sufficiently strong, it is possible we might have brought her out of that harbor in fairly good condition.

However, we had little time to think of any such venture as that.

The orders previously given were to be obeyed

immediately the *Philadelphia* was in our possession, and in hardly more than five minutes each crew, every member of which was laden with combustibles, was at the appointed place, beginning the work of destruction.

In fact, the commands were executed with almost too much promptness for safety, so far as Master Morris's party, to which were attached Seth and I, was concerned.

We had hardly gotten into the cockpit before the fires were lighted on the decks above, and when, having completed our portion of the work, we attempted to ascend, the after hatchways were filled with smoke from the fires in the wardroom and steerage.

We were forced to make our escape by the forward ladders, no more than gaining the deck when it appeared as if the frigate was in a blaze from stem to stern.

We of Master Morris's party were the last to come up from below, and then, short though the time had been, we found nearly all the *Intrepid's* crew aboard of her.

"Jump lively, boys!" Lieutenant Decatur cried, as we leaped down on to the deck of the ketch, and the hawsers were cast off.

The *Philadelphia*, having been so long in that low latitude, was dry as tinder, and burned like pitch pine. In fact, it was from the very fires we had kindled that our greatest danger menaced.

When I followed Master Morris over the rail the sparks had already begun to pour out of the frigate's ports, and, our forward hawser having been the first cast off, the ketch fell astern, with her jigger flapping against the quarter gallery.

Then it was that the *Intrepid's* boom fouled. The flames darted over us, and, as it seemed to me, fully across our little craft, not more than two feet above the ammunition which had been brought out on deck and covered with a tarpaulin that we might get at it handily in case of emergency.

Half a dozen men ran to the after hawser, which had become jammed, and could not be unloosened.

There was no time to hunt around for an axe, even though we knew where one might be found; but the officers, using their swords, cut and hacked at the manila rope, while the others pushed against the hot hull of the frigate until finally we were adrift.

That our ammunition was not exploded seems little short of miraculous, and why it was that some of the *Philadelphia's* port guns were not discharged by

the heat, while we lay wedged against their very muzzles, is most strange.

As we swung clear of the frigate the fire had crept far up the rigging, running aloft with wonderful swiftness, fed by the tar which the heat of the sun had brought to the surface of the ropes.

It is difficult to fancy that the huge ship could have been enwrapped in flames so suddenly. A stack of matches would not have flamed up with greater rapidity, and we knew beyond peradventure that soon the guns, if they were loaded, would be discharged by the heat.

There was no wind by this time, and only the current sent us slowly away from the burning ship.

Long oars or sweeps, which had been made ready for just such an emergency, were swung over the side, and we pulled away; but even after we had taken half a dozen strokes not a sound was heard from the shore.

It was as if the pirates were paralyzed by our bold stroke.

Then it was that our men, unable longer to control themselves, ceased rowing for a moment as they gave three lusty cheers, and this noise served to arouse the enemy.

In a twinkling, so it seemed, from the batteries, and from the ships, and the galleys, came a storm of shot, while, strange as it may appear, the gallant old *Philadelphia* returned the fire. Her guns on that side having first become heated, were discharged with fairly good aim directly toward the piratical craft, while we pulled eight sweeps on a side steadily but vigorously, knowing that with such an advantage as had been already gained, it would be difficult for anything inside the harbor to overtake us.

The only fear was that we might be sunk by the shot before getting beyond range.

Even while all was excitement and enthusiasm I found myself wondering why a lad could have been so cowardly as was I.

Here was this venture, the very thought of which had almost caused me to faint with fear, accomplished, and not a single man had been so much as wounded.

When it should be told that I, Richard Cutbush, had made one of this party who had performed so gallant an exploit, then would strangers say such a lad must indeed be brave, and yet Commodore Preble had not one among his squadron so timorous and faint-hearted as myself.

Even to those around me I must have passed for being reasonably courageous; for I could admire, and did admire, this spectacle which I had aided in creating.

The entire bay was lighted up by the flames; reports of cannon sounded from every direction, and we knew by the medley of sounds that the whole city was alarmed.

The frigate, which the pirates had hoped soon to sail against us, was a mass of flame out of which came the report of cannon and shrieking of shot as the heated guns were discharged.

I literally forgot that in all this din some one ball, better aimed than another, might send us to the bottom, and was unconscious of the fact until a shot tore through the *Intrepid's* topgallantsail, cutting a hole as round and clean as could have been done with the sharpest knife.

As many as could get a hold of the sweeps were working them.

The pirate pilot held us truly to the proper course, and, when arriving at the entrance of the harbor, we were met by three of the *Siren's* boats fully manned and armed, which had been sent to our assistance.

They were too late to gain any share of the glory, for, truly, glory had been won that night.

We had destroyed a frigate which, when she was gotten into proper trim and manned with Turks, might have worked havoc upon us, and it had been done with that cockle-shell of a ketch which was so near foundering a few days previous.

Steadily we advanced until passing through the channel out of the harbor, no longer fearing pursuit, for never a craft had gotten under way; and as we pulled within short distance to where the *Siren* laid at anchor, Lieutenant Decatur jumped into the boat which was towing astern, going himself to give Lieutenant Stewart, who was his senior in command, a report of the night's work.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHANGE OF QUARTERS.

IT is not to be supposed that either Seth or I, the lowest in station of all our ship's company, could have any knowledge of why we went here or there after the successful attack upon the *Philadelphia*.

As a matter of course the old shellbacks and sea-lawyers, who discussed the affairs of each day, claimed to know exactly why Commodore Preble went to this port or that; but it was all guesswork on their part, as we lads came speedily to learn.

It is possible, however, for me to set down here much that we did not know at the time, having gained such information many months later.

So much by way of explanation as to why I am able to state in this poor yarn what a lad of my age and station would not be expected to know.

Now to continue with the tale in proper sequence of events.

When we were come alongside the *Siren* it was

learned that we had unwittingly taken a prisoner. One of the pirates had scurried on board the *Intrepid* in his fright, and we found him in the very eyes of the ketch, shivering and shaking as if expecting that the least of his troubles would be a throat-cutting, with himself playing the part of victim.

At about this time it was also learned that we had not come off scott free, for Bart Jenkins had a slight scalp wound, such as needed little or no treatment, but was sufficient to prevent us from saying that not a drop of Yankee blood had been spilled.

It was decided between Lieutenants Stewart and Decatur that the *Constitution* had probably run into Syracuse, on the Island of Sicily, during the gale which had made of the Tripolitan coast a lee shore, and we aboard the ketch were forced to remain yet longer in our narrow quarters, because the two vessels were immediately gotten under way for that port.

There, where we arrived after four mighty uncomfortable days, we learned that the *Nautilus*, commanded by Lieutenant Somers (Seth's cousin), was the only craft on the blockade station.

Commodore Preble had gone back to Malta, leaving orders for the *Siren* to join the *Nautilus*, but giving no commands regarding the *Intrepid*.

However it was arranged I know not; but this much is certain, that twenty officers and men of the party which had destroyed the *Philadelphia* were drafted to the *Siren*, and among those ordered into the brig were Master Cutbush, Seth, and myself.

It can be readily understood that we were by no means averse to changing quarters after having been cooped up in the ketch so long, and it seemed much like the highest degree of luxury to be once more on board a ship where there was room enough for a fellow to move around at will.

Master Cutbush continued to be most friendly, although he yet held that Seth and I should treat him with the greatest possible respect, and because he spoke to us more as if we had been equals, far different from what had previously been his custom, I believed we had done our full duty, according to his ideas, during such time as the *Intrepid* had been in the harbor of Tripoli.

We did not as much as sight the *Constitution* from the time of leaving Syracuse until many days after arriving at the blockading station, and Seth was made happy by learning that the *Nautilus* was already there.

“You’ll find Richard Somers a different kind of

man from Jacob Cutbush," my comrade said to me as we stood looking out over the sea toward where the *Nautilus* was cruising slowly to and fro. "He won't put on any such airs as your uncle is so fond of, and we've only to be transferred into his vessel in order to receive proper treatment."

"That last may prove a hard job," I replied, never for the moment doubting but that all Seth had said was true. "The commodore's permission would be necessary, and how may two boys like us gain such a favor?"

"If I can get speech with my cousin it will be done in a twinkling," he said confidently, and I firmly believed the transfer might be brought about.

Uncle Jacob had put on so many airs on account of being a skilful gunner, and behaved toward me as if we were veritable strangers, instead of blood relations, that it would have pleased me mightily to be in some other ship.

It must be borne in mind that blockading a station is anything rather than sport.

There is no variation in the duties; the ship cruises to and fro with all hands on the alert for an enemy, and, as in our case, it is not often that the lookouts are rewarded for their vigilance.

Seth and I were growing as dissatisfied with the *Siren* as ever we had been with the *Intrepid*, when the day arrived that Lieutenant Somers found an opportunity to visit his senior in command.

It had fallen dead calm, and the *Nautilus* was lying hardly more than two miles away when the sun rose.

“Now we shall see my cousin,” Seth said, as we came on deck. “There’s no possibility of any piratical craft’ heaving in sight until after the wind springs up, and it’s almost certain he’ll pay a visit to the brig.”

This seemed extremely probable, and I suggested that we make ourselves as smart as possible in order to win his favor, for no officer looks with kindly eyes on a slovenly sailor.

Master Cutbush took it upon himself to gibe us for being such dandies, forgetting how he primped and smirked before his three-cornered bit of looking-glass when he had been summoned aft; but I did not so much as reply to his weak jokes, believing that before many days should pass we would no longer be in his company.

We lads had little or nothing to do in the way of tasks during the forenoon, and we remained on deck

watching the *Nautilus* until seeing a boat put into the water, when Seth cried in an ecstasy of joy:—

“Now he is coming aboard! We must get aft, Dick, where it will be possible to attract his attention, and after that has been done we’ll have the same as advanced a step in the service.”

Crowding as near the quarter-deck as we dared, Seth and I overhung the rail, watching the gig which was approaching with an officer in the stern-sheets, and when she was close aboard, my comrade cried:—

“Good day to you, Cousin Richard.”

It was Lieutenant Somers without a question, but he looked sour enough at being hailed in such a fashion, and I drew back a few paces after noting the scowl upon his face.

Never a word did he speak in reply, but he gazed at Seth in what seemed much like mute astonishment, and no greeting of any kind did the lad receive even after the officer came aboard.

Seth stared after him open-mouthed as the lieutenant, answering our commander’s salute, went below, and I could not refrain from saying:—

“It appears much as if your cousin and my uncle were patterned after the same model.”

“He didn’t know me, that’s what’s the matter. I

never saw him before, though I've often heard mother and father speak of him."

"It bids fair to be a hard task for you to make the relationship known," I suggested, petulant in my disappointment.

"Wait until he comes on deck again, and then you'll see a difference," the lad replied, hiding his chagrin bravely.

I waited because there was nothing else to do, and at the same time hugged a tiny bit of hope to my heart that it might all be as Seth represented, in which case there was yet a chance that we would come into more pleasant quarters.

We were not kept long in suspense as to the light in which we were viewed by Lieutenant Somers.

When perhaps an hour had passed, and while the crew of the gig were yarning with our men, the commander of the *Nautilus*, accompanied by Lieutenant Stewart, came on deck.

As a matter of course we did not go up to him while he was on the quarter, but waited with our hearts in our mouths for him to come within ear-shot.

Instead of thus doing he remained near the com-

panionway, and shortly we saw a marine coming toward us.

“He has sent word for me to speak with him!” Seth whispered excitedly, and then the marine asked gruffly:—

“Which of you two boys hailed Lieutenant Somers as he came alongside?”

“I did,” Seth replied loudly.

“You are to follow me,” the marine said, turning on his heel and walking aft.

It can readily be supposed that the lad did as he was bidden, and I whispered while he was yet within earshot:—

“Don’t forget to speak a good word for me.”

Seth nodded his head in reply, and I strained my ears to hear what might be said, at the same time edging up to the break of the deck.

“Who are you?” the lieutenant asked, when the lad stood before him saluting awkwardly.

“Your cousin, Seth Gordon, sir.”

“How long have you been in the service?”

“We sailed from home in the *Constitution*, sir.”

“Have you had no one to instruct you as to a sailor’s duty toward his superiors?”

“Master Jacob Cutbush has had Dick and I in

charge; but we want to go on your ship, Cousin Richard, for it will be more pleasant sailing with one's kin."

"Hark ye, lad! In the service there is no such thing as kinship. You will at once report to Gunner Cutbush, repeating to him the words with which you hailed me, and ask that he give the matter proper attention."

To say that I was thunderstruck at the result of the interview would be putting it all too mildly, and Seth was literally paralyzed, so far as concerned the use of his tongue.

He remained standing in front of the lieutenant, staring him stupidly in the face until the latter turned on his heel, leaving the lad gazing blankly at the man at the wheel, who was grinning like a cat.

Well, it proved to be mighty unfortunate for us, — the hailing of the lieutenant as if he had been an old crony.

When Seth came forward to where I had retreated as soon as the commander of the *Nautilus* ceased speaking, he asked pitifully: —

"Do you think, Dick, that we are bound to go to Master Cutbush?"

"It seems to me wisest that you should do so," I

replied, overjoyed at the thought that I was not included in the order. "Your cousin may take it upon himself to learn if he was obeyed, and I am beginning to think he can put on even more airs than ever has Uncle Jacob."

Seth was so saddened and disappointed that he could not reply to my speech as he would undoubtedly have done under other circumstances; but asked meekly:—

"Will you come with me, Dick?"

There was no reason why I should not do so, particularly since I was eager to hear what the gunner might say, and together we went between decks, where Master Cutbush was mending a pair of trousers.

Dutifully Seth repeated the entire story, speaking rapidly as if to have the task over without delay, and, save by a certain shrug of the shoulders, Master Cutbush gave no apparent heed until the lad had come to an end, when he asked:—

"Well, havin' proven yourself to be little less than a fool, why do you tell of your folly to me?"

"My cousin — I mean Lieutenant Somers — told me to, sir," Seth replied meekly.

"Oh, he did, eh? An' have you any idee to what end?"

“He told me to ask that you give the matter proper attention, sir.”

“Was Richard Cutbush concerned in that fine game?” the old gunner asked, as he rose slowly to his feet.

“He went with me to watch for him, but never spoke to Lieutenant Somers.”

“An’ I reckon he hankered after a change, the same as you did?”

“Yes, sir.”

I could not deny the statement, although it would have been more the act of a friend had Seth cleared me of the whole scheme, particularly since it might have been done simply at the expense of a few words.

Master Cutbush at once set about “giving the matter proper attention,” by seizing a short length of knotted rope which lay conveniently at hand as if for just such a purpose, and laying it on our backs with no sparing hand.

Never before nor since have I received such a flogging as came to my share then.

Not until the old man had tired himself out did he cease, and then I felt positive the blood was streaming down my back from a dozen wounds.

This work done to his satisfaction, although by no

means to ours, Master Cutbush sat himself down and continued his sewing without either word or glance for us.

There is little need for me to say that we hurried off as soon as he had finished his cruel work, and creeping below, into the very eyes of the ship, we gave full sway to our anger and grief.

I vowed never to call that wretched old gunner my uncle if I lived to be a million years old, and Seth declared that the time would come when he could pay off scores against this cousin of his, who had brought so much misery upon us.

What stung us even worse than the flogging was the thought that all hands aboard the *Siren* would soon know what had occurred, and we might expect to hear of it at least twenty times each day from those who had nothing better to do than torment lads weaker than themselves.

While trying to console each other we made careful examination of our bodies, and it was a positive disappointment because the skin on my back was not broken.

I had really hoped it would be seamed and scored to such an extent that I could show the scars to my father, as proof of what his brother had done without due cause or justification.

“I’d like to know why the old wretch didn’t give

a reason for flogging us," Seth muttered between his sobs, and, strange as it may seem, I had failed to realize that during all the punishment Master Cutbush had not spoken a word.

"We can guess at the cause without spending very much time in the effort," I said angrily. "It was because you dared speak to your cousin as if he was no more than a man. It seems that an officer in the navy, and even some who do not hold commissions, must not be addressed as are ordinary people."

"My cousin never flogged us," Seth growled, as if holding me in a certain degree responsible for what we had suffered.

"And my uncle wouldn't have raised his hand against us if your cousin had not the same as ordered him to do so."

Then began a dispute, each trying to prove that the other's relative was the most brutal, and it might have resulted in more than words, bruised and sore though we were, but for the fact of a sudden commotion.

Men were running to and fro, orders were being bawled from one end of the brig to the other, and the sudden heeling of the vessel told that a breeze had sprung up.

I was not so sore in mind but that the thought of an

enemy being in sight roused me to a certain excitement, and, after listening a few moments, I became convinced that at last some of the pirates were trying to make their way out of the harbor.

“Come on deck, Seth,” I cried, forgetting for the instant that he had a cousin or I an uncle in the service. “Something has been sighted, and it stands us in hand to learn what it may be.”

“They’ll have to get along without me,” Seth replied angrily. “I’m through with this navy business, no matter how many pirates show themselves.”

Such talk was not only rank folly, but smattered strongly of mutiny.

I was frightened, for in his present mood the angry boy might say that which would lead him into trouble so serious that the flogging would seem, by comparison, no more than child’s play.

“Be careful, lad!” I cried. “Don’t put a yet worse rod in pickle for yourself. We have signed articles, and if it so be we’re not on hand when wanted, there’ll be a fine mess.”

At that moment the drums beat to quarters, and I laid hold on Seth to drag him along with me, lest he should loiter even for an instant, when he said between his sobs:—

“Let go of me! I’m not such a fool as to refuse obedience, though I’d give much if it might be done with safety.”

Then we ran to the gun-deck, taking the stations near the after hatch, which had previously been assigned us.

Here our only duties in an engagement would be to carry trifling orders to the gunners forward, or perform such other service as might be required of us by the officers until the ammunition was served out.

There was little need to ask why the crew had been called to quarters.

From the excited converse of those around us we soon knew that a brig of war had been sighted, and was trying to make her way into the harbor.

After so many days of idle watching, the enemy was before us at last, and the thought of taking a prize was more of a balm to my sore back than could have been afforded by all the ointment in the surgeon’s quarters.

The *Nautilus* had been sent close ashore to engage the gunboats, in case any should venture out, and we were to attend to the brig, as it seemed.

Peering through one of the open ports I could see the stranger with every stitch of canvas set, working



“‘WHO ARE YOU?’ THE LIEUTENANT ASKED.”

in shore with two boats towing, for as yet the breeze was no more than heavy enough to give her steerage-way; while we, farther out to sea, were favored with air enough to send us along at the rate of three or four knots.

Seth's cousin was doing his best to prevent the prize from escaping; but had he displayed better seamanship than was ever before known, I would not have forgiven him the flogging. His boats were also out with tow-lines, and the *Nautilus*, being a smaller craft than the pirate, was rapidly getting between the brig and the shore.

"We'll have yonder hooker as a prize before midnight, even if all the cruisers in the harbor of Tripoli come to her assistance," Master Cutbush said confidently, and I was very near to hoping he might be wounded in case we had an engagement.

The chase was most exciting to us lads, perhaps because it was our first, and at every opportunity we were at one open port or another gazing out, until one of the men shouted,—

"I reckon Cousin Richard will see to it the pirate don't have a chance to sneak into the harbor."

Then a great roar of laughter followed, and I crouched beside a water cask, hoping to hide myself

from view, while the blood came into my cheeks until they burned as did my back.

Most likely Master Cutbush had told of his valiant deed, although it is possible the man at the wheel might have brought the news forward; but however it got there, we were not soon allowed to forget what had happened, and at intervals during all the time of the chase did we hear what were supposed to be witty remarks regarding "Cousin Richard."

The *Siren* carried the wind with her, and when we were close aboard of the chase, the pirates first gained enough of the breeze to force their brig along without the aid of oars.

By that time it was too late for retreat, and there was nothing left save to put up as good a fight as they could, unless it was in their cowardly hearts to yield without a blow.

That they would defend the brig for a certain time, we had every reason to believe.

The crew was at quarters, and I heard more than one of our men predict we would need to pay a good price in blood before getting possession of her.

But for the unwarranted flogging Master Cutbush had given me, I doubt not but that I should have felt a return of my old timorousness; but, under the

circumstances, I was in just that humor when it seemed as if a battle was the one thing most needed to give me relief, and never a fear came into my mind as to what might be the result.

When we swept alongside, every man aboard expecting to hear the word spoken which would open the fight, the pirate ran up a white flag, not having any ensign to pull down, and that which had given such good evidence of proving a chance to show our metal, resolved itself into a remarkably tame affair.

The prize was the *Transfer*, an alleged British privateer hailing from Malta, and her captain carried an English commission. She had an armament of sixteen carronades, and a crew of eighty men, all Turks. The British commission did not save her, however. Lieutenant Stewart believed that the papers were fixed up to suit the occasion, even though she was English built, and he threw a prize crew aboard without delay.

“She should bring in dollars enough by way of prize money to tassel all our handkerchiefs well,” I heard Master Cutbush say, and I would willingly have signed away such as might have been my share, to know that he would get no part of the booty.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FELUCCA.

OUR prize was sent away to Syracuse in order that she might be appraised and regularly put into the service of the United States; for it must be understood that when a ship of war captures a vessel there are certain legal steps to be heeded, in order that it be determined if she was taken according to the rules of warfare,—if there be any rules in such bloody work,—so she may be recognized by other nations as belonging to the country which captured her.

These formalities are also necessary, which was of more importance to us, in order that the prize money may be apportioned out equally.

Lest I should neglect to set it down elsewhere, it is well to say here that Commodore Preble, having complied with all the details of the law regarding the capture of the *Transfer*, renamed her the *Scourge*, and gave her into command of Lieutenant Dent, he who had been acting captain of the *Constitution*.

She joined the blockading squadron within a few days after we sent her away, and then our force off Tripoli consisted of the *Siren*, Lieutenant Stewart; *Argus*, Lieutenant Hull; *Enterprise*, Lieutenant Decatur; *Vixen*, Lieutenant Smith; and, as I have just said, the *Scourge*, Lieutenant Dent.

We two lads had not seen the *Constitution* from the day we left her to go aboard the *Intrepid*; but it was well known by us that Commodore Preble was cruising here and there, getting matters into shape for the attack upon Tripoli, and many of our crew believed the rumor that he had succeeded in getting some bomb-vessels and gunboats from the king of the Two Sicilies, who was also at war with Tripoli.

This was the condition of such affairs as immediately concerned Seth and me, three weeks after the first prize had been taken.

Of what had occurred on board the *Siren* after we lads were flogged, until this time, little need be said.

The men continued to speak of "Cousin Richard" when we were within hearing, and time did not lessen the sting of their ill-mannered jokes. I fancied, however, that Master Cutbush was a trifle more friendly in manner, as if he repented having inflicted the

punishment, which, as I think of it even now, was disproportionate to the offence.

He often put himself out of the way to repeat some information which had drifted from the cabin to the crew forward, and now and then gave us an opportunity of sighting the guns, as if believing we might some day come to occupy a position as high in the service as he evidently believed his was.

Seth had ceased to speak of his relative, the commander of the *Nautilus*, which craft we understood was now with the commodore, from the day of our punishment, and it was to me as if Master Cutbush held no nearer kinship to my family than did any other gunner in the squadron.

After the capture of the *Transfer* the duties of maintaining the blockade became as monotonous as before.

Each day went by without our sighting so much as the smallest craft, until one morning we of the *Siren* were aroused to the highest pitch of excitement by the word that a felucca was stealing along the shore coming from the westward, most likely with the purpose of trying to enter the harbor during the land fog which extended from the shore to the outermost rocks guarding the channel.

As a matter of course neither Seth nor I understood what a felucca might be; but we soon came to know that she was a small vessel carrying a three-cornered canvas stretched on a long yard, which last is known as a latteen sail, and, in addition, using oars. A piratical sort of craft, which Master Cutbush said was only to be found in the Mediterranean.

To Seth and me it appeared a trifling task to cut off this small craft, and there were many others of the same opinion. Surely never one on board believed that we were about to engage in a bloody conflict.

Without delay every American vessel was in full chase, the *Siren* leading, and soon we were so near our intended prey as to be able to make her out quite distinctly with the naked eye.

The Turks were plying the oars vigorously, and the odd-looking sails were drawing in fine style; but yet our brig overhauled her so rapidly that when we had run about ten miles to the westward of Tripoli, the crew of the felucca saw capture staring them in the face.

There was no longer the lightest hope they could save their craft, which we might have sunk offhand with our starboard guns, had Lieutenant Stewart not been eager to take her unharmed.

“We’ve got ’em in a hole,” Master Cutbush said; for it must be understood that nearly all the crew were on deck watching the chase, since there had been no call to quarters. “There is only one thing for the pirates to do, which is, run their craft ashore and take to their legs, unless the villains are minded to come aboard as prisoners.”

“They will not lose her without some show of a fight,” an old seaman said in a tone of conviction, whereat those around him laughed heartily; for scoundrels though these Turks were, it did not seem possible they would offer resistance to such an overwhelming force as was in pursuit.

To Seth and me it was no more than a spectacle to be enjoyed as a delightful break in the monotony of blockading work, and my comrade said:—

“If yonder craft is run ashore, our boats will be sent out to destroy her, of course, and we must be in one of them, Dick. I have a longing to stretch my legs on firm land once more.”

He had no more than ceased speaking before a cry of exultation went up from the men.

The pirates had rounded the reef of rocks which extended from the shore a mile or more, and were pulling straight for the sandy beach, evidently intending to abandon their craft.

Then it was that signals were set on the *Siren* for all the small boats of the squadron to be manned in order to destroy the enemy, and our launch and cutter were lowered as the brig came to within half a cable length of the rocky point.

Now was the time for Seth and me to make known our desires, if we counted on being among one of the boat parties, and, forgetting in his excitement and eagerness the unmerited punishment we had received, my comrade went up quickly to where Master Cutbush stood.

“Please, sir, can Dick and I be among those who are sent in pursuit of the felucca?”

The old gunner looked first at my comrade and then at me for a moment, as if debating whether we did not deserve another flogging for presuming to make such a request, and then, doubtless considering the affair an insignificant one, as did the others, he said gruffly:—

“Ay, lad, if it so be I can manage it. When the crews are called away keep close behind me, and perhaps you may succeed in sneaking aboard where you do not belong.”

Giving heed only to the possibility of being able to say on my return home that I had actually stepped on Tripolitan soil, I burned with a desire to be numbered

among one of the boat crews, and we two lads stood so close behind Master Cutbush that he could not have taken a single step backward without treading on our toes.

When the men were called away the old gunner was among the first to respond, as was his right in virtue of station, and so quickly did we two lads move that I question if Lieutenant Caldwell, who was in command of the launch, had an inkling of our purpose until we were occupying places which should have been held by the seamen.

“What are you two boys doing in there?” he began, but before the remark could be concluded, Lieutenant Stewart called him aft to give some instructions.

I believe of a verity that he gave no further heed to us, not even remembering that we had crowded in where it might be said we did not belong, until he was in the stern-sheets, and the launch being rapidly pulled toward the shore.

I was keeping watch upon the officer, fearing he might find some way of sending us back, even when we were clear of the ship, and observed that he eyed us narrowly for an instant, after which the suspicion of a smile spread over his face, as if he was secretly pleased because lads like us should be eager to take part in the enterprise.

The *Siren's* cutter followed close behind, while, looking back, we could see that all the vessels of the squadron were arming and manning their boats as rapidly as might be, and the thought came into my mind that we were making a most ridiculous display of force when there was nothing save a small felucca, carrying perhaps thirty men, to oppose us.

Just at that moment an exclamation from Seth caused me to look shoreward, and there, dimly through the mist, could be seen two or three hundred cavalrymen, riding at full speed toward the now stranded craft, while it was as if from every point came armed men on foot.

Suddenly this enterprise, which had appeared to be no more than an innocent jaunt ashore, took on wonderfully ugly proportions, and I had no little ado to prevent my teeth from chattering.

In another instant the cold sweat of fear came out on my brow, for the launch, driven ahead with the force of a full complement of oars, was run half her length up on a rock which was covered with only four or five inches of water.

In a twinkling she heeled to one side, and while one might have counted ten, confusion reigned supreme, to be increased, if indeed that were possible, when the soldiers on shore opened fire upon us.

The first knowledge I had of the attack was when Seth screamed in terror, as the sailor next him on the thwart pitched forward with a bullet through his brain.

In the sea all around us spouted up tiny jets of water, showing where the missiles struck, and even in my terror I wondered why it was that all the crew were not instantly killed.

Lieutenant Caldwell was as cool as if directing us at drill. One might well have believed him to be ignorant of the peril as he stood in the stern-sheets, a fair target for the pirates ashore, giving his commands quietly, although quickly.

Four men in the bow of the launch were ordered to endeavor to gain a footing on the rock, while the remainder were enjoined to keep the craft in trim, lest she overset.

The Turks, seeing full well the plight in which we were placed, redoubled their fire, and the bullets came thick and fast, three men in the after portion of the launch being wounded almost at the same moment.

Surely this was a battle, and where only one side was doing any execution.

A seaman directly in front of me pitched forward, the blood from a severed artery in his neck spurting

over my face, and causing a sensation of faintness as the salty odor of the life fluid came to my nostrils.

It was to me just then as if the boat was completely stained a crimson hue, and of a truth fully one-fifth of our men had been killed or wounded in less than three minutes.

I ceased to realize what was passing close around me because of the terror which had taken possession of my heart, and steadfastly gazed seaward lest I should see in the air that bullet which was destined to cut me off from this world.

Within my range of vision were seven or eight launches, or cutters, being pulled at their best speed shoreward to give us succor, and involuntarily I cried aloud in relief when the marines opened fire with their muskets.

What Seth did or said at that time I have no idea. There was in my mind only a great terror; even the objects nearest appeared indistinct and of a bloody hue.

Then it was that I became conscious the launch was afloat once more. I saw the approaching boats slacken speed, and swing around in sharp circles as if retreating.

“Are they afraid to come closer?” I asked of whosoever was nearest me, and received as reply:—

“The lieutenant has ordered all hands to return to their ships.”

“Why?” I asked in amazement. “Does he wish us to be killed here?”

“We are beating a retreat also.”

“Is the battle over?”

The man laughed heartily, even though there was a corpse lying close at his feet.

“There has been no battle as yet, lad. We have run our noses into a nasty mess, and it would be folly to make any attempt at landing under the fire of five or six hundred pirates, who appear to be well armed and reasonably good marksmen.”

“What is to be done?” I asked, like a simple.

“That remains to be seen; but I’m thinking the pirates won’t come off scott free, for our officers are not the kind of men to receive such a handling without an effort at getting even.”

While I had thus been displaying both ignorance and cowardice, the launch was rapidly increasing the distance between us and the shore, heading for the brig, and soon we were beyond range; but bearing with us three dead men and five wounded, as evidences of the pirates’ skill at shooting.

Not until we were thus in comparative safety did

I come out of the daze into which my timorousness had plunged me, and realized that I was side by side with Seth—that neither of us had received so much as a scratch.

Immediately shame took possession of me, and I glanced toward Master Cutbush, expecting to see him glaring down on me because of having brought disgrace upon the family.

It must have been that either the old gunner had failed to notice my behavior, or I had not betrayed that which was in my heart, for he wore a friendly expression, while nodding kindly to me, and saying:—

“It was a bad plight for a minute or two, lad, and we have come off cheaply, considering that all on board were, for the time, at the mercy of the pirates.”

Wonderfully relieved in mind I turned toward Seth.

He was gripping the thwart with both hands, as if to hold himself down, and the lad afterward told me, when we were alone where none might hear, that only by clutching at the plank with all his strength did he prevent himself from leaping overboard to escape that deadly fire.

I had been in a worse plight than he, for the thought did not come into my mind that it was possible to leave the launch, else I believe of a verity I should have gone over the gunwale.

Well, we were out of danger, and I, who had never before seen a man grievously wounded, could not force myself to sympathize as I should have done with those who were suffering, because of the thankfulness in my heart that I was no longer in jeopardy.

Ere we could gain the *Siren's* deck, signals had been hoisted for the schooners to run close inshore and open fire upon the felucca.

While they were getting into position for such work, the men from our launch and cutter clambered aboard the brig, and, with the boats towing behind, the *Siren* pulled around to the eastward, toward the point of the rocks, anchoring with her broadside to the shore.

Then came the call to quarters, and Seth and I, with the other boys of the brig, were set to work serving the gunners with ammunition as each broadside was fired.

“What are we shooting at?” I asked of Seth, and he was unable to answer the question.

When a second broadside shattered the air until one's head was like to split with the reverberation, I got a moment's speech with Master Cutbush.

"We are firin' at that 'ere ravine," he said, pointing through the open port, where dimly amid the sulphurous vapor I could see a depression in the land, heavily wooded. "Look yonder at the heathen as they make the dust fly! They are showing as much eagerness to get away now as were we of the launch a little while before."

By this time the schooners had opened fire upon the felucca, and the booming of the guns, and the clouds of smoke from the burning powder, caused it to seem to me as though a mighty battle was in progress.

Then the *Siren* added to the din by discharging a full broadside once more upon the ravine, and, leaning well out of the forward port as a gun was run in to be swabbed and recharged, doing so as much to free my lungs from the stifling vapor as to make out what might be going on ashore, I saw the enemy scattering in every direction.

Splinters were flying from the felucca as shot after shot struck her frail hull, and here and there upon the sand I made out the figure of a Turk, wounded into helplessness or killed outright.

It was to me as if no more than ten minutes had passed, although it must have been much longer, from the time we came aboard the brig until word was given to cease firing, and Seth and I were at liberty to go on deck.

We could not make out from the tiny signal flags flying what order was being given to the schooners, but might readily guess at it shortly afterward, as one after another hauled out from the shore, leaving the felucca riven and splintered until there was no longer chance that she might be gotten afloat again.

Then the squadron stood back toward the blockading station, and while talking among themselves of that which had been done in so short a space of time, the old seamen spoke of it as something too trifling to be considered of any consequence, although in the cockpit were five brave fellows writhing under the surgeon's knife, while well forward in the gun-deck lay three ominous shapes covered with the stars and stripes.

"Such men as Master Cutbush may not call it a battle," Seth said to me as we stood on the deck, not caring to go below because it would be necessary to pass nearabout where lay the forms of those who had so lately been our companions; "but I shall always

claim that it was one, and such as I hope never to see again. If all our engagements could be the same as that at Tripoli, when we destroyed the *Philadelphia*, then would war be a fine thing for those on the winning side; but if men are to be killed or mangled, as we have seen them this day, Dick, it is horrible!"

In this I agreed with him, and while agreeing was overcome with dismay because of remembering that I had heard more than one of the crew predict that when Commodore Preble got his squadron into proper condition we should see bloody work in the harbor of Tripoli; and of a verity we did before many more days had passed.

After this "little affair," as Master Cutbush was pleased to term it, we had many days of blockading duty which were simply made up of so much idleness. The monotony was irksome to such degree that both Seth and I finally resolved even a battle now and then, provided we two lads were not killed or wounded, would be preferable to cruising to and fro, as if the only purpose of all hands was to remain afloat.

Then came a time, that is to say, on the 25th of July, when Commodore Preble assembled his entire force before Tripoli, and Master Cutbush, together with Seth and me, went on board the *Constitution* once more, much

to my relief ; for somehow it seemed as if we were safer in the frigate than on so small a ship as the brig.

To me it appeared as if we had an enormous squadron.

The king of the Two Sicilies had contributed six small gunboats and two bomb-vessels, which last were only of thirty tons measurement, and each carried a thirty-inch mortar.

The gunboats were even smaller, measuring no more than twenty-five tons, in each of which was a long, iron, twenty-four pounder, and thirty-five men were as many as could be carried for crew.

It was found that these boats could neither be sailed nor rowed even tolerably well ; but the larger vessels must tow them, and when the wind was in any degree strong, there was great danger of pulling them bow under.

However, this addition to the squadron appeared, as it lay off Tripoli on the calm sea, to be exceeding strong, and we, meaning Seth and I, flattered ourselves that once the pirates saw such increase to our strength, they would be more inclined to sue for peace than make any attempt at giving us battle.

CHAPTER X.

THE ENGAGEMENT.

IN looking over what I have already set down, it appears as if I had put in too much of what may prove dry reading, because of the necessity of explaining how we, who had come so far from home to take part in the war begun by the Bashaw of Tripoli, were situated. Yet, if such be the case, I must err still more, promising it shall be for the last time, to give the details concerning Commodore Preble's squadron.

Of my own knowledge at the time I could say very little; but since those days I have seen a statement made by one of our officers, which I take the liberty of copying here exactly as it was printed.

“When the American commander assembled his whole force before Tripoli, on the 25th of July, 1804, it consisted of the *Constitution*, 44, Commodore Preble; *Siren*, 16, Lieutenant Commandant Stewart; *Argus*, 16, Lieutenant Commandant Hull; *Scourge*, 14, Lieu-

tenant Commandant Dent; *Vixen*, 12, Lieutenant Commandant Smith; *Nautilus*, 12, Lieutenant Commandant Somers; *Enterprise*, 12, Lieutenant Commandant Decatur; the two bomb-vessels and six gunboats.

“In some respects this was a well-appointed force for the duty required, while in others it was lamentably deficient. Another heavy ship, in particular, was wanted, and the means for bombarding had all the defects that may be anticipated.

“The two heaviest brigs had armaments of twenty-four-pound carronades; the other brig, and two of the schooners, armaments of eighteen-pound carronades; while the *Enterprise* retained her original equipment of long sixes, in consequence of her ports being unsuited to the new guns.

“As the *Constitution* had a gun-deck battery of thirty long twenty-fours, with six long twenty-sixes, and some lighter long guns above, it follows that the Americans could bring twenty-two twenty-fours and six twenty-sixes to bear on the stone walls of the town, in addition to a few light chase guns in the small vessels, and the twelve pounders of the frigate’s quarter-deck and forecastle.

“On the whole there appears to have been in the squadron twenty-eight heavy long guns, with about

twenty lighter ones, that might be brought to play on the batteries simultaneously.

“Opposed to these means of defence, the Bashaw had one hundred and fifteen guns in battery, most of them quite heavy, and nineteen gunboats that, of themselves, so far as metal was concerned, were nearly equal to the frigate. Moored in the harbor were also two large galleys, two schooners, and a brig, all of which were armed and strongly manned.

“The American squadron was manned by one thousand and sixty persons all told, while the Bashaw had assembled a force that has been estimated as high as twenty-five thousand, Arabs and Turks included. The only advantages possessed by the assailants, in the warfare that is so soon to follow, were those which are dependent on spirit, discipline, and system.

“The vessels could not anchor until the 28th, when they ran in, with the wind at east-southeast, and came to, by signal, about a league from the town. This was hardly done, however, before the wind came suddenly round to north-northwest, thence to north-northeast, and it began to blow strong, with a heavy sea setting directly on shore.

“At 6 P.M. a signal was made for the vessels to weigh, and to gain an offing.

“Fortunately the wind continued to haul to the eastward, or there would have been great danger of towing the gunboats under while carrying sail to claw off the land. The gale continued to increase until the 31st, when it blew tremendously.

“The courses of the *Constitution* were blown away, though reefed, and it would have been impossible to save the bomb-vessels and gunboats, had not the wind hauled so far to the southward as to give them the advantage of a weather shore, and of comparatively smooth water. Fortunately the gale ceased next day.

“On the 3d of August, 1804, the squadron ran in again and got within a league of the town, with a pleasant breeze at the eastward. The enemy's gunboats and galleys had come outside of the rocks, and were lying there in two divisions: one near the eastern and the other near the western entrance, or about half a mile apart. At the same time it was seen that all the batteries were manned, as if an attack was not only expected, but invited.

“At half-past twelve the *Constitution* wore with her head offshore, and showed a signal for all vessels to come within hail.

“As he came up, each commander was ordered to prepare to attack the shipping and batteries. The bomb-vessels and gunboats were immediately manned, and such was the high state of discipline in the squadron that in one hour everything was ready for the contemplated service.

“On this occasion Commodore Preble made the following distribution of that part of his force which was manned from the other vessels of his squadron.

“One bombard was commanded by Lieutenant Commandant Dent of the *Scourge*.

“The other bombard by Mr. Robinson, first lieutenant of the *Constitution*.

“FIRST DIVISION OF GUNBOATS.

“No. 1. Lieutenant Commandant Somers, of the *Nautilus*.

“ 2. Lieutenant James Decatur, of the *Nautilus*.

“ 3. Lieutenant Blake, of the *Argus*.

“SECOND DIVISION OF GUNBOATS.

“No. 4. Lieutenant Commandant Decatur, of the *Enterprise*.

“ 5. Lieutenant Bainbridge, of the *Enterprise*.

“ 6. Lieutenant Trippe, of the *Vixen*.

“At half-past one the *Constitution* wore again and stood toward the town. At two the gunboats were

cast off, and formed an advance, covered by the brigs and schooners, and half an hour later the signal was shown to engage.

“The attack was commenced by the two bombards, which began to throw shells into the town. It was followed by the batteries, which were instantly in a blaze, and then the shipping on both sides opened their fire within reach of grape.”

That which I have just copied out, because it was written by a man who understands far more concerning naval affairs than I can ever hope to learn, gives such an idea of those few days when all hands knew a battle was pending, as would be impossible for me to set forth.

By it one can see that the hopes Seth and I entertained were speedily proven vain.

Instead of being frightened by our show of strength, it appeared much as if the pirates were eager for a conflict, and at that time I feared they might gain the victory.

When we ran in on the 28th, as has been set down, all on board, excepting, possibly, the officers, believed that an engagement was near at hand, and the more experienced of our crew began making preparations for it.

On the instant Master Cutbush became exceeding

friendly, almost affectionate, in his manner toward us lads. He entered into converse much as if we had been his equals in station, and explained again and again what were to be our duties during the battle, concluding by warning us against being too reckless in exposing ourselves unnecessarily to the enemy's fire.

If he could have looked into my timorous heart at that time, he would have understood that there was little need for any such caution.

It overwhelmed us with surprise, however, that my high and mighty uncle had so suddenly laid aside his dignity, and later, when we two lads were comparatively alone, Seth said:—

“It must be, Dick, that we are like to be in great danger, once the squadron enters the harbor, and the thought that possibly one of us may be killed, has softened the old man's heart.”

It is odd, but nevertheless true, that whenever I grow cowardly I lose my temper, and now it angered me not a little that Seth should suggest such possibilities just at this time.

“He would be no less than an idiot who fancied we might not be in great danger, having once entered the harbor,” I cried. “Think you, Seth Gordon, that

the pirates will stand with folded arms when our ships open fire? They will do their best to kill us all, and it seems much as if our end had come. The bombards and gunboats make a brave show; but I have heard Lieutenant Robinson say that he puts very little dependence upon them in time of action. Our ships are like to be sunk offhand."

"I'm not thinking it can be quite so bad as that, Dick," Seth replied thoughtfully and with exasperating calmness, for it was much as if he was discussing something in which we had no share of the danger. "Of course we know the pirates will fight desperately, and many of our people will be killed —"

"You anger me by talking in that strain!" I cried frantically. "Have you no fear of the result, that you speak of it so quietly?"

"I shall be afraid when the balls begin to come aboard, perhaps; but Barry Thomas declares that fear is simply nonsense."

"Does he consider that it is nonsense to be cut in twain by a round shot, or torn to pieces by a discharge of grape?"

"He means that one is foolish to give way to fear —"

"How can it be avoided?"

“By thinking only of one’s duty, and performing it with no more thought of what is going on than forces itself upon a fellow’s mind.”

I laughed in anger rather than mirth.

“Perhaps he can prevent his mind from dwelling upon the present when he sees all around him his shipmates dead or dying!”

“I believe you suffer more than is necessary,” Seth replied to my outburst. “Why do you dwell upon such things when we are yet at a respectful distance from the enemy?”

“Why? Because I have sense enough to know that we shall soon be within range of their cannon, and cannot but let my mind run into the future, even as it seems Master Cutbush is doing when he suddenly grows friendly with us whom he considers beneath him, simply because he is the captain of a gun and we only boys.”

“What is accomplished by thus torturing yourself when as yet we are a league from the shore?” he asked, and I was so vexed by his seeming stupidity that I turned away from him, not minded to waste time on one who was so thick-headed.

When the wind hauled around and the signals were set for the squadron to gain an offing, I felt such

relief as I may never know again, even though it was positive that the evil day had been only postponed, not averted.

As the gale increased in force my spirits rose, and there was not a man or boy in the squadron so happy as I.

Then it was I once more sought converse with Seth, and found that we had but changed places.

He was by this time almost as despondent as I had been, and claimed that it would have been more to his liking if we had opened the engagement instead of getting under way.

“When a fellow is where he can’t run, it is best the danger is met and passed as quickly as may be,” he said, as I rallied him on his low spirits; for I, like any other coward, could be exceedingly brave and given much to bantering when no peril was nigh at hand. “Now we shall put to sea, and when the wind abates, stand in again. Then one must nerve himself a second time for the struggle.”

I failed to understand his reasoning, and finding him but a sorry companion sought out Master Cutbush, presuming, from his suddenly conceived friendship as displayed a few hours before, that he would greet me almost as a comrade.

To my great disappointment and surprise the old man had changed as completely as my friend.

He no longer spoke to me in a kindly tone; but displayed all his high and mighty airs, with, perhaps, a few more added, holding me to my proper station.

Even Barry Thomas had grown sullen, and I wondered how all these men could be so deeply disappointed because the moment of their death, perhaps, had been delayed.

On the second and third days, when the gale was at its height, I thoroughly enjoyed myself, knowing that every hour of the storm was so much time gained in which I might remain an occupant of my fool's paradise.

Seth came out of his gloom within twenty-four hours after we gained an offing; and for a while we two lads were comparatively happy, until I learned that in fleeing from one danger it may be quite possible to run into another and greater peril.

When the reefed fore-course was blown from the bolt-ropes, with a noise as if one of the guns had been discharged, and the main and mizzen course followed it in a twinkling, fear again took possession of my heart.

It seemed to me, and Seth was also fully con-

vinced, that the frigate, stanch and well built though she was, must be dismasted, and in such a disaster I would share the full danger with all the crew, whereas in an engagement only a certain number were like to be killed or wounded, therefore did it appear as if we had come out of the frying-pan only to fall into the fire.

All this I set down, not because it is important, or even connected with the story I am trying to tell; but that he who reads may know that there is but little difference between a coward and a fool.

As is well known, the frigate suffered no other damage than the loss of her canvas, and when the storm abated we were once more in front of Tripoli, when again my timorous heart came into my mouth.

It was when the *Constitution* wore with her head offshore for all the vessels to advance within hail, that Lieutenant Somers came aboard in response to a summons from the commodore, and Seth and I chanced to be standing amidships when he appeared over the bulwarks.

One of the crew, who happened to be near us at the moment, whispered softly, so that none save ourselves might hear:—

“Cousin Richard is coming to look after his relatives.”

I pretended that I did not hear the remark; but my face grew as red as did Seth's, and then the ill-timed jest lost its point entirely as the lieutenant beckoned my comrade to his side.

“The time has come, lad, when you will have an opportunity to show your metal, and remember that death is preferable to cowardice.”

He laid his hand on Seth's shoulder, much as though he had never even thought of ordering him a flogging, and then went aft to the commodore who, at the moment, was holding converse with Lieutenant Robinson.

Master Cutbush came on deck just as Seth turned to rejoin me, and he also had a kindly word for us, causing my heart to quiver, for I understood that this sudden change was due to the fact that death stood very near to us all.

Well, as has been set down already, we stood in toward the town, the crew was called to quarters, and the moment had arrived when I was to take part in a battle—a desperate one, as seemed probable.

When the *Constitution's* broadside was discharged, and, as Master Cutbush told me, it was the first time since her launching that the full complement of shotted guns had been fired in concert, it was as if

the odor of burning powder which assailed my nostrils intoxicated me.

I actually forgot to be frightened, and although we were ranging past the rocks and batteries, oftentimes within two cables' lengths of the shore, I gave no heed to anything save the duties before me.

I saw Barry Thomas fall to the deck wounded, and leaped over his body without stopping to learn if I might lend him aid, for Master Cutbush was yelling for more ammunition.

When a ball from the Turkish battery near the Bashaw's palace entered one of the stern ports as the frigate was wearing, cutting down a marine who was in the act of loading his musket, and throwing a shower of splinters half the length of the deck, I never so much as winced, although by this time the white planks were spotted and smeared with vivid red, telling where brave men had fallen that the United States might be looked upon by the powers of the Barbary coast as a great nation.

I was like one under the influence of a nightmare, and could not remember, when the bombardment came to an end, what I had done or said.

Should I undertake to set down no more than what I knew of my own knowledge at the time,

concerning the attack upon Tripoli, it would be much like a tale in which is told no more than the name of the would-be author, for I was dazed, in a panic, or whatever you may choose to term it, to such an extent that I remained ignorant even of my own actions.

Therefore it is that I must set down an account of the engagement as I have it before me in a printed story, written by one who was braver and more clear-headed on that eventful day than was I.

“The eastern, or most weatherly division of the enemy’s gunboats, nine in number, as being least supported, was the aim of the American gunboats. But the bad quality of the latter craft was quickly apparent, for as soon as Mr. Decatur steered toward the enemy with an intention to come to close quarters, the division of Mr. Somers, which was a little to the leeward, found it difficult to sustain him.

“Every effort was made by the latter officer to get far enough to windward to join in the attack; but finding it impracticable, he bore up, and ran down alone on five of the enemy to leeward, and engaged them all within pistol-shot, throwing showers of grape, canister, and musket-balls among them. In order to do this, as soon as near enough, the

sweeps were got out, and the boat was backed astern to prevent her from drifting in among the enemy.

“No. 3 was closing fast, but a signal of recall being shown from the *Constitution*, she hauled out of the line to obey, and, losing ground, she kept more aloof, firing at the boats and shipping in the harbor; while No. 2, Mr. James Decatur, was enabled to join the division to windward.”

As Master Cutbush afterward told me, the signal for No. 3 gunboat was bent on by mistake, and therefore it was that she withdrew without real need, except that her commander could do no less after the wrong signal was displayed.

“No. 3 gunboat, Mr. Bainbridge, lost her latteen yard while still in tow of the *Siren*; but, though unable to close, she continued advancing, keeping up a heavy fire, and finally touched on the rocks.

“By these changes Lieutenant Decatur had three boats that dashed forward with him (No. 4, No. 6, and No. 2). The officers in command of these boats went steadily on until within the smoke of the enemy. Here they delivered their fire, throwing in a terrible discharge of grape and musket-balls, and the order was given to board.

“Up to this moment the odds had been as three

to one against the assailants, but now it was, if possible, increased.

“The brigs and schooners could no longer assist. The Turkish boats were not only the heaviest and the best in every sense, but they were much the strongest manned. The combat now assumed a character of chivalrous prowess, and of desperate personal efforts that belongs to the Middle Ages, rather than to struggles of our own times. Its details, indeed, savor more of the glow of romance than of the sober severity that we are accustomed to associate with reality.

“Lieutenant Commandant Decatur took the lead. He had no sooner discharged his shower of musketballs than No. 4 was laid alongside the opposing boat of the enemy, and he went into her, followed by Lieutenant Thorn, Mr. McDonough, and all the Americans of his crew.

“One Tripolitan boat was divided nearly in two parts by a long, open hatchway, and as the people of No. 4 came in on one side, the Turks retreated to the other, making a sort of ditch of the open space. This caused another instant of delay, and perhaps fortunately, for it permitted the assailants to act together.

“As soon as ready, Mr. Decatur charged around each end of the hatchway, and after a short struggle

a portion of the Turks were piked and bayoneted, while the rest submitted or leaped into the water."

Master Cutbush afterward told Seth and me, when he was describing what he had seen of the battle, that the Turkish captain had fallen with no less than fourteen bullets in his body, and then it was his men became panic-stricken with fear.

"No sooner had Mr. Decatur got possession of the boat first assailed than he took her in tow, and bore down on the one next to leeward. Running the enemy aboard as before, he went into this second craft, followed by the most of his officers and his men. The captain of the Tripolitan vessel was a large, powerful man, and him Mr. Decatur personally charged with a pike. The weapon, however, was seized by the Turk, wrested from the lieutenant's hands, and turned against its owner.

"Decatur parried the thrust, and made a blow with his sword at the pike, with a view to cut off its iron head. The sword hit the iron and broke at the hilt, and at the next instant the Turk made another thrust. Nothing was left to the gallant Decatur but his arm, with which he so far averted the blow as to receive the pike through the flesh of one breast. Pushing the iron from the wound by tearing the

flesh, he sprang within the weapon, and grappled his antagonist. The pike fell between the two, and a short trial of strength succeeded, in which the Turk prevailed. As the combatants fell, however, Mr. Decatur so far released himself as to lie side by side with his foe on the deck.

“The Tripolitan now endeavored to reach his poniard, while his hand was firmly held by that of his enemy. At this critical instant, when life or death depended on a moment well employed, or a moment lost, Mr. Decatur drew a pistol from his pocket, passed the arm that was free around the body of the Turk, pointed the muzzle in, and fired.

“The ball passed entirely through the body of the Tripolitan, and lodged in the clothes of the man who had discharged the weapon. At the same instant Mr. Decatur felt the grasp that had almost smothered him relax, and he was liberated. He sprang up, and the Turk lay dead at his feet.”

CHAPTER XI.

REPAIRING DAMAGES.

AFTERWARD, when the crews of the different vessels of the squadron had opportunity to yarn with each other, we of the frigate learned that when Mr. Decatur was so sorely beset by the Tripolitan, one of the youngest of the *Enterprise's* quarter-gunners pressed on close at the heels of his commander.

He had been forced to fight his way along the deck, and right gallantly did he do so, arriving at the desired place just as a Turk had raised his sabre to cut down the lieutenant while he was struggling with his enemy.

Then it was that this young fellow, Reuben James, threw himself forward with hands upraised to ward off the blow.

The sword descended, sheering off one of the boy's arms within a few inches of the shoulder, and death was thus averted from the lieutenant.

The one fact concerning this battle, and I afterward came to know it was considered a desperate

one, which gave me the greatest surprise, was that it differed so entirely from what I had pictured it to myself.

I had fancied a fellow would be in mortal fear of his life from the moment it began until the end came; that during its progress I would find it almost impossible to prevent myself from crying aloud in terror; and yet it is true that I knew not at the moment, and cannot recall even now, anything whatsoever distinctly.

It was a nightmare wherein everything was confused and misty — a tumult in which I was so bewildered as to forget my cowardice.

However, this is not the time for me to speak of myself if I would set down what may serve as a story of the fight, and therefore do I repeat the tale as given by another, carrying it on from the moment when Lieutenant Decatur killed his enemy, the captain of the pirate vessel.

“An idea of the desperate nature of the fighting that distinguished this remarkable assault may be gained from the amount of the loss. The two boats captured by Lieutenant Commandant Decatur had about eighty men in them, of whom fifty-two are known to have been killed and wounded. As only

eight prisoners were taken who were not wounded, and many jumped overboard and swam to the rocks, it is not improbable that the Turks suffered still more severely.

“Lieutenant Decatur himself, being wounded, secured his second prize and hauled off to rejoin the squadron; all the rest of the enemy’s division that were not taken having by this time run into the harbor, by passing through the openings between the rocks.

“While Lieutenant Decatur was thus employed to windward, his brother, Mr. James Decatur, the first lieutenant of the *Nautilus*, was nobly emulating his example in gunboat No. 2.

“Reserving his fire, as did gunboat No. 4, this young officer dashed into the smoke, and was on the point of boarding when he received a musket-ball in his forehead. The boats met and rebounded, and in the confusion of the death of Mr. Decatur the Turk was enabled to escape, but forced to flee under a heavy fire from the American squadron.

“In the meantime Mr. Trippe, in No. 6, the last of the three boats that were able to reach the weather division, was not idle. Reserving his fire, like the others, he delivered it with deadly effect when closing, and went aboard in the smoke. In this instance the

boats also separated by the shock of the collision, leaving Mr. Trippe, with Mr. J. D. Henley, and nine men only, on board the Tripolitan.

“The commanders singled each other out, and a severe personal combat occurred, while the work of death was going on around them. While Mr. Trippe was hard pressed by his antagonist, one of the piratical crew aimed a blow at him from behind; but before it could be delivered, Sergeant Meredith of the marines ran his bayonet through the fellow’s body.

“The Turkish commander was young, and of a large, athletic form, and he soon compelled his slighter but more active foe to fight with caution. Advancing on Mr. Trippe, he would strike a blow and receive a thrust in return. In this manner he gave the American commander no less than eight sabre wounds in the head, and two in the breast, when, making a sudden rush, he struck a ninth blow on the head, which brought Mr. Trippe upon one knee.

“Rallying all his strength in one desperate effort, the American lieutenant, who still retained the short pike with which he fought, made a thrust that passed the weapon through his gigantic adversary and tumbled him on his back. As soon as the Tripolitan officer fell, the remainder of his people submitted.

“The prize was at once headed for the squadron, and, in the confusion, no one thought that the enemy’s ensign yet remained flying. As she advanced toward the *Vixen*, the commander of the latter vessel, naturally believing himself about to be attacked, poured in a broadside upon the prize, bringing down colors, mast, latteen yard and all. Fortunately no one was injured by the fire, and, as can well be imagined, the prize crew at once set about making themselves known to their friends.

“The boat taken by Mr. Trippe was one of the largest belonging to the Bashaw. The number of men in her is not positively known, but, living and dead, thirty-six were found in her, of whom twenty-one were either killed or wounded. When it is remembered that but eleven Americans boarded her, the achievement must pass for one of the most gallant on record.

“All this time the cannonade and bombardment continued without ceasing. Lieutenant Commandant Somers, in gunboat No. 1, sustained by the brigs and schooners, had forced the remaining boats to retreat, and this resolute officer pressed them so hard as to be compelled to ware within a short distance of a battery of twelve guns, quite near the mole. Her

destruction seemed inevitable, as the boat came slowly round, when a shell fell into the battery, most opportunely blew up the platform, and drove the enemy out to a man. Before the guns could be used again the boat had got in tow of one of the small vessels.

“There was a division of five boats and two galleys of the enemy that had been held in reserve within the rocks, and these rallied their retreating countrymen, making two efforts to come out and intercept the Americans and their prizes; but were kept in check by the fire of the frigate and small vessels.

“The *Constitution* maintained a very heavy fire and silenced several of the batteries, though they reopened as soon as she had passed. The bombards were covered with the spray of shot, but continued to throw shells to the last.

“At half-past four, the wind coming round to the northward, a signal was made for the gunboats and bomb-vessels to rejoin the small vessels, and another to take them and their prizes in tow. The last order was handsomely executed by the brigs and schooners, under cover of a blaze of fire from the frigate. A quarter of an hour later the *Constitution* herself hauled off and ran out of gun-shot.

“Thus terminated the first serious attack that was

made on the town and batteries of Tripoli. Its effect on the enemy was of the most salutary kind, the manner in which their gunboats had been taken by boarding having made a lasting and deep impression. The superiority of the Christians in gunnery was generally admitted before; but here was an instance in which the Turks had been overcome by inferior numbers, hand to hand, a species of conflict in which they had been thought particularly to excel.

“Perhaps no instance of more desperate fighting of the sort, without defensive armor, is to be found in the pages of history. Three gunboats were sunk in the harbor, in addition to the three that were taken, and the loss of the Tripolitans by shot must have been very heavy. About fifty shells were thrown into the town, but little damage appears to have been done in this way, very few of the bombs, on account of the imperfect materials that had been furnished, exploding.

“On the part of the Americans only fourteen were killed and wounded in the affair. The *Constitution*, though under fire two hours, escaped much better than could have been expected. She received one heavy shot through her mainmast, had a quarter-deck gun injured, and was a good deal cut up aloft. The

enemy had calculated his range for a more distant cannonade, and generally overshot the ships. By this mistake the *Constitution* had her mainroyal-yard shot away.

“The vessels hauled off and anchored about two leagues from Tripoli to repair their damages.”

It would please me exceedingly to be able to set down here that Seth and I covered ourselves with glory during this engagement, and when it was over were called aft to be praised by Commodore Preble; but, unfortunately, such is not the fact.

I have often read of lads younger than we two, who went into battle and took entire charge of the business on hand, shaming their elders and making themselves famous evermore; but I could never bring myself to believe it all, and more particularly after my experience in front of Tripoli.

Had we been the greatest heroes ever born, we could not have taken the command of the frigate from Commodore Preble, as some stories tell us other lads have done; nor would it have been possible for us to behave in different manner than as we were ordered.

Master Cutbush was pleased to say to me, when the *Constitution* was hauling off to repair damages, and I stood by his side in a daze:—

“You have shown good blood, Dick, and I’m proud of you. Seth hasn’t been backward, either, an’ I’ll have a fine report to make when we three see Boston again. I did have just the suspicion of a fear that you might show the white feather when the work grew hot; but both you lads stuck to your tasks like men, and I’m beginnin’ to believe that we’ll make somethin’ out of you in time.”

From that moment I forgave my uncle the flogging he had administered to us so generously, even though knowing full well that I did not deserve any share of the praise he bestowed upon us.

Then, when others of the crew had a good word for us, and all seemed pleased with our behavior, I felt wofully guilty with the knowledge of my own shortcomings.

At the first opportunity of speaking privately with Seth, I unbosomed myself by declaring that what we had just passed through was more like a dream than a reality.

“It seems much as if I ought to confess that my behavior might have been far different had I realized fully the danger,” I said; and he replied with a laugh that had in it very little of mirth:—

“We are in the same boat, Dicky Cutbush, for it

is a truth that I hardly knew when the engagement came to an end, and at the first show of blood would have run away had such a thing been possible. Even now I fail to understand whether this has been a victory, or if the pirates have forced us to beat a retreat. How much have we done toward setting free the crew of the *Philadelphia*, and those other poor fellows who have been slaves so long?"

This was a question I could not answer, and, strange though it may seem, one which had not occurred to me before.

It surely seemed as though we had the best of the battle, yet our squadron had hauled off, and not a single captive was free.

We puzzled over the matter in vain, and then I proposed that we ask Master Cutbush how the matter stood, although it was an odd act for two who had been praised as doing good duty, to inquire whether the Americans or the Turks had come off best.

The old gunner was yet in remarkably cheery humor, because of our supposed bravery and devotion to duty, when we put the question to him, Seth acting the part of spokesman.

Master Cutbush eyed us narrowly while one might have counted ten, and then asked sharply:—

“Is it true that you fail of seein’ how the scrimmage ended?”

“We have hauled off, and it does not appear as if very much damage had been done to the town,” I ventured to suggest.

“Ay, that part of it is true enough; but we’re not runnin’ away. Even the bravest fighter may find it necessary to gain his breath once in a while, an’ it’s much like givin’ the frigate a breathin’ spell when we attend to her wounded spars. Haven’t you seen that we brought out three of the piratical craft as prizes, an’ sunk as many more?”

“Ay, sir, that we know full well; yet why did we not wait there till we had rescued those of our countrymen who are held as prisoners?”

Master Cutbush laughed long and loud at my question.

“Was it in your mind, lad, that we’d run in an’ pull the town down about the Bashaw’s ears? We’ve but made the first attack, an’ I’m thinkin’ we’ll keep hammerin’ away till that old pirate who sets himself up as a small-sized king is ready to do a bit of tradin’ with us. Wait till we run into the harbor again.”

“Again?” I repeated, and then shut my teeth

tightly lest from between them would escape the words proving me to be the arrant coward I really was.

It literally staggered me to thus learn that what I had thought a mighty battle was but the first of a series of attacks, and instead of having finished the work we set out to do, it was hardly more than begun.

Seth's face turned a bit pale, and I knew full well what thought was in his mind.

We had been congratulating ourselves that the danger was passed, when, if Master Cutbush was in the right, we might expect the same sort of experience over and over again.

Perhaps it was well for us two lads that there was no further opportunity for conversation, else might Master Cutbush have come to know that we did not deserve his praise.

By this time the frigate was well out from the shore, and word had been given for her to come to anchor in the midst of the squadron.

There was much work to be done, and neither the seamen nor the boys on board would be allowed to remain idle.

The *Constitution's* spars and rigging needed much attention to put her in trim for another battle, and

aboard nearly every vessel of the fleet was similar work to be performed.

In addition to that, Commodore Preble had decided to alter the rig of the captured gunboats, and to perform such task a certain number of men were drafted from each ship.

It is not to be supposed that Seth and I were of any great assistance in these labors.

We could pull or haul, however, or do more than boys' usual share toward keeping the gun-deck looking shipshape while our elders were on deck, and we did not shirk; for it seemed to both of us as if by doing more than would have been demanded, we atoned in some slight degree for having remained silent while being praised for displaying bravery.

It was not necessary we jump to it every moment of the time, however, and, without neglecting our duties, we found more than one opportunity of visiting Barry Thomas.

His wound was not particularly dangerous, but severe enough to hold him close prisoner below, and we lads did all that lay in our power to repay, by such slight attentions as we could give, the kindness he had shown when it seemed much as if every man's hand was against us.

Barry was not alone in the hospital on the gun-deck where the cool breezes might soothe the fevered ones.

We had aboard the *Constitution* all the wounded prisoners taken during the engagement, and a mighty dismal sight it was when the surgeons were performing their regular morning work.

By moving here and there among them we two lads soon came to understand that these fellows were not the savage beasts we had believed them to be.

There was one lad, scarcely older than ourselves, who had lost his left leg, and I believe we might really have made friends with him in course of time, for he did his best to be sociable by means of signs and smiles.

A stout-hearted chap he was, and no mistake. Barry Thomas said the chances were he would die, and yet the fellow never failed to greet Seth and me with a smile, even though the surgeons might be poking and probing in a way sufficient to cause the most intense pain.

My heart bled for him when I pictured to myself Seth or me in such a condition among the enemy; but, fortunately, as I believed, we were not long grieved by his sufferings.

On the second day after the battle the *Argus*

brought to a small French privateer that had just come out of the harbor, and Commodore Preble persuaded her commander to carry into Tripoli the most grievously wounded of our prisoners.

Among them, as a matter of course, was the Turkish lad, and when Seth and I carried him on deck, the surgeon having given us permission, he kissed our hands as token of gratitude or friendliness.

Much as it would have pleased me to do what I might toward relieving his suffering, I felt a wondrous relief when he was no longer on board the frigate, for then I might forget his grievous troubles.

During three days did the men of the squadron work like beavers, making ready the vessels for another attack, and riggering the prizes.

These last were fitted much like our others, and numbered seven, eight, and nine.

The command of the first was given to Lieutenant Crane, the second to Lieutenant Caldwell, and the third to Lieutenant Thorn.

Thus was our fleet increased by three small craft, and when the work of the seamen had been brought to an end, it would have puzzled a newcomer to say that either of the ships had seen active service, in such good condition did every vessel appear.

It was on the night of the sixth day of August, seventy-two hours after the battle, when the tired men were piped below for a long night's rest, only a small watch being kept on deck, that word was passed among us that on the morrow, if the weather held favorable, we would again enter the harbor of Tripoli.

I question if there was on board the frigate a single man who did not feel positive he would take part in another fight within twelve hours, and yet no one showed evidences of fear or nervousness.

Even Seth and I looked forward to the morrow with eagerness, and while my heart may have quivered with cowardice now and then, it was only for an instant.

A battle was so entirely different from what I had always pictured it, that fear no longer held possession of me.

Master Cutbush was among the first to turn in, and, knowing it would cost us a vigorous dose of the rope's end to make any effort at holding converse with him while he was disposed to sleep, Seth and I stole forward to where Barry Thomas lay, for there were many questions we desired to have answered.

I was most eager to learn how we might hope to

release the prisoners in Tripoli, save by battering down the town, and such information Barry quickly gave us.

“The commodore counts on makin’ matters so hot for the Bashaw that he’ll beg for peace, an’ then will be the time that we can release our shipmates.”

“But I thought we’d come out here to capture the city,” Seth cried, with just a tinge of disappointment in his tone.

“I don’t reckon our people counted on goin’ it quite so strong as that,” Barry replied with a laugh. “S’posen we could run in an’ drive the pirates out, how would it be possible to hold the place? We haven’t got more than force enough to man the ships, therefore it don’t stand to reason we’d take such an elephant as Tripoli on our hands. It’ll be enough, lads, if we bring that old pirate governor to his knees, an’ free them as have been held by him so long.”

“Think you the work will be finished to-morrow night?” I asked, beginning to grow disheartened by the thought that it might be necessary to make many attacks before the war would be at an end.

“That is what I can’t say, lad. It’s enough for us that we’ll have a whack at ’em mighty soon —”

“You won’t have a chance to take part, unless a storm holds us back until your wound has healed,” Seth interrupted.

“Do you lads believe that I’d lay here idle while my shipmates were pitchin’ shot into the pirates’ nest?”

“What else can you do?” I asked.

“Take my full share in the work, of course,” and the sailor really appeared hurt because I seemed to believe it possible he could do otherwise. “I’ve been keepin’ snug here, knowin’ we’d soon strike another blow, an’ this ’ere hurt has been gettin’ on famously. It don’t stand to reason I can do quite as much as them who are sound in body; but I’ll come mighty near it unless I run into the track of another Turkish ball.”

Barry Thomas could not tell us how the action would begin, nor what part the *Constitution* might take in the attack; but he believed the battle would be much like the other in the beginning, and with this information we left him, going on deck instead of into our hammocks.

I felt little inclined to sleep at such a time, and soon came to understand that Seth was in much the same frame of mind.

Perhaps after we had served two or three years, the

prospect of an engagement might not affect us so deeply; but while we were thus inexperienced I could not bring myself to look forward calmly to facing death.

“We may not come out of it the next time in quite as good shape,” Seth said half to himself, and my anger was aroused that he should have mentioned such a possibility.

“Why should you croak like an owl at this time?” I asked sharply. “I may as well confess that my courage is none of the best, and if we fall to discussing what may happen, Master Cutbush will speak in a different tone to-morrow night.”

“By that time we may not care what he says,” Seth rejoined moodily, and I turned away from him petulantly, refusing to remain longer in his company.

Then I went below; but sleep did not come to my eyelids when I swung gently to and fro in my hammock, because of the fears Seth’s words had aroused once more in my timorous heart.

CHAPTER XII.

AN EXPLOSION.

DURING the night I suffered much more in mind than I had while the first attack was being made, and again was it proved to me that he who peers into the future for trouble is but showing himself to be a fool.

I lay in my hammock quivering inwardly with fear, and seeing death before me constantly, when, as a matter of fact, I might better have taken such comfort as the present afforded, because, in the first place, all my dismal forebodings could not change the situation, and, secondly, one cannot say to a certainty what an hour will bring forth.

All this is in my thoughts as I go back to that mournful night, and, remembering how much there was of needless suffering, I laugh heartily, so foolish did it prove, since the *Constitution* did not go into action as we reckoned upon.

In other words, I borrowed the most generous

amount of trouble when none really threatened, and afterward, by trying to avoid danger, ran into the very thick of it.

However, it is not well to go on with the yarn in such a halting fashion simply that a lesson may be learned by him who reads, therefore I will turn back to the moment when, after having fallen into a troubled sleep, I was aroused by Seth just at daybreak.

I leaped on deck in an instant, believing the battle was really begun, and then, observing that all the watch below were yet in their hammocks, I asked petulantly: —

“What is the trouble? Why should you turn a fellow out when he might be able to forget, during a few moments longer, what the future may have in store for him?”

“There is a chance for us to leave the frigate during this day!” he replied excitedly. “Number 8, the gunboat captured by Mr. Trippe during the last attack, is close alongside, and an opportunity has been given for some of us to volunteer as her crew for this day only. Mr. Caldwell, who has just come aboard to speak with the commodore, tells me that you and I might be taken on, for no boys have been detailed to her.”

“Are you tired of life that you should choose to go

on such a cockle-shell, when it is possible to remain in the frigate?" I asked in both surprise and anger; whereupon Seth drew me aside, lest his words should be overheard, after which he whispered:—

"I may admit to you, Dick Cutbush, what I would keep from every one else, even with my life. It sends the cold chills down my back to think of going into action again, and I would avoid doing so, if it might be compassed in what seems like a manly fashion."

"How much better off would you be on a gunboat? For my part, while I'm not eager to go into action, it seems as if we were safer here than aboard such a small craft."

"All that would be true if No. 8 was going into the harbor; but I heard Mr. Robinson tell Lieutenant Caldwell that in his opinion the three prizes would not take part in this affair, whereupon the lieutenant made a great outcry, much as if it saddened him because he could not run his nose into danger."

I began to be interested in this plan of Seth's, which had seemed so ridiculous when he first proposed it.

If Lieutenant Caldwell's boat was to remain outside while the remainder of the squadron did the fighting, then for a certainty she was the one craft above all others on which I would choose to stay during this day.

There was no good reason why I should admit to my comrade that I had been unable to sleep through fear of the fate which might be mine before nightfall; but, trying to make it appear as if I was ready to volunteer for service on board No. 8 simply to please him, I said, with as much calmness as it was possible to assume on the instant:—

“If it is your desire, I am ready to go on board the gunboat, that is,” I added, as a sudden misgiving came into my heart, “if you are certain she will not be sent into the harbor.”

“Mr. Robinson seemed positive she would remain outside, and you know as well as I that the *Constitution* will be in the very thick of it.”

I had good reason for believing that such would be the case, and instead of holding back any longer to deceive my comrade, I urged him to secure the desired permission without delay.

He ran on deck, and returned before I was ready to join him, crying gleefully:—

“We have been taken on, with the understanding that we are to return to the frigate immediately after the attack has been made; but Master Cutbush must be told.”

“Why?”

“I know not, except that such was Mr. Robinson’s command.”

I was in mortal fear lest the old gunner, suspecting our true reason for thus volunteering, might prevent the scheme; but since the order had been given there was nothing for it but to obey, and very unwillingly I went to his hammock, saying, as I shook him gently:—

“If you please, sir, No. 8 is alongside, and Seth reports that Lieutenant Caldwell asks that two or three boys from the frigate volunteer to serve under him during the day.”

“Well?” the old gunner asked, not taking the trouble to turn over that he might look at me.

“It is in Seth’s mind and mine that we would go aboard No. 8. Mr. Robinson has said we may do so after you have been told, sir.”

Now it was that Master Cutbush turned quickly, looking at me sharply as he asked:—

“How’s the weather?”

“Fine as a fiddle, sir,” Seth replied quickly.

“And you two lads are burnin’ to go aboard the gunboat?” Master Cutbush asked, as if inclined to doubt the evidence of his own senses.

“With your permission, sir,” I ventured timidly,

turning my eyes away lest the old gunner should read that which was in my heart.

He hesitated so long that I believed some objection would be raised, and then said slowly:—

“It does me good to know you two lads are eager to go where the work will be hottest; but if anything should happen, it might be your father would bear down heavily upon me for givin’ permission. However, you may be as safe in one place as another, so I’ll say ‘go’; but take care not to be venturesome.”

He had hardly ceased speaking before we ran on deck, fearing lest he might come to suspect our true reason for volunteering, and I could have hugged myself as I thought how readily we had blinded him.

We were not long in getting on board No. 8, the fear that something might happen to prevent our so doing quickening every movement, and once we stood on the deck of the gunboat I began to wonder if we might not have been safer by sticking to the frigate.

After having been accustomed to such a ship as the *Constitution*, this little craft appeared hardly larger than an ordinary long-boat, and much the same thought must have been in Seth’s mind, for he said to me as we stood amidships waiting to be assigned to some station:—

“Fancy going into battle with a cockle-shell like this! I would rather take my chances aboard the frigate in ten engagements than risk one in such a craft.”

“It doesn’t seem safe even to put to sea in her,” I said half to myself, and then straightway forgot that No. 8 was not to my liking, as I realized that through her we two lads would escape the dangers of the attack, so soon to be made.

We were not kept long in ignorance as to what were to be our duties.

An old sailor, who appeared to be the only gunner aboard, took us in charge, and, under his directions, we were soon working like a couple of slaves, making ready the gun or cleaning the deck, for the carpenters had but just finished the task of changing the gunboat’s rig, leaving, as a matter of course, everything in confusion.

We would not have been called upon in two weeks aboard the frigate for so much work as we were forced to perform in three or four hours, and then signals were displayed from the *Constitution* which so delighted our taskmaster as to render him forgetful even of our presence.

Seth and I were able to read the signals most

commonly used, and by the bits of bunting which floated in the northerly breeze we knew that the squadron was ordered to get under way.

“The fight will soon be on,” Seth whispered to me. “If we hadn’t jumped at such a chance mighty lively, you and I would be quaking in our boots lest on this day we might stand in the way of a Turkish ball.”

“But this boat is getting under way too,” I exclaimed, and the words had no more than been spoken before our crew gave a hearty cheer, as if something had come to pass that afforded them most intense pleasure.

Seth’s face grew pale, and a fever of apprehension suddenly seized upon me.

“Suppose we have made a mistake, and this gunboat is one ordered to begin the attack,” I said to my comrade, and he, looking at me steadily for an instant, ran forward to where the gunner was standing.

I followed in time to hear him ask:—

“Is this gunboat to go into the harbor?”

“Ay, lad, an’ it’s rare good luck for us,” the man replied gleefully. “The first calculation was that some of us small craft would have to stand by an’

see the others takin' all the plums; but this wind has upset the commodore's plans."

"What has the wind to do with it?" I asked nervously.

"Can't you see that it's blowin' on shore?"

"Well, sir?" I continued, failing to understand the situation.

"While it's in this quarter, an' givin' promise of pipin' up lively 'twixt now an' noon, the frigate can't go in, seein's how she's too big a ship to be knockin' around the rocks in action. There'd be danger of her comin' to grief the first time she wore."

"And the *Constitution* isn't going?" Seth cried, in a tone of mingled disappointment and despair.

"That's what I've been tellin' you, lad. She's bound to stay outside, which gives us a show. It was settled just after you come aboard that we should do our share of the work, instead of loafin' 'round. It shouldn't be much past noon when we're in position to open the game, an' you'll have a chance to know what fightin' is like before night, for Mr. Caldwell is a master hand at it when he gets warmed up, so I've been told."

I gave one reproachful glance at Seth, and then turned away sick at heart.

By trying to avoid danger we had run our noses into it beyond a peradventure, and the peril would be a hundred times greater than we ever faced. Even though the *Constitution* had entered the harbor, she was too large to make any attempt at boarding the small craft of the pirates, and we would have no fear of seeing hand-to-hand fighting while on her; but this gunboat could do nothing more than engage one of the enemy in single combat, which fact did not escape me even while I quaked with terror.

“It’s a dreadful mess we’ve gotten into!” some one said in a low tone just behind me, and, turning, I saw Seth, his face very white and his lips quivering.

“But for you we’d be on board the frigate this minute,” I cried angrily; “and for the matter of that, if you hadn’t been so hot to win honor and glory on shipboard, I’d be in Boston, with no fear of being killed by Turkish bullets.”

“I wish we *were* there!” Seth wailed, and I, ill-tempered because of my fear, retorted untruthfully:—

“I am glad you are in the mess, for perhaps it will cure you of trying to win renown by running all over the world at the heels of a lot of miserable pirates!”

No one but a coward like myself would have thus spoken at such a time; and when Seth turned away with the air of one from whom all hope has departed, I became ashamed of having indulged my anger upon the only person in all that squadron whom I could truly call a friend.

After the gunboat was under way, standing in toward the harbor amid the fleet of small craft, we two lads grew more calm, recognizing the fact that it was folly to give our fears full sway, and tried with some degree of manliness to prevent the crew from discovering that we were afraid, when every one else was in the highest possible spirits because of thus having an opportunity to distinguish themselves.

The gunner, who also acted as master-at-arms, did not long allow us to remain idle; but as soon as his joyous excitement, because of the prospect before him, had subsided somewhat, he set us at this task or that, and the labor served to abate our grief somewhat, since it gave us little time for thought.

It was near about nine o'clock in the morning when we got under way, and not until two o'clock did we arrive sufficiently near to begin the attack.

The bombards were anchored in a small bay to the westward of the town where they would be par-

tially sheltered from the enemy's fire, while the gunboats, among which was our craft, were hauled around in a position to open fire on the piratical batteries. To windward, where they could cut off any of the enemy's vessels that might attempt to come out of the harbor to attack our lighter craft, were the *Constitution*, *Nautilus*, and *Enterprise*, while hovering near the fleet of gunboats to lend assistance, whenever it might be needed, stood the *Siren* and *Vixen*.

Everything appeared to be in readiness for the bloody work which we must soon be in the midst of, and I, straining every nerve to act calm and unconcerned, said in a low tone to Seth, as I pointed seaward where could be seen the frigate:—

“We were not very fortunate in running away from her to escape danger, eh?”

“Don't talk about it,” Seth replied with a sigh. “I've made up my mind that we must stay here, and had rather not even so much as look at the frigate.”

There was no longer time for banter. One of the bombards opened fire, and within a very few seconds every American craft, save the larger ships to windward, were pouring in shot and shell as rapidly as the pieces could be loaded and discharged.

Now, as during the first engagement, no sooner had the battle begun than I entirely forgot the danger. Once more the fumes of burning powder ascended to my brain, and I ran here or there, shouting, cheering, yelling, and all the while unconscious of my own movements.

No thought was in my mind of the possible danger. I watched eagerly each shot fired from our long twenty-six, rejoicing when it struck within one of the shore batteries, and feverishly impatient to see the piece loaded again that we might do more execution.

Seth appeared to be in much the same frame of mind as was I, and any person who saw us must perforce have believed that our one desire in life was to take part in a battle.

Mr. Spence of the *Siren* had charge of our single gun, and I heard more than one of the crew say that he was doing greater execution than any other officer in the gunboat fleet. It surely seemed to me as if our shot struck its target oftener than did those around us, and I remember crying exultantly in Seth's ear as we came up from the magazine side by side:—

“At this rate we stand a good chance of giving the Bashaw a proper lesson before the day is ended!”

And he, who had been so timorous a few hours before, rejoined:—

“If Mr. Caldwell would only lay us alongside one of their gunboats, we could soon take back a prize, and thereby increase the size of our squadron!”

Twice I noted that the Turkish fleet was in motion, evidently bent on coming out to engage us who were doing them so much damage; but our ships drove them back, and we continued to pour shot after shot into them, without receiving any injury worth mentioning.

A ball carried away our latteen yard, and another chipped off four or five feet of the rail; but to such slight wounds we paid no attention, now that our courage was up, although I would have said four or five hours previous that I could not prevent myself from betraying the cowardice in my heart if we approached within such close range.

Then came a time when Seth and I were sent to the magazine in company, the supply of powder having fallen short suddenly, and as we went below I heard some one say that the battle had lasted just an hour. To me it seemed as if no more than ten minutes had passed.

We two lads were each given a bag of powder in compliance with the order of Mr. Spence, which

we repeated, and hurried on deck, running forward at full speed because the crew were already waiting for the ammunition.

Seth won the race, and his burden was shoved into the muzzle of the twenty-six at the instant I came up.

Then, before I even had time to lay my load in its proper place near the rail, I heard a terrific crash, felt a violent shock, and it was as if the entire after part of the gunboat was lifted suddenly into the air.

It seemed as if I received a blow on the head; dimly, as afar off, I heard the rending and crashing of timbers, shrieks, cries, groans, and, high above all, the thunder of the guns from our fleet.

Then, as if it was a part of the uplifting, the bow of the boat began to sink, and the sudden contact with cold water served to partially restore my senses.

I heard Mr. Spence cry:—

“Ram that ball home, lads, and we’ll pitch it over to the pirates before the ship goes down!”

I struggled to my feet, looking hurriedly around for Seth, when the twenty-six was discharged, and at the same instant the deck seemed to drop from under my feet, leaving me swirling around and

around in a perfect whirlpool, while some fellow near at hand was cheering wildly because the piece had been fired in good season.

Again and again had Master Cutbush told Seth and me that if we ever fell or were thrown overboard, particularly during an engagement, we should strive to keep our wits about us, swimming leisurely, and having a sharp lookout for boats which would be sent to pick us up.

This lesson stood me in good stead now, and forcing all other thoughts from my mind, I struggled to release myself from the clutch of the whirlpool that had been formed by the sinking of the ship, and at the same time avoid being hit by the fragments of timbers and spars which were swirling dangerously near me.

To do this was not a particularly difficult task, once I had set all my mind upon it, and within a few seconds I found myself outside the wreckage, in comparative safety, save for the shots that fell here and there, as if the pirates were aiming at us struggling wretches in the water.

During the heat of the engagement we had stripped off all clothing save our breeches, and thus I was in good condition, provided a ball did

not come my way, to wait until some of our boats could come up.

There were on board the gunboat twenty-eight persons all told, and because I failed to see many swimmers near at hand I knew that a goodly number of the brave fellows had been killed outright, or carried down with the sinking boat.

At first my great fear was lest Seth was among those whom I would never see again ; but before I had well settled my mind to such melancholy fact, he swam alongside, saying, in what was really a cheery tone :—

“It was well Master Cutbush spent so much time telling us what to do in a case like this, otherwise I question if we should be together now, unless at the bottom of the harbor.”

“Are you hurt?” I asked anxiously, for at this moment I remembered clearly all the disagreeable words I had spoken to him during the day, and was fearful lest there would be no opportunity for me to make atonement.

“So far as I can make out I’m not even scratched. Do you know what happened?”

“The ship sank, and that is about all I can make of it.”

“I believe there was an explosion. The instant it

happened I was looking aft, and saw a shot coming straight for us. I believe it went into our magazine, and No. 8 blew herself up."

Judging from what I knew of the disaster, this seemed a most reasonable conclusion, and we came afterward to know that such was indeed the fact.

It is not to be supposed that we speculated very long upon the cause of our trouble, but gave more heed to the small craft which could be seen putting off from the gunboats near at hand.

Then we saw Mr. Spence not many yards away. He was supporting his chin on an oar, like a man who cannot swim, and we hailed to know if we could lend any aid.

"I'm all right, lads," he cried, as if hailing a comrade. "The boats are near at hand, and we shan't be obliged to paddle around here much longer."

Seth and I swam toward him, and remained in his company until a boat from the *Vixen* took us on board.

It seemed certain we should be swamped by the shower of balls which struck all around us, causing the water to boil and hiss; but we went through the rain of missiles as safely as if they had been no more than sugar pills, until alongside the *Vixen*.

No one knew how many of our people had been lost by this disaster, nor was any attempt made to learn, for the battle was yet on in fine style, and neither Seth nor I had time to ask questions.

We were set to work within ten seconds after coming over the rail, and from that time until fully two hours later we took our chances of being killed without giving the slightest heed to such unpleasant possibility.

We could hear the men around us speculating as to why our craft sank so suddenly, and I soon understood that Seth's version of the affair was the one generally believed.

Not until half-past five o'clock did the *Constitution* make signals for us to haul off, and then the bombardment had come to an end.

"Now we'll go on board the frigate," Seth whispered to me, "and I'm curious to hear what Master Cutbush will have to say about our little venture."

"If he knew what sent us on board No. 8, I'm afraid we'd get another taste of the rope's end," I replied, able now to laugh at my own cowardly fears of the morning.

CHAPTER XIII.

MASTER CUTBUSH.

SETH and I did not return to the *Constitution* as soon as we had anticipated.

It goes without saying that a boat put off from the *Vixen* to carry Commander Smith's report to the commodore immediately after the schooner had come to anchor, and we two lads overhung the rail, hoping the officer would see us, remembering where we belonged.

Just at that time, however, there was no room among his thoughts for two such insignificant members of the fleet as we lads, and he put off without a single glance in our direction.

As a matter of fact it made little difference whether we were sent back to the frigate or kept on board the schooner, so far as the effectiveness of our force was concerned; but, from our point of view, it was important the transfer be made. The *Vixen's* crew were all strangers to us, and it was reasonable to

suppose that we should be shoved here or there, according to the convenience of others, when rations were served or hammocks assigned, therefore our desire to be "at home" once more was very great.

However, it was not be supposed for an instant that a boat would be sent especially to convey us, and we could only keep a sharp watch for opportunity to transship ourselves.

While overhanging the rail, gazing in the direction of the *Constitution*, with the hope that we might see a boat put off from her, the master-at-arms came bustling up to know why we were loitering about the decks instead of being in our proper stations.

Seth stated the case in a respectful tone, concluding with the hope that it might be possible for us to go aboard our own ship before night had fully come.

Now, simply as an example of how highly "boys" are rated in the navy, I here set down the fact that the master-at-arms, up to this moment, believed we belonged to the schooner, thus showing how much attention he had given to the lads on board.

He seemed also to have forgotten that we had been picked up after No. 8 exploded, and it became necessary to give him a full account of our movements during the day, whereupon he said gruffly:—

“It may be you’ll have a chance to rejoin your ship within a day or two; but while stayin’ here you’ll not be allowed to loiter about the deck.”

“Where shall we go, sir?” I ventured to ask.

“Below, or anywhere, so that you don’t run athwart me again,” he said sharply, turning on his heel as if our case was settled finally.

By going below we would be losing a possible opportunity to regain the *Constitution*, which I was not disposed to do.

“At this rate we’ll stay on the schooner many a long day,” Seth said petulantly, but taking good care not to speak in so loud a tone that the words could be heard by the petty officer, whose duty it was to preserve order on board, and he turned as if to obey, whereupon I said with a boldness that surprised even myself:—

“I’m going to take the chances of punishment and stay here. If we go below, a hundred boats may come alongside without our knowing it, and it is only by remaining that we can hope to be taken aboard our own ship.”

He looked at me doubtfully, as if wondering whether I had suddenly been bereft of my senses, and there was no opportunity for him to decide as to

his course, for the master-at-arms turned suddenly upon us.

In another instant our bare backs would have been well striped with the short length of rattan he carried as badge of office, had my courage not departed as quickly as it came, and I ran with all speed to the forward hatch, my comrade following closely.

Once below, we gave all our attention to bewailing our sad fate, instead of trying to make friends with the crew, as we should have done, and in this manner perhaps an hour passed, when we were electrified by hearing some one cry from the hatchway:—

“Are there two boys here by name Seth Gordon and Richard Cutbush?”

“Ay, ay, sir!” I cried loudly and wildly, fearing lest I might make reply too late.

“Tumble on deck lively! The frigate’s boat is alongside, and can’t be kept here all night to suit your lazy movements!”

We clambered up the ladder in a twinkling, and, running to the rail, saw Master Cutbush acting as coxswain in the *Constitution’s* dinghy.

“Get aboard, you young villains!” the old gunner roared, and my heart became very sore, for he spoke as if we were to be blamed for remaining away from our

ship, and this after we had not only done more than a boy's full duty during the day, but been among that crew which was exposed to the greatest danger.

However, this was neither the time nor the place to brood over injustice, and I made haste to take my place in the small boat, which was rowed by only two men.

Master Cutbush gave us no other greeting as the little craft was pushed off from the schooner's side, and I might never have known that my uncle had been really anxious and concerned regarding us but for Seth's question.

"How did you know where we were, sir?" he asked, when we had gotten well clear of the *Vixen*.

"I didn't till we found you. I've been to nearly every craft in the fleet, and had begun to fear you were among those of the gunboat who have this day lost the number of their mess."

"You have been hunting for us?" Seth repeated in surprise.

"Ay, lad, and why shouldn't a man look after his own flesh and blood when the day's work has come to an end? As the reports were brought in of this man or that havin' been picked up by the different boats, an' no mention of your names, it begun to seem as if I'd be forced to say to your fathers that you'd been left at

the bottom of Tripoli harbor, which would be hard, seein's how you're beginnin' to show the makin' of men."

For the second time I vowed to forget that the old man had ever dressed us down with the rope's end when there was no good reason for so doing. That he had been really concerned for our safety was shown by the fact of his coming in search of us at the close of a hard day's work, and I began to understand that perhaps after all he might have some affection for the son of his brother.

"Do you know how many were killed when No. 8 exploded, sir?" Seth asked.

"There are yet ten to be accounted for, and reports have come in from all the fleet, so we can say at least that so many went under. In addition to such loss, six of those picked up were wounded, so you see, only twelve out of a crew of twenty-eight escaped unharmed. You two lads have seen hotter work than the rest of us, an' I'm told you stood up to duty like men to the very last. Mr. Spence gives you much credit, an' I'm takin' a good bit of the praise to myself. It wouldn't surprise me to any great degree if you went home midshipmen, with the right to call me 'Old Jacob,' while I'll be forced to touch my cap when we meet."

Master Cutbush chuckled as if such a picture gave him much pleasure, and I knew he did not jest, otherwise the words of praise would never have been spoken, for the captain of No. 8 gun was not given to flattering those below him in station.

I had had good reason to believe that we two lads came through great danger; but did not realize its full extent until Master Cutbush spoke as if it was little less than a marvel that our lives were spared, and now and then addressed us in the most friendly tone, such as he might use when conversing with a comrade.

Once on board the frigate, we had a rare opportunity of learning in what esteem we were held by her crew, and until that moment I had not so much as fancied we might be looked upon with favor. But no sooner had we come over the rail than every man on deck pressed forward to shake us by the hands, and many were the words of praise bestowed upon us.

We afterward learned that Mr. Spence gave us much credit for our behavior during the engagement and after the explosion, and this was in fact an official report, for he was the highest officer who had come out of the fight with his life.

Mr. Caldwell, first lieutenant of the *Siren*, he who

had been in command of the boat that led the attack upon the stranded felucca, was among the killed, and also Mr. Dorsey, midshipman from the same ship.

Not until after all the others had given us some word of greeting did Barry Thomas show himself, and I was surprised at seeing him moving around, when by rights he belonged in the hospital.

“I’m through with that bloomin’ place,” he said, in reply to my exclamation of surprise. “Saw-bones counted on keepin’ me there two or three weeks longer; but when the crew were sent to quarters this mornin’, I went with ’em, an’ you don’t see me back there till another Turkish bullet comes my way.”

“You stand a good chance of getting into trouble because of disobeying orders,” Seth suggested.

“That may be; yet I’m thinkin’ it won’t go very hard with me, seein’ s how I was only tryin’ to do a man’s part against the howlin’ pirates. An’ by all accounts, it seems as if you lads had been gettin’ in a good bit of work. It’ll be somethin’ worth talkin’ about when you get home, to say you was aboard No. 8 when a piratical shot sent her to the bottom in a jiffy. There are not many who can tell such a yarn, lads.”

I had already heard enough regarding this adventure of ours. If we had gone on board the gunboat simply in order to have a better opportunity of striking a blow at the enemy, I might, with good cause, have felt proud of this generous praise from the seamen; but, remembering that we had volunteered from no other motive than to escape danger, firmly believing the small craft would not go into action, it shamed me to hear the men give us unearned credit.

Barry Thomas had no idea of holding his tongue on the subject, however, and during no less than two hours he held forth on the gun-deck as to our bravery, while Master Cutbush showed a disposition to prolong the conversation, instead of cutting it short, as I believed was his duty.

There was one phase of this affair which pleased me wonderfully, although I was careful not to express my thanks. The crew had said very little regarding "Cousin Richard" since the day on which we attacked the stranded felucca; but yet now and then Seth and I would hear something on the subject intended for us alone, and it was impossible for us to shut our ears to the joke.

On this night, however, Barry Thomas made mention of the matter for what proved to be the last time.



"HE SWAM ALONGSIDE."

“We’ve made it lively for you two now an’ then when Cousin Richard hove in sight, an’ perhaps there’s been more sport in it for us than for you. But after this day’s work, I’m allowin’ that all such nonsense comes to an end, for it ain’t the square thing to poke fun at lads who have shown as much pluck as you.”

More than one of the men showed their approval of this speech, and no person offered any objection, therefore it was much as if a regular compact had been solemnly made.

As to what followed after this second attack upon the batteries and shipping in the harbor of Tripoli, it will be better understood if I copy here some portion of a story which I lately read, and begin with those lines which give the result of the last engagement, meaning the one in which, much against our will or inclination, we two lads had been proven heroes to a certain degree.

“The gunboats in this attack suffered considerably. In consequence of the wind’s being onshore, Commodore Preble had kept the frigate out of the action, and the enemy’s batteries had no interruption from the heavy fire of that ship. Several of the American boats had been hulled, and all suffered materially in their sails and rigging. Number 6, Lieutenant Wads-

worth, had her latteen yard shot away. The killed and wounded amounted to eighteen men.

“At eight o'clock on this same evening the *John Adams*, 28, Captain Chauncey, from America, came within hail of the *Constitution*, and reported herself.

“By this ship Commodore Preble received despatches informing him of the equipment of vessels that were to come out under Commodore Barron, and of the necessity, which was thought to exist, of superseding him in the command.

“Captain Chauncey also stated the probability of the speedy arrival of the expected ships, which were to sail shortly after his own departure.

“As the *John Adams* had brought stores for the squadron, and had put most of her gun-carriages in the other frigates to enable her to do so, she could be of no immediate use; and the rest of the vessels being so soon expected, Commodore Preble was induced to delay the other attacks he had meditated, on the ground of prudence.

“By the *John Adams* intelligence reached the squadron of the reestablishment of the rank of masters and commanders, and the new commissions were brought out for the officers before Tripoli, who had been promoted.

“In consequence of these changes, Lieutenant Commandant Decatur was raised to the rank of captain, and became the second in command then present; while Lieutenant Commandants Stewart, Hull, Chauncey, Smith, and Somers became master commandants, in the order in which they are named. Several of the young gentlemen were also promoted, including most of those who had a share in the destruction of the *Philadelphia*.”

Not until these different promotions had been read from the quarter-deck did either Seth or I realize how rapidly one may rise in station, provided he has done some brave deed, and our hearts bounded until we were liked to be choked, when Master Cutbush said privately to us after the quarter-deck ceremony had come to an end:—

“The next news which comes to us from home, when Commodore Preble’s account of our work has been made, will have the names of you two among it, or I’m mistaken.”

“Do you mean that we’re like to be promoted?” Seth asked, his voice trembling as if he had an attack of the ague.

“That’s it, exactly, lad. You should be given midshipmen’s berths, an’ that I’ll maintain before everybody.”

“But why we more than those sailors who came out of the explosion alive?”

“Old shellbacks like myself are not likely to rise higher than gunners—an’ why? Because, as a rule, every man jack of us is ignorant as the pigs; not more than one out of six can write his own name. It’s the boys who’ve had what you might call an education that are promoted; an’ perhaps it’s hard for you to realize yet a while, but it’s none the less true, that schoolin’ counts wherever you go.”

“But you are not ignorant, Master Cutbush,” I ventured to say.

“There’s no good reason why I should be, seein’s how I’ve had the chance to store up book-learnin’; but I was foolish, like a good many other lads, an’ allowed there was no need of knowin’ more’n twice two if I was to be a sailor.”

It can well be understood that after such a prediction from the old gunner Seth and I were in the highest state of excitement, and from that moment we spent all our spare time bringing to mind the lessons learned at school, mourning meanwhile because we had not been more studious.

But to go back to the story of our doings as I have read it, and I take the words from others be-

cause we two lads knew nothing regarding what might be done at home, or on shore in the enemy's country, save when those who lived aft discussed matters in the presence of the guard, who repeated everything in the way of news for the pleasure and satisfaction of those forward.

“The Bashaw now became more disposed than ever to treat, the warfare promising much annoyance with no corresponding benefits. The cannonading did his batteries and vessels great injuries, though the town suffered less than might have been expected, being in a measure protected by its walls. The shells, too, that had been procured at Messina turned out to be very bad, few exploded when they fell.

“According to the private journal of Captain Bainbridge, then a prisoner in the town, out of forty-eight shells thrown by the two bombards in the attack of the 7th, but one exploded. Agreeably to the records made by this officer at the time, the bombs on no occasion did much injury, and the town generally suffered less by shot even than was commonly supposed.

“The case was different with the shot, which did their work effectually on the different batteries. Some idea may be formed of the spirit of the last attack,

from the report of Commodore Preble, who states that nine guns, one of which was used but a short time, threw five hundred heavy shot in the course of little more than two hours.

“Although the delay cause by the expected arrival of the reënforcement was improved to open a negotiation, it was without effect. The Bashaw had lowered his demand quite half, but he still insisted on a ransom of five hundred dollars a man for his prisoners, though he waived the usual claim for tribute in future. These propositions were rejected, it being expected that, after the arrival of the reënforcement, the treaty might be made on the usual terms of civilized nations.

“On the 9th of August the *Argus*, Captain Hull, had a narrow escape. That brig having stood in toward the town to reconnoitre, with Commodore Preble on board, one of the heaviest of the shot from the batteries raked her bottom for some distance, cutting the plank half through. An inch or two of variation in the direction of this shot would infallibly have sunk the brig, and that probably in a very few minutes.”

Now that whoever reads this halting story may understand what we, who were at the scene of

action, did not know at the time, I will go on with that portion of the tale in which Seth and I took active part.

The reënforcement did not arrive as the commodore had been led to believe would be the case, and he immediately began to cast about for some fresh means of annoying the enemy.

The first thing which demanded his attention was the supply of drinking water. We were already on short allowance, and might soon come to know how much suffering can be caused by thirst if our stores of that precious liquid were not speedily replenished.

To such end the *Enterprise* was sent to Malta, with orders for the American agents there to forward us transports laden with water, and once this was done the commodore prepared for another attack upon the town where our countrymen were held in captivity or slavery.

Therefore it was we who lived forward got news through one of the guards that a reconnoissance was about to be made in small boats in order to learn exactly where the piratical fleet was stationed. It was not impossible that the Bashaw had changed his plan of defence, and it stood the commodore in hand

to know what had been done since that day when Seth and I were so near death.

Left to myself, I never should have dreamed that I wanted to be with the party, for those who thus sneaked into the harbor under cover of darkness would most likely lose their lives, or their liberty, if the pirates discovered them, since no very strong resistance could be made from the boats.

Death would have been preferable to being captured by the Tripolitans, and there was in my mind, as in Seth's, that we had already seen as much of danger as lads of our age needed, therefore we heard the discussions among our crew without ever dreaming that we might be personally interested in the venture, until Master Cutbush took us aside one morning, as he said gravely:—

“I haven't heard you two lads so much as yip about this boat reconnoissance.”

“Why should we?” I asked hotly. “It is said that Captain Decatur and Captain Chauncey will command, and there is little chance any from the *Constitution* will be called upon.”

“Do you mean to tell me you two are not burnin' with the desire to join the party?” and Master Cutbush looked very severe.

“I’m well content to stay where I am,” Seth replied with a laugh, whereupon the old gunner rejoined:—

“I’m ashamed that you should hold back at such a time!”

“Why do you say ‘such a time’?” I asked.

“Because you are now on the road to promotion, havin’ earned the first step, so to speak. If you hold back now, all that has been done in the past may be forgotten, whereas by pushin’ forward it’ll come fresh again to the commodore’s mind. I’m not reckonin’ on takin’ you home as boys of the ship, after havin’ shoved you along thus far.”

It nettled me that Master Cutbush should speak as if only through his favor or labors did we stand well with the officers and men, therefore I said in what I intended should be a tone of sarcasm,—

“How do you reckon on shoving us ahead any further?”

“By havin’ you ask for permission to go with the reconnoiterin’ party. Mr. Dent will listen to you, because of what has already been done, an’ you’re to show yourselves eager for yet more service.”

Seth looked at me ruefully, and I knew there was in his mind the same thoughts as found a place in

mine. We had been exposed to great danger, and come off without a scratch ; to rush in now where we were surely not needed, and when nothing of credit could be gained, was much like tempting Providence, according to my way of thinking.

It was destined, however, that the matter should be settled without our permission, and against our desire.

At this moment it so chanced that Mr. Dent came forward on a tour of inspection, and Master Cutbush, dragging us after him as if we had been a couple of evil-doers, approached the lieutenant with a salute that was intended as a request for permission to speak.

To declare that we did not want to go with the party would be to make of the old gunner a mortal enemy, and also, perhaps, destroy our chances for promotion, if any we had ; therefore, because of having appeared to be brave when in reality we were cowards, yet further opportunities for death were to be sought out for us.

Tremblingly I waited for Master Cutbush to make his request, hoping most fervently that it would be denied.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ENVIOUS SHIPMATE.

THE old gunner had no more than brought Mr. Dent to a halt, and was clearing his throat preparatory to speaking in his most dignified tone, when Joseph Foster chanced to come that way. Observing us two lads standing in the wake of Master Cutbush, he halted near No. 6 gun, pretending there to have some duty to perform, although he had no business whatsoever in that vicinity.

I gave little heed to the boy at the time, thinking it quite natural he should desire to know what business we three could have that would warrant our bringing Mr. Dent to a standstill while he was on a tour of inspection; but the idea was dimly in my mind that here was a chance for him who had felt so disgruntled when Seth and I were sent into the *Intrepid*.

There was little opportunity for me to speculate long about anything, for Master Cutbush soon began his palaver, and I, as one of the lads whose life might

pay for the venturesomeness, was naturally eager to hear what he said.

One might have thought him at least second in command, so many airs and graces did he put on while making a beginning of his story, by explaining that he had taken upon himself the task of licking us two into shape, because of kinship and friendship.

“You have made an excellent beginning, Jacob,” Mr. Dent said, as if Seth and I had done nothing whatsoever of our own accord, but were simply puppets who danced as Master Cutbush pulled the string.

“Thank you, sir, thank you,” the old man replied, with a wonderful flourish as he saluted. “I am doing my best, if it please you, and the lads are not showin’ themselves backward in learnin’.”

“So it would seem, Jacob, for they contrive to get rather more than their share of service,” the officer replied, thus showing, at least to my satisfaction, that Seth and I had more than once been the subject of a conversation aft.

“The only fear, sir,” Master Cutbush continued, “is that, like all other lads, they may grow lazy and puffed up with much praise, unless they are kept employed. I’d have them get more experience in boat work, if it please you, and to that end have

made bold to ask your permission for them to go out in the reconnoissance which it is said among the men will be made to-night."

"Captain Decatur and Captain Chauncey have been assigned to that work, and therefore they are the officers to whom you should prefer your request."

"Ay, sir; but there is little likelihood of my gettin' speech with them in time. These lads are keen to join the party, and if, with a view of encouraging them because of what they already have done, you could speak a good word in their behalf, it would be the greatest of favors to them as well as myself."

"Very well, Jacob," Mr. Dent replied, with a smile. "I will bear it in mind, and see what can be done, although there is fear I may be laying myself open to a charge of favoritism, for thus far these two boys have had a finger in everything that is going."

Having said this Mr. Dent turned on his heel and walked away, leaving me with the thought in my mind that indeed we had had too many fingers in everything that was going, and it would please me much should we be allowed to remain quietly on board the *Constitution*, taking no more chances of death than it was absolutely necessary lads in our station should take.

Without giving overly much heed to Joe Foster, I observed that his work on the gun was apparently finished instantly our interview with Mr. Dent had come to an end, for he sneaked away as if desirous of escaping notice.

“I reckon we can safely count the business as settled in what you might call a satisfactory manner,” Master Cutbush said, when we were alone again; and I could have added, although it would have cost me dearly had I been so venturesome, that the matter would not be satisfactory to me if we were to have a finger in any such pies as a boat reconnoissance of Tripoli harbor by night.

“It may be he will have no opportunity of speaking with either Captain Decatur or Captain Chauncey,” Seth suggested, and by the tone of his voice I understood that he, like myself, was hoping something might occur to prevent our gaining this additional experience.

“That part of it gives me little uneasiness,” Master Cutbush replied confidently. “You may set it down as a fact that both the officers will be on board this day to receive instructions from the commodore, and we can safely count on Mr. Dent’s keeping his word to the letter.”

Then, with the air of one who has done an exceeding

great favor, the old gunner strutted away, much as if he considered himself of vast importance on board the frigate.

“ We know, by the fact of his having come in search of us after No. 8 was blown up, that he has some regard for you and me,” Seth said in such a mournful tone that at another time I should have laughed outright ; “ but if we are counted among the killed in this war, I hold to it, and will with my latest breath, that he is responsible for our deaths. What will promotion avail us if we are not alive when our commissions arrive at this station ? ”

I could make no other reply than to shake my head, for at the moment it appeared much as if Master Cutbush would succeed in his intentions, because, probably, there were not many boys in the squadron who would beg for an opportunity to face death.

However great may have been my uncle’s affection, and keen though he might be for our welfare, it is certain he gave us little opportunity for idleness.

In less than five minutes after having made the request of Mr. Dent, he set us at a task which seemed of no more importance than to keep our hands employed, and during the two hours which followed we were forced to work like slaves, or take the chances

of having the rope's end laid heavily upon our backs.

Then came the word which I had been dreading to hear.

One of the marines advanced from the cabin to where Master Cutbush sat yarning with his cronies, and said:—

“Captain Decatur is pleased to grant the request you made to Lieutenant Dent, and desires that you have the boys ready for boat service an hour before sunset this afternoon.”

As the soldier walked away I looked up quickly at Seth, and saw on his face an expression which corresponded to the feeling in my heart.

We were as lambs about to be led to the slaughter, on the pretext that it was our greatest desire to face the butchers.

Joe Foster, who was working around No. 4 gun, heard, as a matter of course, this brief message, and, involuntarily glancing in his direction, I was surprised at seeing him shake his fist toward me in a menacing manner.

However, I gave little heed at the moment, being fully occupied with timorous thoughts, and straightway left the tasks which had been set me, that I might hold private conversation with Seth.

It was directly opposed to proper conduct, this knocking off work without orders; but I was on the verge of recklessness at the moment, because of fear, and might have said, had any one taken the trouble to question me, that one flogging more or less made little difference to a lad who was thus forced to venture his life whenever death lurked in the air.

“The pitcher that goes often to the well will sometime return broken.”

I repeated this old adage to myself as, beckoning Seth to follow, I went well forward into the eyes of the ship, where there was little likelihood of being interrupted during such time as we consoled each other.

We had hardly more than settled ourselves down by a water butt, which would partially screen us from view of the men, when Joe Foster came up.

Forgetting the threatening gestures he had made, I fancied the lad was of the mind to sympathize with Seth and me, because we were forced to do a duty which, considering our station, was utterly needless.

Therefore it was that the first words he spoke astonished me to the verge of bewilderment.

“So you haven’t yet given over tryin’ to stick your noses in where they don’t belong, thus deprivin’ others of their rights?”

“Whose rights have we been interfering with?” Seth asked, looking up in bewilderment, which was not less than mine.

“The rights of every boy on board this ship!” Joe cried, seemingly growing more angry each instant. “If the others are willin’ to lay down while you and your precious Master Cutbush ride over ’em, I ain’t.”

“What’s the matter, Joe?” I asked, believing for the moment that he had made some mistake, and then there came into my mind the words he had used when we were on the point of setting out for the *Intrepid* to make that long, terrible voyage, every hour of which was marked by misery and by danger.

“You’ll find out before we’re many hours older,” he replied, squaring away as if to make an attack. “I’m countin’ on layin’ you two by the heels, and what’s more, I’ll do it single-handed, so’s to show that both of you together ain’t a match for any other lad aboard.”

“Lay us by the heels!” Seth cried. “What reason can you have for wanting to do that?”

“Now don’t try to stuff me with any bloomin’ nonsense, for it won’t go down. Haven’t you two been gettin’ all the plums in this ’ere voyage? An’ don’t you come at ’em by playin’ the sneak?”

By this time I had forgotten my fears of what might come to us during the reconnoissance, and began to lose temper. There was no good reason why this lad whom we had ever treated as a friend should thus berate us, and I leaped to my feet.

“Do you dare call us sneaks?” I cried.

“Ay; what else can that lad be who continually curries favor with the officers in order that he may share in this enterprise or that, thereby depriving others, who have an equally good claim, from showing of what stuff they are made?”

“When did we do anything like that?” I asked, believing for a moment I might convince him, by words rather than blows, that he was in the wrong.

“How else could you have got a berth aboard the *Intrepid*?” he cried angrily.

“How else? Why, you know as well as do we that it was none of our doings. Not a man forward had any idea of what was to be done until Master Cutbush came from the interview in the cabin, announcing that Seth and I were to follow him. We did not even know where we were going, nor for what purpose, until after having gone on board the *Intrepid*. Do you believe that we were eager to starve, to suffer from thirst, and be packed like

herrings in a box, during a gale when the bravest among us believed the ketch must founder?"

"There was no reason to expect a storm would spring up, or that all hands' would be on short allowance, when you laid plans to be among the crew which should destroy the frigate," Joe replied doggedly. "Perhaps you'll lay your luck in being aboard No. 8 to Master Cutbush?"

"Do you call that luck?" Seth asked bitterly.

"Well, what else is it? Don't every man of the crew say you stand in the line of promotion, simply because of happening to get blown up? How did you chance to be aboard of her?"

Seth stepped forward eagerly, and from the look on his face I fancied he was about to tell the truth—to explain that we had volunteered for the gun-boat, believing thereby we might not go into action.

I am not what can be called a quick-witted lad, and yet on the instant it flashed into my mind that if Seth should thus make confession we would have put ourselves in the power, not only of this lad, but of all those whom he might tell. We should be giving them a better weapon for gibes than was furnished by the "Cousin Richard" mistake.

Therefore it was that I laid my hand over his

mouth quickly, and answered Joseph Foster myself by saying:—

“Seth was on deck when there was a call for boys to volunteer. He answered it, and we went. Would you have had him come down to your hammock and ask if it was your good pleasure that we go aboard the gunboat? Should we have waited until the master-at-arms told Mr. Spence that Joseph Foster was not inclined to risk his precious life?”

“Oh, you think you’re wonderfully smart, don’t you?” the lad cried scornfully. “Perhaps you will say that you couldn’t help bein’ sent away in the boats when the salt-laden felucca was run ashore?”

“Now you have hit upon the only time when we ever exerted ourselves to join an enterprise. In that case we did ask permission to go, and received it. But how much of honor, or of glory, was gained thereby, I leave it for you to say.”

That Joe Foster had been worsted in this controversy any right-minded lad would have agreed; but his anger was so great that he could not realize the fact, or, if he did so, was unwilling to admit it.

He had come to make a row with us, and was not disposed to be turned from his purpose.

“I am not countin’ on lettin’ you sneak out of this

matter by fine words, an' you're to be made to understand from this out that there are other boys aboard the *Constitution* besides yourselves, although perhaps none of them may have an uncle who is captain of a gun."

"Well, and how do you count on preventing us from doing what you call sneaking?" Seth asked, having by this time worked himself into a fine state of temper. "Having taken it upon yourself to regulate matters aboard the frigate, I am anxious to know how you will set about the task?"

"That you shall understand in short order," Joe cried, seemingly beside himself with rage. "I give you a chance now to promise you won't go out on the reconnoissance to-night, but will allow them as have a better right to take your places."

"And suppose that for the sake of being contrary we should not take up with the chance you speak of?" Seth asked.

"You will either ask permission to stay aboard, leaving others to be chosen by Captain Decatur, or I'll flog both of you now."

However much I dreaded taking part in this night's reconnoissance, there was no idea in my mind of allowing Joseph Foster to bully me into foregoing the danger.

I would willingly have given anything of which I was possessed had it been possible to remain on board the frigate; but, timorous though I was by nature, there was in my mind not the slightest shadow of an inclination to submit to his demands.

“It was not our desire to join this night party to prowl around the harbor of Tripoli,” I began, when Joe interrupted fiercely:—

“There’s no use in tryin’ to lie out of it, Dick Cutbush, for I heard all that was said when Mr. Dent came forward.”

“That may be true,” Seth cried with a laugh; “but I defy you to show that either Dick or I said anything.”

“You held your peace when Master Cutbush said it was your heart’s desire to go on the reconnoissance, and that is much the same as if you used the words yourself. Now are you ready to beg off from the venture?”

“No,” Seth replied firmly, and I echoed the word.

“You will do it, or take a flogging.”

“Perhaps, provided some one of greater ability gives it to us;” and now Seth was worked up to that pitch where I believe the thought of venturing into Tripoli harbor almost unarmed was pleasing to him.

I had not supposed Joseph Foster would dare raise any row on the gun-deck, for he knew full well that the master-at-arms would at once have him in custody on what might be a most serious charge, therefore was I taken thoroughly by surprise when he suddenly struck out with both fists and such true aim that Seth and I were almost toppled over.

Each of us received a blow full in the face, and for an instant we were so staggered, confused I might say, that he had time to deliver yet another stroke before we were on the defensive.

Once we had gathered our scattered senses, however, Joseph Foster learned that he had taken a contract which it would be impossible to fulfil, for he did not again succeed in striking either of us.

Seth, forgetting discipline in his anger, was for rushing upon the lad and giving him the sound drubbing he deserved; but I had sufficient wit about me to realize what might be the result of engaging in a brawl.

Therefore it was I pulled him toward me until we stood with our backs against the bulkhead, where any one who approached could readily see that we were simply protecting ourselves, and not fomenting a quarrel.

“Do no more than to prevent him from striking you,” I whispered. “If we are charged with taking part in a brawl, our hopes of promotion have vanished.”

He understood the situation in a twinkling; but Joe Foster was so thoroughly enraged as to have lost all self-control.

While at another time he might have understood that it was impossible he could whip two of us, now there was in his mind nothing save the uncontrollable desire to inflict some injury upon lads who, from his point of view, had been more fortunate than himself.

While striking out viciously, Joe heaped the most violent reproaches upon us, making such a din as could readily be heard from one end of the gun-deck to the other, and, as a matter of course, the master-at-arms, followed by all the idlers below, came toward us at full speed.

Now it was that I had good reason for congratulating myself upon having thus been prudent, instead of allowing anger to come uppermost.

Unless those who approached were blind, they might readily see that Seth and I were simply defending ourselves against Joe, and in no wise endeavoring to prolong the strife.

On the contrary, our adversary, heeding nothing save

his passionate desires, was giving good proof of having been the aggressor.

All this the master-at-arms evidently understood as well as if we had explained the case from our point of view, for, seizing Joe by the collar, he jerked him backward upon the deck, and then dragged the lad away as if he had been no more than a bundle of merchandise.

Seth would have followed the captive but that I held him back.

“We had best stay where we are, lad, until after making certain that the master-at-arms has no idea of preferring a charge against us.”

“He would have no reason to do so simply because we followed the throng.”

“Perhaps not,” I replied; “but according to my idea it is wiser that we remain here.”

At that moment Master Cutbush, who had been on deck, came rapidly toward us, a look of apprehension upon his face.

“Have you lads been fighting?” he cried, and when Seth explained the situation it might readily be seen that the old man was relieved in mind.

“It would have gone ill with both had you taken part in a brawl aboard ship, for, save in case of downright mutiny, there can be no greater offence committed. Stay you here until the matter is settled.”

Then Master Cutbush bustled away, and we two held our position, no longer trying to hide behind the water butt, both of us wondering not a little why the lad should have been provoked into such a fury simply because he was not permitted to venture his life when it might be possible to remain in safety.

A full five minutes passed before the silence at our end of the ship was broken, and then Seth said, in a tone which sounded to me most comical:—

“It is hard lines for two lads to be always forced into positions of peril, and then called upon to defend themselves because of having done what could not be avoided. At this rate, what between Master Cutbush and the disgruntled boys of the *Constitution*, we are likely to have troublous times.”

“It may be all will come to an end with this night, Seth,” I suggested, speaking rather to myself than him, for now that the excitement had subsided my thoughts went again into the future.

It would seem as if experience should have taught me by this time the folly of borrowing trouble; but yet it had not, and I magnified, as usual, the dangers of the reconnoissance, until feeling almost certain the expedition would result fatally to us.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RECONNOISSANCE.

SO far as I could learn, Joseph Foster had, by his attack upon us, accomplished nothing more than to insure his own imprisonment, during a certain time at least, in the brig of the ship, or, in other words, that place where offenders are confined, and Barry Thomas was of the opinion that the lad would be exceedingly fortunate if he got off with nothing more than an ordinary flogging.

He had done Seth and me no harm, however, and, according to my belief, might have been of considerable benefit to us if, because of the row, some other boys of the *Constitution* should be sent on the reconnoissance in our stead.

To my disappointment, however, by his interference he had rendered our going all the more certain, and there was nothing for it, as I soon realized, but to look as pleasant as might be, pinning my hopes upon the chance that we should be able to enter and leave the harbor without attracting the notice of the pirates.

In fact, Barry Thomas did much toward allaying my fears, for he declared most positively that a dozen boat expeditions might go into the harbor secretly on so dark a night as this promised to be, without danger, unless through carelessness of the commander or crew.

Perhaps Barry suspected somewhat of our true frame of mind, for he spent no little time in trying to convince us that a reconnoissance of this kind was hardly more than a pleasant method of keeping the men employed, and at the same time varying the monotony.

However, whether the danger was much or little, we were in for it, and when the word came that Captain Decatur was alongside, we two lads tumbled on deck with every appearance of eagerness, while I dare venture to say there was neither man nor boy aboard who did not envy us.

As was seen half an hour later, the expedition was made up of only two boats, one commanded by Captain Decatur and the other by Captain Chauncey.

Each boat carried eight oarsmen, two marines, and two seamen whose duty it would be to stand by the craft in case the party made a landing.

It appeared that on this occasion Seth and I were

to count as seamen, for I noted when we headed for the harbor that he and I were the only boys in the expedition.

The stars were obscured by low-hanging clouds which gave promise of a speedy storm; the sea was running unusually high, although there was little or no wind nearabout the shore, and, take it all in all, a better night for the purpose could not have been selected.

The men were rowing with muffled oars; at the outset word was passed that no conversation should be indulged in, even while we were so far from the entrance of the harbor that the report of a musket could not have been heard by our enemies, and the two boats, flung hither and thither by the waves, made their way toward the rock-guarded entrance as if there was nothing of life on board.

To me it was most depressing, this silence save for the dash of the waves and the low moaning of the breeze.

The blackness of the night was, to my mind, much like an impenetrable mantle which had shut us off from our countrymen, perhaps forever.

We sat well in the bow, Seth and I, and now and then I pressed his hand in order that he might do

the same by mine, and thus give me proof a friend was by my side.

The sea dashed against the rocks either side the channel as we made the western entrance, just north of the Spanish Fort, and so great was the tumult of the surf that had the marines opened a fire of musketry, I question if it would have been heard by those in the city beyond.

Ahead, appearing much nearer than they really were, we could see the lights of the town, while now and then, between us and the twinkling stars of fire, could be distinguished, as we rose on the crest of the waves, a dark line which I knew marked the position of the Tripolitan fleet.

I longed to whisper in Seth's ear what had come into my heart by way of comfort, for now it was I realized that the greater portion of my fears had been groundless, since we might run close aboard these vessels without being discovered, unless they kept a sharper watch than it seemed probable men would be inclined to keep on such a night.

Then, again, I realized that even though they opened fire upon us, it would be only by chance that we were struck, since our boats were tossed to and

fro so violently that the best gunner in the land could not draw sight upon us.

Well, there is no good reason why I should set down all the thoughts which were in my mind as we stole into the harbor, more like ghostly visitors than living beings, otherwise it will seem as if too many words are given to us lads who thus far had failed to really deserve even a mention.

The work on hand was to discover the location of the Tripolitan fleet, and not undertaken that Seth and I might have experience, therefore I will say no more concerning ourselves; but set down only what occurred in the regular duty of reconnoitering.

The boats were pulled steadily in, running close to the western shore until we were come to a point half-way between the lazaretto and the mole, or landing-place, when the outermost gunboat was no more than half a cable length distant.

Then Captain Decatur, who was at the helm and leading the way, shoved the tiller down until we were on a course parallel with the line of war-vessels.

Not a sound came from boat or galley as we pulled along, keeping sharp watch lest peradventure we come unaware upon some craft that was out of the line; and by that time had been learned what made up

Captain Decatur's written report to the commander, which I afterward heard was in these words:—

“The vessels of the Tripolitan flotilla are moored abreast of each other in a line extending from the mole to the castle, with their heads to the eastward, thus making a defence directly across the inner harbor.”

Up to the moment when we came abreast the last craft to the eastward, it was certain the enemy had no suspicions that we had ventured thus far, and on our part it was as if all on board the boats were asleep, so perfect was the silence.

We could hear faintly certain noises from the town betokening that the inhabitants were bent on pleasure or labor, despite the lateness of the hour; but the defenders of the harbor were unseen and unheard.

We had encountered no danger, and thus far it was, as Barry Thomas had said, nothing more than an excursion for the men that they might vary the monotony of the blockade.

Then came a change in the scene, so sudden and startling that for the moment I was bewildered beyond power to realize what had occurred.

I had been peering ahead in the darkness, saying

to myself as we came to an end of the long line of vessels, that now we would turn to go back, that my cowardly fears were without foundation, when on the instant, it seemed to me as if there leaped out of the very sea, so quickly did it come within my line of vision, a boat with no less than eight oars on a side, the bow of which seemed to be filled with armed men.

There was no time to give an alarm, and even had there been, not a word was needed, for every man on board our boat whose face was turned toward the bow, saw the danger at the same instant as did Seth and I.

This craft, which had sprung out of the darkness, was broadside on, and hardly more than six feet away, therefore but one result could be expected.

Neither their crew nor ours could pull swiftly enough to avoid a collision, which came, as it seemed to me, within the merest fraction of time after she first appeared.

The bow of our boat was driven into her side, between the oars, so firmly that we remained fixed there, and then it was that, without realizing the fact at the time, I saw she was an armed galley, carrying a crew all told of not less than fifty men.

“Look to your weapons!” I heard Captain Decatur say in a low, sharp tone, and, as if his voice was the signal, those aboard the galley opened fire, each man acting independently of his neighbor, as it seemed. The bullets whistled over and around us; but, so far as I could then tell, not one found its billet.

I have failed in the telling of this, if he who reads does not understand that from the moment the craft came into view, until the pirates opened fire, it was as if no more than five seconds had elapsed. One might say that instantly we saw the galley we struck her, and our bow had but just hit the gunwale when the soldiers discharged their weapons.

During a full minute confusion reigned supreme, and then, while the pirates were yet pouring a scattering fire upon us, two of our oarsmen sprang forward, seizing the boat-hooks which lay across the thwarts on either side. With these they struck at the galley, intent on forcing the bow of our boat out from the timbers which it had shattered, and then the two marines began firing.

Captain Decatur discharged his pistol, and the sailors drew their cutlasses; but we were so far outnumbered that but little resistance could have been

made had we been alone. Captain Chauncey's boat was close astern, and as soon as might be after we struck, she came up on the galley's bow to windward of us.

Seth and I, who had been pushed aside by the seamen, could do nothing toward aiding ourselves or our companions, because of being unarmed. With a musket or a pistol I am certain we might have borne our part well, because timorousness was forgotten, and there came into my mind only the thought that by prompt, energetic action would it be possible to save my life.

As a matter of course the discharges of the muskets gave the alarm to those on board the fleet, and in the merest fraction of time lights were twinkling along the whole line; shouts of command could be heard here and there, and we knew that the Bashaw's squadron was making ready to give us a warm reception.

The only thing which saved us from death and captivity was that the Tripolitans believed the Americans were making an attack in force. As was afterward told us by a prisoner, they had no idea of our weakness, otherwise we should have been speedily overpowered.

The crew of the galley believing, from the swift on-coming of Captain Chauncey's boat, that all the men of the squadron were inside the harbor, bent their energies to making good an escape, and the firing which they kept up was only for the purpose of holding us at a distance until the two crafts could be detached.

This last task was accomplished by our men, and no sooner was the galley free than her crew made all haste to gain the nearest ship, firing on us as they retreated, but with such poor aim that the bullets whistled above our heads.

It can readily be supposed that our commanders, venturesome though they had proven themselves to be, had no idea of lingering within the line of fire once it was possible to work out of the harbor, and the men sprang to their oars with an energy that bent the ashen blades, sending showers of spray over the bows as we dashed through the foaming waves.

The one circumstance which puzzled us greatly was that none of the Tripolitan fleet opened fire.

There could be no question but that every man aboard their vessels was on the alert, and yet when we were nearing the channel not a gun had been discharged.

This was explained later by the prisoner of whom I have spoken. Believing that our entire fleet had come inside the harbor, they withheld their fire until the frigate could be seen, and to such prudence did we owe our lives.

By the time the town was alarmed, we were safely outside, and a fervent prayer of thanksgiving went up from my heart, for it seemed to me that during a certain time my comrade and I had been in greater danger than when the gunboat exploded.

It was as if all the events of that night were directed by a Providence which ruled in our favor; for by the time Captain Decatur's boat came alongside the *Constitution*, the inshore wind had gotten up in such force that it was necessary the squadron gain an offing, lest it be overpowered by the elements.

Fortunately for Seth and me, Captain Decatur believed it was his duty to make a verbal report that same night, else we might have spent a certain uncomfortable time on board No. 4 gunboat.

As it was, however, we found the planks of the frigate under our feet none too soon for comfort, and Master Cutbush took us under his rudely protecting wing once more, by straightway ordering us below to

the gun-deck to give an account of the night's work to the anxious seamen.

It was near to morning on the 18th of August when our squadron was gotten under way in order that we might have sea room during the gale which was coming on apace, and not until the morning of the 24th did we stand in toward the town again.

During these seven days we fell in with the *Enterprise* and the transports laden with water which she had brought from Malta, and learned that no news had been heard at that port from the reënforcement which the commander of the *John Adams* had announced was on the way from the United States.

The breeze came lightly from the eastward during this 24th of August, and not until near to eight o'clock in the evening was the *Constitution* anchored inside the harbor just beyond range of the batteries.

Singularly enough, no news had filtered through the marine guard of the cabin, to us forward, regarding what was about to be done; but from the fact that we had come thus near, every man aboard believed another attack would be made before morning, and, as can be fancied, the excitement among the seamen was great.

While we stood there in little groups awaiting the call to quarters, Joe Foster, who had been kept in the brig—meaning the prison—until the day before, as punishment, instead of receiving the flogging which he had every reason to expect, came up to where Seth and I stood, and for a moment I fancied the quarrel was about to be resumed.

In this I was happily mistaken, however. Being confined in such close quarters for so long a time while the frigate was at sea had given Joe ample opportunity to reflect, and now that it seemed a general action was near at hand, his one desire was to be on friendly terms with us again.

He began the work of reconciliation by what gave token of being a long apology, over which, I had no doubt, he studied many a day; but Seth cut him short.

“There is no need of many words, Joe,” my comrade said, and I could have hugged him for being thus thoughtful, because it pained me to see the lad humble himself to another of the same station. “You allowed anger to get the best of you, and that’s the substance of it. Both Dick and I are glad to know you have come to look at the matter as it really is, and from this time out we’ll forget,

so far as may be, that even a hard word passed between us."

It was plain to be seen that Joe was not only relieved, but thankful, at thus being interrupted in his lengthy speech, and without another word he shook hands with us heartily.

Then the lad went to his gun, and Seth and I had little time to converse regarding his repentance, so excited, and perhaps timorous, were we by thoughts of the coming action.

While we waited on the gun-deck it fell a dead calm, and about nine o'clock, greatly to the surprise of all, every boat was ordered into the water, causing Master Cutbush to say with a doubtful shake of his head: —

"It looks much as if the commodore had made up his mind to have a try at the town, in which case there's not many of us likely to leave this coast."

The orders which followed, however, gave all hands to understand that no assault was intended, for the seamen were sent to the oars unarmed, and while Seth and I stood at the port of No. 8 gun, watching proceedings, we heard the master-at-arms announce to one of his mates that the bombards were to be towed into position in order to shell the

town, an undertaking in which the ships would have little part.

This proved to be the truth. The seamen were called upon to do no more than tow the bombards into what was thought to be a favorable position for throwing shells; but not until one or two o'clock in the morning was the work completed.

Then the bombardment began and continued without interruption until daylight, during all of which time not a single shot was fired from the town or the Tripolitan fleet.

At sunrise the vessels were towed off again, and there was much arguing and speech-making among our crew during the remainder of the day.

A certain portion of the men insisted that we had inflicted no damage upon the town, while the remainder declared that if the attack had not served some purpose, it was because the bombs were worthless.

In fact, it was reported by the marine guard that the officers in the cabin, during a consultation, had asserted that lead was found in the fuse-holes of many of the bombs, it having been done by treachery through the French agents in Sicily, where the shells were charged to resist a French invasion.

However that may be, certain it is that no disposition was shown to make another attack of the same kind next night, although the weather was most favorable for it.

So far as I could see, and Barry Thomas was of much the same opinion, we had thus far accomplished very little toward forcing the Bashaw of Tripoli to terms, although perhaps causing him considerable annoyance and much expenditure of money.

The first purpose of Commodore Preble, so it seemed likely, was to effect the release of the *Philadelphia's* crew and such other Americans as were held in captivity or slavery; but up to this time the nearest approach we had come to the desired end was that the Bashaw had reduced his ransom price to five hundred dollars—a proposition which could not be entertained by those representing the United States after they had come so far to enforce their demands.

If the boys and younger seamen aboard our ship discussed the situation, arriving at the conclusion that apparently little had been done toward accomplishing the purpose for which we were sent, it can readily be understood that our elders, those who

counted themselves to be well versed in such matters, did not hold silent.

Save when one or another of the officers were within earshot, the old shellbacks had wordy wrangles with each other concerning what should or should not be done, and although they differed on nearly every point, all of them united in much the same verdict as we younger ones had arrived at.

To remain at arms' length, so to speak, pitching into the town bombs which would not explode, capturing now and then a gunboat that was of little service, and killing and wounding no more than we ourselves lost, was little better than the frittering away of time, paying a goodly price for the dry husk.

Amid all the wordy warfare no one ventured to make complaint against the will or ability of our commander, or those next him in command, particularly of Captain Decatur.

The crew united in believing that those officers would lead us wheresoever men might, reckoning not the cost, so that something should be accomplished; but it was the method with which we found fault.

Then, on the morning of the 28th, as if in answer to all their arguments and all their complaints, it was

noised about that a grand assault was to be made upon the Tripolitan town and shipping.

The guard had reported the substance of such conversation as he had heard in the cabin, while the officers were in consultation with the commodore, declaring that at last were we, so soon as the wind should prove friendly, to come as near our piratical foes as they would allow, and from that moment all was excitement on the gun-deck.

CHAPTER XVI.

BOMBARDING.

BECAUSE of the fact that Seth and I had little to do in that which follows from the 28th of August until the 3d of September, save such duties as would naturally be expected from a frigate's boys, and were in no particular danger at any time, although we may have fancied such to be the case, I am disposed to set down here what another has written concerning the two bombardments which occurred.

As in other cases already mentioned, we knew very little of our own knowledge regarding the work done, or results arrived at, and therefore can best describe the situation by using the words of an officer who was closely in touch with all that took place.

His story of our battering at the door of Tripoli is much as follows, save where I have added certain matters with which Seth or I was familiar:—

“The weather proving very fine and the wind favorable, on the 28th Commodore Preble determined to

make a more vigorous assault on the town and batteries than any which had preceded it, and his dispositions were taken accordingly.

“The gunboats and bombards requiring so many men to manage them, the *Constitution* and the small vessels had been compelled to go into action short of hands, in the previous affairs. To obviate this difficulty, the *John Adams* had been kept before the town, and a portion of her officers and crew, and nearly all her boats, were put in requisition on the present occasion.

“Captain Chauncey himself, with about seventy of his people, went on board the flagship, and all the boats of the squadron were hoisted out and manned. The bombards were crippled and could not be brought into service,—a circumstance that probably was of no great consequence, on account of the badness of the materials they were compelled to use. These two vessels, with the *Scourge*, transports, and *John Adams*, were anchored well off at sea, not being available in the contemplated cannonading.

“Everything being prepared, a little after midnight the following gunboats proceeded to their stations:—

No. 1. Captain Somers.

No. 2. Lieutenant Gordon.

- No. 3. Mr. Brooks, master of the *Argus*.
- No. 4. Captain Decatur.
- No. 5. Lieutenant Lawrence.
- No. 6. Lieutenant Wadsworth.
- No. 7. Lieutenant Crane.
- No. 9. Lieutenant Thorpe.

“They were divided into two divisions as before, Captain Decatur having become the superior officer, however, by his recent promotion.

“About three o’clock in the morning the gunboats advanced close to the rocks at the entrance of the harbor, covered by the *Siren*, Captain Stewart; *Argus*, Captain Hull; *Vixen*, Captain Smith; *Nautilus*, Lieutenant Reed; and *Enterprise*, Lieutenant Commandant Robinson, and accompanied by all the boats of the squadron.

“Here they anchored, with springs on their cables, and commenced a cannonade on the enemy’s shipping, castle, and town. As soon as the day dawned, the *Constitution* weighed and stood in toward the rocks, under a heavy fire from the batteries, Fort English, and the castle.”

It must be understood that Seth and I had very little to do. We were not called upon to man the boats, since only oarsmen were wanted, and we could

not be expected to perform the work of men at such a task.

We overhung the open port, however, craning our necks to see all that might be taking place, and on the alert for a call from any of the officers. Understanding that we might get ourselves into serious trouble if we failed to appear, by reason of not hearing the summons, whenever our names were called, we joined forces with Joe Foster, and took turns standing watch: one lad remaining near the forward ladder while the other two gazed out over the sea.

By changing sentinels every fifteen minutes, it was possible for all three to view the scene without danger of neglecting duty.

We believed, as did the majority of the crew, that on this day we would run the piratical fleet down, and some even fancied that a landing would be made to attack the walled city; therefore, when the frigate was gotten under way, and the men called to quarters, our hearts beat fast and loud, for it surely appeared as if now was come the time when we would take part in a veritable battle, instead of standing off at long range.

It is with shame that I set down the fact of my return to cowardice the moment it appeared as if

danger was menacing. Try as I might, I could not repress that certain fluttering in my breast which told me I was being attacked with timorousness; but I fought sturdily against it, succeeding so well that neither Seth nor Joe had any idea that I was nigh to showing the white feather.

The writer whose story is before me, and who sets it down so much more clearly than I could ever hope to do, says: "At this time the enemy's gunboats and galleys, thirteen in number, were closely and warmly engaged with the eight American boats, and the *Constitution*, ordering by signal the latter to retire, because their ammunition was nearly exhausted, delivered a heavy fire of round and grape on the former as she came up. One of the enemy's boats was soon sunk, two were run ashore to prevent them from meeting a similar fate, and the rest retreated."

No matter how cowardly a fellow might be, he could not feel any fear whatsoever in such an affair as we of the *Constitution* then engaged.

It was as if a single glance at the frigate was sufficient to send the enemy flying shoreward, and our broadsides were so heavy and frequent that they really did not get an opportunity to reply to them.

It was much like standing behind a stone wall and

pelting with rocks a fellow about half your size ; but in this case the fellow was a villanous pirate whom it would be a service to the world generally to kill.

If we could have poured such broadsides into the town at so short a range, I'll answer for it that the Americans in prison there would have been speedily released, and his high mightiness, the Bashaw, brought to our terms.

Although we knew it would be impossible to come very near the city, all hands of us set up the wildest shouts of joy when the gallant old frigate ran as near inshore as the rocks would permit, and from that moment I gave more heed to serving Master Cutbush with ammunition than to the possibility that a Turkish bullet might come aboard to my injury.

As the story-writer sets down : “ The *Constitution* now continued to stand on until she had run in within musket-shot of the mole, when she brought to, and opened upon the town, batteries, and castle. Here she lay three-quarters of an hour, pouring in a fierce fire, with great effect, until, finding that all the small vessels were out of gun-shot, she hauled off.”

The gentleman may well say that we poured in a fierce fire. I had never believed that those great guns could be worked so rapidly until I saw the crew

sending shot after shot ashore, as intimation that it would be wise for the Bashaw to release such Americans as he held in prison or in slavery.

Every man, and boy too for that matter, was stripped to the waist, and before the firing had continued half an hour we were so begrimed with smoke and powder that one would have said that we were a crew of negroes.

The gun-deck was almost stifling with smoke from the burning powder; the guns became so heated that one could hardly lay his naked hand on them, and yet our fellows rammed home charge after charge as rapidly as the work might be done, thinking all the while that every shot sent into the city might serve in some slight degree to effect the release of comrades who, on shore, were doubtless listening eagerly and with bursting hearts to these messages from their countrymen.

We boys never thought of danger, fatigue, or discomfort. We had simply in mind the knowledge that it was possible for us to do some small part of this fierce work, and we ran here and there, bent only on serving the gunners to the best of our ability, hoping most fervently meanwhile that Commodore Preble might find some way of bringing us yet nearer the town.

I could, at that moment, have laughed at the idea of being afraid of Turkish shot or shell.

I was seized with a frenzy such as I find it impossible to describe, and no peril would have seemed too great if, by incurring it, we might have come to a hand-to-hand fight with those ruffians within the walls of the city.

It was said later: "About seven hundred heavy shot were hove at the enemy in this attack, besides a good many from the chase-guns of the small vessels. The enemy sustained much damage and lost many men. The American brigs and schooners were a good deal injured aloft, as was the *Constitution*. Although the latter ship was so long within range of grape, many of which shot struck her, she had not a man hurt! Several of her shrouds, back-stays, trusses, spring-stays, chains, lifts, and a great deal of running rigging was shot away, and yet her hull escaped with very trifling injuries.

"A boat belonging to the *John Adams*, under the orders of Mr. John Orde Creighton, one of the ship's master's mates, was sunk by a double-headed shot which killed three men and badly wounded a fourth, but the officer and the rest of the boat's crew were saved.

“In this attack a heavy shot from the American gunboats struck the castle, passed through a wall, and rebounding from the opposite side of the room, fell within six inches of Captain Bainbridge, who was in bed at the moment, and covered him with stones and mortar, from under which he was taken, considerably hurt, by his own officers.

“More injury was done to the town in this attack than in either of the others, the shot appearing to have told on many of the houses.”

We on the gun-deck hardly knew the *Constitution* had been struck until after we hauled off, and then it was as if we were half wrecked in our rigging, as one saw the severed ends of ropes swinging in the breeze, or took note of the splintered spars.

However, as has been set down, not a man among us was injured, and when we had returned to our station just outside the harbor, the sea-lawyers of the gun-deck set their tongues to wagging over the question as to whether we had gained enough in this bombardment to repay us for the labor and ammunition expended.

And for four days following, these old barnacles went over and over again all the incidents of the attack until one grew sick with hearing the same

words, and my heart rejoiced when the news came forward that we were about to make another and yet more spirited attack.

I have not set down in that interval anything which Seth or I did, and, in fact, it would prove dry reading.

We two lads were called upon for nothing save our regular tasks, and as for holding private converse with each other, it would have been well-nigh impossible, for at whatever part of the ship a fellow might go, it was only to run upon a knot of seamen discussing the situation, as if success or failure depended upon their jawing.

To Seth and me it seemed as if this next attack was but a portion of the one just ended, and since we had been in no particular danger at that time, we absolutely forgot to be frightened when preparations were making for another advance into the harbor.

Again is it wisest for me to use the words of others rather than my own, which fail oftentimes in expressing all I have in mind: "On the 3d of September, everything being ready, at half-past two, the signal was made for the small vessels to advance.

"The enemy had improved the time as well as the

Americans, and they had raised three of their own gunboats that had been sunk in the affairs of the 3d and of the 28th of August. These craft were now added to the rest of their flotilla.

“The Tripolitans had also changed their mode of fighting. Hitherto, with the exception of the affair of the 3d, their galleys and gunboats had lain either behind the rocks, in positions to fire over them, or at the opening between them, and they consequently found themselves to leeward of the frigate and small American cruisers, the latter invariably choosing easterly winds to advance with, as they would permit crippled vessels to retire.

“On the 3d of August, the case excepted, the Turks had been so roughly treated by being brought hand to hand, when they evidently expected nothing more than a cannonade, that they were not disposed to venture again outside the harbor.

“On the 3d of September, however, the day at which we have now arrived, their plan of defence was judiciously altered. No sooner was it perceived that the American squadron was in motion, with a fresh design to annoy them, than their gunboats and galleys got under way, and worked up to windward until they had gained a station on the weather side

of the harbor, directly under the fire of Fort English, as well as of a new battery that had been erected a little to the westward of the latter.

“This disposition of the enemy’s force required a corresponding change on the part of the Americans. The bombards were directed to take stations and to commence throwing their shells, while the gunboats, in two divisions, commanded as usual by Captains Decatur and Somers, and covered by the brigs and schooners, assailed the enemy’s flotilla.

“This arrangement separated the battle into two distinct parts, leaving the bomb-vessels very much exposed to the fire of the castle, the mole, crown, and other batteries.

“The Tripolitan gun-boats and galleys stood the fire of the American flotilla until the latter had got within reach of musketry, when they retreated. The assailants now separated, some of the gun-boats following the enemy, and pouring in their fire, while the others, with the brigs and schooners, cannonaded Fort English.

“In the meanwhile, perceiving that the bombards were suffering severely from the undisturbed fire of the guns to which they were exposed, Commodore Preble ran down in the *Constitution* quite near the

rocks and within the bomb-vessels, and brought to. Here the frigate opened as warm a fire as probably ever came out of the broadside of a single-decked ship, and in a position where seventy heavy guns could bear upon her."

Up to this time we lads had not been called upon for extra duty, and, Master Cutbush being in a fine humor, owing to the prospect of heavy fighting before him, I had good opportunity for seeing all that took place within my line of vision as I stood at the port of No. 8 gun.

It was when the frigate was brought around to run toward Fort English that the old gunner said to me, in the tone of one who believes himself on the verge of some great pleasure:—

"I reckon you won't have much chance for loafin' from this out, lad, till the action's over. If I'm not mistaken, we'll be called upon to give the heathen much the same dose as was given the last time we paid 'em a visit, an' we're the boys to do it."

What a roar went up from the eager men when we brought to within short range, and word was passed to fire at will!

Once more all hands stripped for the work; we boys were ordered to jump to it for all we were

worth; every man at the guns plied rammer or sponge as if his own life depended upon quickness of movement, and in the merest fraction of time, after the command had been given, the gun-deck was shrouded in smoke, and reverberating with the reports of the cannon.

The frigate trembled incessantly; one shook as with a palsy whether he ran to and fro, or stood still; and poor timorous me never so much as realized that all this while the pirates might be hurling shot and shell at us, as we were at them.

Once I forgot myself entirely in the heat of battle, and, as before, I should have yelled for very joy had it been announced that we were to land for a hand-to-hand encounter with the villanous Tripolitans.

During that short time I came to understand how timorous men may be mistaken for heroes. It is because they forget themselves entirely, and are excited by the fumes of the powder.

But read what we did, as set down by one who can describe such things as they should be described: "The whole harbor, in the vicinity of the town, was glittering with the spray of the *Constitution's* shot, and each battery, as usual, was silenced as soon as it drew her attention.

“After throwing more than three hundred round shot, besides grape and canister, the frigate hauled off, having previously ordered the other vessels to retire from action, by signal.

“The gunboats, in this affair, were an hour and fifteen minutes engaged, in which time they threw four hundred round shot, besides grape and canister. Lieutenant Trippe, who had so much distinguished himself, and who had received so many wounds a month previous, resumed the command of No. 6 for this occasion.

“Lieutenant Morris, of the *Argus*, was in charge of No. 3. All the small vessels suffered, as usual, aloft, and the *Argus* sustained some damage in her hull.

“The *Constitution* was so much exposed in the attack that her escape can only be attributed to the weight of her own fire. It had been found, in previous affairs, that so long as this ship could play upon a battery, the Turks could not be kept at their guns; and it was chiefly while she was veering, or tacking, that she suffered.

“But, after making allowance for the effect of her own cannonade, and for the imperfect gunnery of the enemy, it creates wonder that a single frigate could

lie opposed to more than double her own number of available guns, and these, too, principally, of heavier metal, while they were protected by stone walls.

“On this occasion the frigate was not supported by the gunboats at all, and she became the sole object of the enemy’s aim after the bombards had withdrawn.

“As might have been expected, the *Constitution* suffered more than in any of the previous affairs, though she received nothing larger than grape in her hull. She had three shells through her canvas, one of which rendered the maintopsail momentarily useless. Her sails, standing and running rigging, were also much cut with shot.

“Captain Chauncey, of the *John Adams*, and a party of his officers and crew, served in the *Constitution* again on this day, and were of essential use. Indeed, in all the service which succeeded her arrival, the commander, officers, and crew of the *John Adams* were actively employed, though the ship herself could not be brought before the enemy for the want of gun-carriages.

“The bombards, having been much exposed, suffered accordingly. Number 1 was so much crippled as to be unable to move without being towed, and was

near sinking when she was got to the anchorage. Every shroud she had was shot away.

“Commodore Preble expressed himself satisfied with the good conduct of every man in the squadron. All the vessels appeared to have been well conducted and efficient in their several stations.

“Of the effect of the shells, there is no account to be relied on, though it is probable that, as usual, many did not explode. There is no doubt, however, that the bombs were well directed, and that they fell into the town.”

CHAPTER XVII.

“COUSIN RICHARD.”

SURELY Commodore Preble had given good proof that he was not an officer prone to idling away his time.

He had made five attacks upon Tripoli within a month, not counting the destruction of the *Philadelphia*, which should really be reckoned as the boldest adventure of them all.

Although our gun-deck orators and sea-lawyers had argued that nothing was being accomplished, so far as the reduction of the town and liberation of the prisoners were concerned, they one and all grieved because our commodore was soon to be superseded in command.

They argued, and I have come to learn that old shellbacks will spend much breath in argument, however trifling or important the subject under discussion, that even though nothing material may have been accomplished, Commodore Preble was the

one man above all others to give the Tripolitan pirates such a lesson as they needed.

I am not to be understood as stating that any of our people had aught to say against Commodore Barron. All the old sea-dogs knew him as a skilled seaman and a good officer.

When the *John Adams* first brought the news that the American Congress had appointed him to the command of the Mediterranean Squadron to supersede Commodore Preble because of certain state reasons, and not that our commander was humiliated thereby, every gun-deck philosopher insisted that it was a mistake; but with all their insistence the fact remained.

I might fill an ordinary book with the discussions which ensued, and yet when it was done there would remain to be said only that Commodore Preble must give up the command as soon as the forty-four-gun frigate *President* should arrive.

Even though we had seemed to accomplish little, the continual battering against the door of Tripoli must eventually make some impression, and we, for by this time I am warranted in counting Seth and myself among the crew, were burning with the desire to be in at the death.

However, it is not for a common seaman to say where he shall be at any particular time, and talk as long as they might, the people of the *Constitution* could not change the plans mapped out by the Government of the United States insomuch as a single hair.

Although we little dreamed of it at the moment, it was destined that the days of Commodore Preble's command should be marked by disaster so great and so appalling as to daunt the spirits of the most valiant.

Before this last attack that I have set down, and which was the fifth, the carpenters had been at work on board the *Intrepid*, which, it must be remembered, was formerly the ketch *Mastico*, that craft used by us in the destruction of the *Philadelphia*.

No one gave any particular attention to this fact, first because the men only worked on board the ketch when there was nothing else to be done, and secondly, for the matter had been considered seriously by the gun-deck gossips, it was supposed no more than ordinary repairs were being made.

It was on the evening of the 3d of September, when, the action having come to an end, the frigate returned to an anchorage, and a goodly portion of

her crew were set to work repairing damages, that we began to understand something extraordinary was in the wind.

Now, as has been set down, the *Constitution* suffered considerably in this last action. Both standing and running rigging were much cut by shot and shell, the canvas was torn, and we had no less than fourteen wounds in the hull made by grape.

As a matter of course it was necessary that all this be repaired without loss of time, because at any hour the wind might haul around with such force as to necessitate our putting to sea, and it was by no means improbable that the Tripolitans would take it into their heads to turn the tables,—instead of allowing us to make the attacks, they might try something of the same kind themselves.

Therefore, as I have said, the first duty to be considered was that of putting the frigate into a seaworthy condition, and it was naturally believed by all that the entire crew would be set about the task, regardless of every other necessity.

Commodore Preble was not the man to take any such chances as that of allowing a single night to pass before the ship had been restored to her former condition, and therefore the greatest surprise came



“WE RAN HERE AND THERE, BENT ONLY ON SERVING THE GUNNERS.”

upon us all when no more than two-thirds of our crew were ordered to bind up the good ship's wounds, while the remainder were mustered amidships for what at the time was spoken of as “other duties.”

Among these last was Master Cutbush, Barry Thomas, Seth, and myself, and while we stood there in the darkness every tongue was wagging over the, to us, singular fact that within a few moments from the time an action had been ended, some other enterprise appeared to be in contemplation.

Many were the speculations indulged in. One man suggested that a boat expedition would probably be sent out, with the idea that we might catch the enemy napping by returning so soon.

Another believed there was some cutting out to be done while the Turkish fleet was partially disabled, and yet more of the party honestly confessed that they were unable to so much as guess what might be on hand.

Then it was that, to the surprise of all, the *Intrepid* was towed as near as she could lay with safety, and when this had been done we idle ones were ordered into the boats to board her.

“It's a cuttin' out expedition, lads,” Master Cutbush said, with an air of exceeding wisdom, “an'

they have given us that old hooker in which to do the work. Now, I'm not one who turns up his nose at any kind of duty; but this knockin' around Tripoli harbor in a craft like yonder ketch, isn't to my likin'."

The old man indulged in a long fit of grumbling, which it is not necessary to set down here, and did not cease his complaints until we were on board, where it could be plainly seen that all his speculations or imaginings were false.

Whatever it might be the commodore's intention to do with the ketch, any such work as using her to cut out one of the enemy's vessels on that night was not contemplated.

As soon as we had been put on board, the boats were ordered to return to the frigate to be laden with certain queer stores, a goodly portion of which made up the odd cargo.

Until the men should return with whatsoever was to be sent on board, we, having been set about no duty, were at liberty to look around us at will, and then could be seen what the carpenters had been doing.

In the hold of the ketch, just forward of the mainmast, had been built a small room extending from keelson to deck, and a similar contrivance was found

aft, blocking up what had formerly been the cabin. Between the two ran a trunk, or tube, formed of boards, and measuring perhaps two feet square.

It was a most singular contrivance, and, puzzle their brains over it as they might, the eldest of our seamen could come to no satisfactory conclusion regarding the purpose of these structures which had destroyed the ketch for a transport or gun-vessel.

Master Cutbush, with two or three old cronies, captains of guns, marched solemnly from one of these structures to the other, tapping the connecting tube or trunk to make certain it formed a passage between the two, and shaking their heads sagely as if to give us youngsters the impression of being thoroughly familiar with such contrivances, but we who watched them were not deceived; we understood full well that they were thoroughly puzzled.

The old barnacles were yet nosing around, trying to make out the meaning of it all, when the first boat load of material was brought from the *Constitution*, others following in rapid succession, until even a lad like myself could gain a very good idea of why the *Intrepid* had been thus transformed into a sort of floating storehouse.

When, nearabout morning, the men detailed for such

purpose had finished their work of transshipment, there was on board the ketch above an hundred barrels of gunpowder in bulk, which had been put into the magazine forward of the mainmast.

It was packed down as solidly as was consistent with safety, and over the top, just below the deck, was laid a flooring of boards, on which was stowed many round shot, bits of old iron, and a ton or more of kent ledge, or what landsmen would call pig-iron, which had been used for ballast.

Directly above this magazine, on the deck, were placed fifty thirteen-and-one-half-inch shells, a hundred nine-inch shells, and any odds and ends of metal that could be picked up aboard the vessels of the squadron.

Now it was evident to all that this enormous quantity of powder had been placed in the stout magazine with the shot and shell above it, to form what might be called a floating mine, or an "infernal machine," and, as a matter of course, to be used against the enemy; but how, we as yet were in ignorance.

After this had been done, and the shot and shell secured by timbers spiked to the deck, so that they might not roll off when the ketch was tossed about by the sea, we laid a train of powder in the wooden tube

of which I have spoken, running through it a length of port-fire, or fuse.

The structure in the stern was filled with splinters of light wood, oakum saturated with oil, tar, rags, and, in fact, everything which would serve to make a quick and fierce blaze.

Not until daylight had we come to the end of our labors, and when all hands of us went on board the *Constitution* for breakfast, it can well be imagined what a chattering and palavering ensued.

Even Master Cutbush did not consider it beneath his dignity to be greatly excited by the scheme of sending this floating mine in among the enemy's fleet, as was unquestionably the commodore's intention, and all the old sea-lawyers decided that it must work great havoc ; but as to how the machine might be gotten into the midst of the fleet was a question on which they were sadly divided.

“ It will serve to blow up the whole town as well as the craft,” the captain of No. 4 gun said, with the air of one who defies contradiction.

“ Ay, that it will,” Master Cutbush was pleased to agree. “ But how the craft may be run in is more 'n I can figger.”

“ Some of our people will volunteer to sail her,” Seth

suggested, and one would have supposed from the contemptuous looks with which his proposition was received, that he had made the most foolish remark possible.

“When the moon is brought down to be cut up for green cheese, you’ll find sailormen manning a craft like that, but not before,” Master Cutbush said curtly, and his comrades wagged their heads as if to say his opinion was also theirs.

It did indeed seem to me out of the question that any one would attempt to carry the ketch into the harbor, loaded as she was, for a single shot would serve to set off the explosives, and certainly no man on board of her might escape death, for she would be torn into a thousand fragments.

Besides all that, the *Intrepid* was a dull sailing vessel, and, while standing through the western passage as she must to come into the most advantageous position, it would be necessary to run directly in the face of several batteries, all of which, it was to be supposed, would open fire upon her at once.

Afterward, she must run close among the gunboats and galleys of the enemy until arriving at a point decided upon.

Allowing that all this might be done without the mine’s having been exploded by the fire of the Tri-

politan forces, how would it be possible for her crew, in case she carried any, to escape?

Having come to this point in their discussions, the men of the *Constitution* decided beyond question that it was in the commodore's mind to wait until the wind was in the right direction, and then send her through the channel at random, having fired a slow match, trusting that the explosion would occur at the proper moment.

Having thus settled the question while eating breakfast, the surprise, and I might almost say the consternation, of our people was overpowering when one of the marines came forward with the information that Captain Somers, Seth's cousin Richard, had volunteered to take charge of the venture, and Lieutenant Wadsworth, our lieutenant of the *Constitution*, offered himself as the second in command.

The marine made the statement so emphatically that we could but believe he had heard such conversation in the cabin as warranted his making it,—that ten men would be allowed to go with these officers to aid in working the *Intrepid* to her position in the harbor, and then pull back the two boats which were to be towed astern.

I wish it might be possible for me to set down here

so plainly that he who reads could see before him the picture which was presented on the gun-deck when this news had been imparted.

During what seemed to me five minutes, the men forgot to eat, to smoke, or to continue whatsoever they were doing at the moment the marine came forward; but all gazed in open-mouthed astonishment, one at the other, asking with their eyes if it could be possible such a hazardous venture was to be made.

Then, when the tongues were loosened, the confusion was great, each man venturing an opinion without waiting to hear what his neighbor might think regarding the affair, and there was such a din that I was forced to put my mouth close to Seth's ear as I shouted: —

“Think you Master Cutbush will believe it necessary to shove us into this venture, in order that he may have further proof we are deserving of promotion?”

Seth shook his head violently, a look of alarm coming over his face at the bare thought that such a proposition might be made to us, and my heart began to quiver, as it always did when I was about to be attacked by cowardice.

It was while the tumult was at its height that our

news-gatherer, the marine, came running back with word that the *Intrepid* would be sent in on this same evening.

There was a good leading wind from the eastward, the clouds were gathering in promise of a dark night, and it was not well that our floating mine remain among the squadron any longer than was absolutely necessary, lest by some misadventure she be exploded, and work upon us the damage we intended should be done to the Tripolitans.

"Then it is likely volunteers will be called for soon," Master Cutbush said, after this latest news had been digested, and I fancied he glanced toward Seth and me, although why boys should be needed in such an enterprise was more than I could say.

However, if the old gunner had demanded it, I should have felt forced to offer my services; but it so chanced, fortunately, that there was no opportunity for us to volunteer or to hang back.

The work of repairing the injuries inflicted by the Tripolitans upon the frigate was well-nigh finished at noon, and while the men were lounging around on deck, after the noonday meal had been served, word was passed for them to gather in the waist.

We knew, without being told, that the moment had

arrived when those who were to distinguish themselves in this most hazardous venture might have an opportunity for volunteering.

When we were assembled where it would be possible to hear all that might be said from the quarter-deck, Mr. Robinson made his appearance, and after stating what we already knew regarding the purpose for which the *Intrepid* had been converted into a mine, he said:—

“It has been decided that two of the best boats in the fleet, one of six oars from our frigate, and one of four oars from the *Siren*, be sent in with the ketch to bring off Captain Somers and Lieutenant Wadsworth when their work has been done.

“According to that decision, only six men may be allowed to volunteer from the *Constitution*, and the commodore has, through me, called upon you to know who they shall be. Remember that this venture is as hazardous as it well can be; therefore let no man step forward without considering all the chances. There can be no imputation of cowardice upon those who refuse. Take plenty of time to turn the matter over, and then if there be six among you of the mind to share in the enterprise, step forward.”

It was as if Mr. Robinson had no sooner ceased

speaking than every man and boy of us advanced, Seth and I among the rest, even though we were far from wanting to go aboard that floating mine.

“It will please the commodore, as it does me, to know that all of you are ready for this most dangerous enterprise; but I repeat that no more than six, and they must be unmarried men, are allowed to set out from the frigate. Now, how many will step back?”

Not a man moved, and Mr. Robinson continued, with a smile:—

“The boys of the ship are not to be counted in this call for volunteers. We want the sturdiest and ablest seamen among you.”

It can well be fancied how my heart leaped at those words.

Here, at all events, was an opportunity to risk one’s life in which I would not be allowed to take part, however much Master Cutbush might desire it, and yet I held a place in the line, determined to show my willingness, particularly since there was no fear my services would be accepted.

Well, seeing that he could not select any six from among all of us without laying himself open to a charge of favoritism, Mr. Robinson settled the matter

by declaring that we might arrange it among ourselves by lot, and the selection was to be made within the hour.

After this we were sent below, and during ten minutes or more the greatest confusion ensued.

Every man who came within the requirements as set forth by our officer advanced reasons why he should be preferred above the others, and insisted that there was no reason to cast lots when the choice might readily be made, provided the speaker was allowed to make one of the number.

Before the tumult could be quelled the master-at-arms was forced to call upon his assistants for aid, and compelled to make the direst threats unless the crew ceased the uproar without loss of time.

At one moment it seemed as if his efforts would be vain, and then the captains of the guns took it upon themselves to restore order, and proceeded to business in true landsman's fashion.

Master Cutbush, as the oldest and most experienced seaman among them, was chosen to conduct the affair, and under his management matters went on exceedingly smooth.

The men were drawn up in four lines, and the gun-deck scoured from end to end for paper to be cut

in as many squares as there were sailors coming within Mr. Robinson's requirements.

Seth and I were chosen to prepare what served as ballots, and after cutting as many as were needed, we wrote on six of them the word “go.” The remainder were left blank.

“It might as well be the word ‘death,’” I whispered to Seth while we were thus engaged. “There is in my mind the belief that he who leaves the squadron on such a venture will never return,” and my comrade replied gravely:—

“It is well for you and me, Dick Cutbush, that boys are not wanted on the ketch, otherwise I am thinking Jacob Cutbush would have sent us aboard whether the remainder of the crew were willing or not, so eager is he to see us put ourselves wherever danger threatens.”

I would not dwell long upon this scene, because afterward it came to me much as if I had a certain share in the death of those who set out from the frigate.

It is enough that I say we prepared the ballots according to the old gunner's instructions, with six bearing the fatal word, and the remainder blank.

Those slips of paper were put into my cap, and I was forced to stand out where every one might see

me, mixing them up until there could be no possibility I knew the location of those squares which entitled the brave men to go without loss of time to their death.

When all this had been done to Master Cutbush's satisfaction, the seamen were called upon to march in line around where I stood, each being allowed to draw a single slip from the cap, and threatened that if any person attempted to gain an advantage by taking two or more ballots, such an one should be reported aft for punishment.

The first man to draw what he was pleased to term a "lucky ticket" was Barry Thomas, who set up a shout of triumph which could be heard from one end of the frigate to the other as he waved the tiny square of paper above his head, and danced a hornpipe of rejoicing.

In due time the cap was emptied.

The six devoted seamen had been selected, and as they stood apart by themselves, radiant with triumph, every messmate envied them.

In fact, cowardly though I was, there came into my mind something like regret because I could not be of the number, although it is certain that I would have been shaken with fear if such a prospect stared me in the face.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FLOATING MINE.

THERE was little done during the remainder of this day, save such as was connected with the final preparations of the floating mine.

Officers as well as men could think of nothing except the tremendous venture which was to be made, and the six of our crew who were to share in the enterprise were treated by their messmates like distinguished visitors, during the short time they stayed with us.

To set down here all the speculations which we indulged in, or the many yarns told by the seamen, whether true or false, regarding ventures similar to the one proposed, would be to lose sight of the story entirely, and I question whether one, even had he been able, might not have spent months in such task.

Therefore it is I shall pass over all that took place on board the frigate until nearabout seven o'clock in the evening, when signals were made from the

Constitution that everything was in readiness for the hazard.

The fastest boat belonging to the frigate had been lowered into the water, and six oars selected by the carpenters, from the stock on hand, with jealous care lest there should be a flaw in any of them. Six stout blades they were, and pronounced fit by the two or three hundred men who insisted upon making certain they were the best to be had.

Then the half-dozen of our number who had drawn the fatal slips of paper, headed by Barry Thomas, embarked with the air of men who are about to take in some long-anticipated pleasure.

Almost at the same time we could see the four-oared boat pull away from the *Siren*, and knew that her portion of the *Intrepid's* crew had been sent to take their stations.

These two craft came alongside the floating mine, one to port and the other to starboard, almost at the same instant, and, watching from the frigate's rail, we could see the brave fellows advance across the deck and shake hands with each other, much as I fancy gladiators in the olden times saluted before the battle began.

Captain Somers had paid a visit to the *Constitution*

shortly before our men were called upon to draw lots, and Seth watched keenly during the remainder of the day, hoping to have one more friendly word with his relative before the venture was made; but in vain.

The captain had evidently settled with Commodore Preble all the details of the business, and was, perchance, closely engaged in putting matters shipshape aboard his own vessel.

Our lieutenant, Mr. Wadsworth, was sent aboard the *Intrepid* in the captain's gig, and the eight men called upon to do the rowing primped and fluttered on the gun-deck for fully half an hour before they were to perform the task, in order that every man jack of them might be gotten up in the most dandified style to do honor to our officer who was, so to speak, to represent us when the floating mine was exploded.

As Mr. Wadsworth went down the gangway the officers gathered on the quarter as if a visitor of distinction was taking his departure, and the crew, from the youngest boy to the oldest seaman, lined the rail, or took their stations upon the yards as though dressing ship, that our appreciation of his bravery might be shown.

As if timing his movements with those of his second officer, Captain Somers put off from the *Nauti-*

lus at the same moment our lieutenant went down the gangway, and when the frigate's gig returned, the oarsmen reported that Mr. Israel, one of the schooner's midshipmen, had been found secreted on the ketch in order that he might make sure of accompanying the party.

At first, Captain Somers was minded to turn him back, because it had been agreed that but ten seamen and two officers should set out; but the young midshipman showed so much pluck and begged so hard that he was finally allowed to remain.

It was a solemn moment for all in the fleet, when this little company of thirteen proceeded to get the floating mine under way, and at the same instant signals were set aboard the *Constitution* for the *Siren*, *Argus*, *Vixen*, and *Nautilus* to convoy the *Intrepid* to the entrance of the western channel.

It was nearabout eight o'clock, as Master Cutbush afterward declared, that the *Intrepid* and the vessels which were to accompany her stood away for Tripoli, and, the dusk of the evening having gathered, we of the frigate soon lost sight of the craft and her crew whom we were never to see again.

Because of the fact that we could distinguish nothing more until suddenly the heavens were lighted

up by a great glare, the very sea seemed to quiver, and we heard a resounding noise, as of an explosion, it is best I give here the account of what follows as written by an able officer, who gathered all that could ever be learned after many weeks of research.

The *Nautilus*, Captain Somer's own vessel, accompanied the ketch close in, but on reaching a position where there was danger of her creating suspicion by being seen, she hauled off to take her station, like the other small vessels, near the rocks, in order to pick up the retreating boats.

The last person of the squadron who had any communication with Captain Somers was Mr. Washington Reed, the first lieutenant of his schooner, the *Nautilus*, who left him about nine o'clock. At that time all was calm, collected, and in order on board the floating mine.

The general uneasiness was increased by the circumstance that three Tripolitan gunboats lay near the inner end of the channel, and some of the last words of the experienced Decatur, before taking leave of his friend, was to caution him against these enemies.

The sea was covered with a dense haze, though the

stars were visible, and the last that may be said to have been seen of the *Intrepid* was the shadowy forms of her canvas as she steered slowly, but steadily, into the obscurity, where the eyes of the many anxious spectators fancied they could still trace her dim outline, most probably after it had totally disappeared.

When the *Intrepid* was last seen by the naked eye, she was not a musket-shot from the mole, standing directly for the harbor. To the last moment she appears to have been advancing. About this time the batteries began to fire. Their shot are said to have been directed toward every point where an enemy might be expected, and it is not improbable that some were aimed at the ketch.

There was an interval of intense, almost breathless expectation, interrupted only by the flashes and roar of the enemy's guns.

Then a fierce and sudden light illuminated the sea; a torrent of fire streamed upward, and a concussion followed that made the cruisers in the offing tremble from their trucks to their keels. This sudden blaze of light was followed by a darkness of twofold intensity, and the guns of the batteries became mute, as if annihilated.

Numerous shells were seen in the air, and some of them descended on the rocks, where they were heard to fall. The fuses were burning, and a few exploded, but much the greater part were extinguished in the water. The mast, too, had risen perpendicularly, with its rigging and canvas blazing, but the descent veiled all in night.

So sudden and tremendous was the eruption, and so intense the darkness which succeeded it, that it was not possible to ascertain the precise position of the ketch at the moment. In the glaring, but fleeting light, no person could say he had noted more than that the *Intrepid* had not reached the point at which she aimed. A few cries arose from the town, but the subsequent and deep silence that followed was more eloquent than any clamor.

If every eye had been watchful previous to the explosion, every eye now became doubly vigilant to discover the retreating boats. Men got over the sides of the vessels, holding lights and placing their ears near the water in the hope of detecting the sounds of muffled oars.

The gallant adventurers never reappeared. Hour after hour went by, until hope itself became exhausted. Occasionally a rocket gleamed in the dark-

ness, or a sullen gun was heard from the frigate as signals to the boats; but the eyes that should have seen the first were sightless, and the last tolled on the ears of the dead.

The three vessels assigned to that service hovered around the harbor until the sun rose, but few traces of the *Intrepid*, and nothing of her devoted crew, could be discovered. The wreck of the mast lay on the rocks near the western entrance, and here and there a fragment was visible nigh it. One of the largest of the enemy's gunboats was missing, and it was observed that two others, which appeared to be shattered, were being hauled upon the shore. The three that had lain across the entrance had disappeared.

It is now known that the bottom of the ketch afterward grounded on the north side of the rocks, near the round battery at the end of the mole, and as the wind was at the eastward, this renders it certain the explosion took place in the western entrance to the harbor, fully a quarter of a mile from the spot it was intended the ketch should reach.

In the wreck were found two mangled bodies, and four were picked up floating in the harbor or lodged on the shore. These were in the most shocking state

of mutilation, and though Captain Bainbridge and two of his companions were taken to see them, it was impossible to distinguish even the officers from the men. Six more bodies were found the day after the explosion, on the shore to the southward of the town, and a six-oared boat, with one in it, had drifted on the beach to the westward.

As there was but one body found in the boat, we are left to suppose it was that of the keeper. Of the four-oared boat there are no tidings; it was probably either destroyed by the explosion, or sunk by the falling fragments.

That Captain Somers was as capable of sacrificing himself, when there was an occasion for it, as any man who ever lived, is probably as true as it is certain that he would not destroy himself, and much less others, without sufficient reason. It has been supposed that the ketch was boarded by the enemy, and her resolute commander fired the train in preference to being taken.

From all the circumstances, however, it is the most rational opinion that the *Intrepid* was not intentionally blown up.

She was under fire at the time, and although it is improbable the enemy had any shot heated to repel

an attack so unexpected, a cold shot might easily have fired a magazine in the situation of that on the *Intrepid*. The deck of the ketch, moreover, was covered with loaded shells, and one of these might have been struck and broken.

Commodore Preble firmly believed that his officers blew themselves up, and it was also the general conjecture, in the squadron then before Tripoli, that such had been the fate of these bold adventurers.

One of three things seems to be highly probable: the ketch was either exploded by means of the enemy's shot, than which nothing was easier in the situation where she lay; the men may have accidentally fired the magazine while preparing to light the splinters below; or it was done intentionally in consequence of the desperate condition to which the party was reduced.

Of the three, after weighing all the circumstances, it is natural to believe that the first is the most reasonable, as it was certainly easier to cause a vessel like the *Intrepid*, with a hundred barrels of loose powder in her magazine, to explode by means of shot, than one like No. 8, which is known to have been blown up in this manner in the action of the 7th of August.

A sad and solemn mystery, after all our conjectures, must forever veil the fate of those fearless officers and their hardy followers. In whatever light we view the affair, they were the victims of that self-devotion which causes the seaman and soldier to hold his life in his hands, when the honor or interest of his country demands the sacrifice.

All that I have set down here regarding the terrible disaster has been, of course, the result of long research. Of my own knowledge I can only describe what took place on board the *Constitution* during that sad night.

One can well fancy that not a man or boy of the frigate went below after the ketch and the convoying vessels faded from our sight into the darkness.

No one attempted to converse with his neighbor; it was almost as if we dared not draw a long breath, lest by so doing we might drown some noise which should betoken what that brave party was doing.

I do not believe a single man of us forward moved three paces from where he stood when we lost sight of the fleet, until that sudden glare came in the sky, and the frigate was tossed up as if a submarine mine had been exploded beneath her keel.

We knew full well at the moment that the floating mine had been fired; but were far from dreaming of the result.

It was natural to suppose that Captain Somers had taken the *Intrepid* to the point agreed upon by himself and Commodore Preble, and the only question in our minds was as to whether any one had lost his life in the attempt.

Then rockets were sent up; guns were discharged at intervals that the boats might know the position of the frigate, if by any unforeseen circumstance they had been obliged to leave the harbor by the northerly entrance.

The schooners which had convoyed the ketch gave us no token that all was well. Hour after hour went by more slowly than I had ever believed time could drag.

Until the night was gone, no man suggested to his neighbor that perchance all that little party had perished; the thought was too terrible to be put into words, and we waited in silent suspense until the heart was sick with hope deferred.

Then came the light of day. We could see the schooners coming slowly from the entrance of the harbor, as if unwilling to leave the place, and from that moment no words were needed to tell us that the disaster had been complete.

Those old seamen who were ready to argue, and dis-

cuss, and quarrel over the lightest affairs, now held their peace, and if it became necessary for one to speak to his neighbor, it was in such a tone as is employed in the presence of the dead.

Finally, and it seemed as if a full week was passed since we saw her last, the *Siren* came to near at hand. A boat, with an officer in the stern-sheets, put off.

The report of the night's work, so far as known, was about to be made to the commodore; but we of the crew gained such information as could be told, even before our commanding officer heard it, for we overhung the rail, those in the rear scrambling upon the backs of the men in front, that we might see the crew of the boat.

Then, in a tone of awe, was repeated nothing save the fact that those who went into the harbor on board the *Intrepid* had failed to come back.

It was disaster so complete as to terrify one. To have lost thirteen men in action would have been trifling compared with it.

When we had learned that there was nothing to be told, Seth and I went away by ourselves, for it seemed as if the chill of death was upon us, and, sitting on the break of the forecastle deck, incapable

of speech, we gazed almost without seeing them, upon the little knots of men who gathered here and there to speak in whispers of the shipmates whose going out of the world was so mysterious, because there was none left to tell how the catastrophe came about.

Later in the day, when the seamen were more accustomed to the tragedy, if I may use such a term, they spoke freely concerning what had happened, and it was the belief of all that Captain Somers had deliberately brought about the destruction of himself and his men rather than fall into the hands of the enemy.

There were many among the crew, and chiefly those who had been foremost in jeering Seth because he had addressed the captain as "Cousin Richard," who took especial pains to approach the lad and speak him in a friendly manner, as if to atone for what had been spoken — as if to say that they had done a wrong in using the name of so brave a man to point a jest.

CHAPTER XIX.

PEACE.

THERE is very much more I might say regarding those brave fellows who sailed so gallantly and cheerfully into the harbor of Tripoli to meet their death, but I refrain from dwelling upon so sad a theme.

During the first two weeks after the disaster, we of the *Constitution's* crew spoke but little concerning the absence of our shipmates, for it was as if the chill of death yet lurked on the gun-deck; but after such time had passed, the brave fellows were to us as the greatest heroes this country ever had or could produce, and we gloried in bringing up as the subject of conversation this good deed or that generous action on the part of one or another, which was, to the minds of many of us, as if in such manner we held funeral services in their memory.

To Seth and me this blockading work had grown more monotonous than ever, and we longed most fervently to be relieved from it.

Tripoli was, in our eyes, simply a rendezvous for murderous and vile men of every kind, and during the evenings when the frigate cruised back and forth, we fancied the wraiths of those who had lost their lives on and off that blood-stained coast followed the ship on first this tack and then that, complaining because we had not avenged their taking off.

Fortunately for our peace of mind, however, there was soon to be a change, and I felt certain it would be for the better, no matter in what desperate straits we might find ourselves.

Twenty-four hours after the *Intrepid* vanished from our sight in the gloom, all the mortars, guns, shells, and round shot were taken out of the smaller vessels and stored aboard the frigate and the brigs.

Seth and I were wholly at a loss to understand the reason for such disarmament, and puzzled over the matter a full day before finding opportunity to ask Master Cutbush for an explanation.

The old gunner's manner toward us had changed completely since that fatal night.

I believe he realized that, but for the positive order that no boys be allowed to accompany the floating mine, he would have insisted on our going with the doomed party, and the thought of what might have

been, caused him to be exceedingly kind and gentle with us.

He soon gave us to understand why the smaller craft were being stripped of their ordnance, and with the explanation came relief to our heavy, timorous hearts.

“The stormy season is close at hand, lads,” the old man said, “an’ durin’ such time it is dangerous for shippin’ to remain on this coast. Once the on-shore wind sets in, we would be unable to make any attack, an’ unless the gunboats and bomb-vessels are sent away while the weather is favorable, they would of a certainty founder, or be driven ashore.”

“Do you mean that our squadron will draw off entirely?” Seth asked in surprise.

“That is as may be, lad. I’m inclined to the belief that the larger ships will continue the blockade to such an extent as may be possible; but for a while there’ll be no more attacks on the villanous pirates. Besides, after sendin’ away a full hundred barrels of powder, it stands to reason that we’re not overly well supplied with ammunition, an’ more must be had before we could make any great fist at a bombardment.”

“And will nothing else be done toward releasing our countrymen who are imprisoned over yonder?”

I asked, saddened by the thought that they could not be restored to liberty at once.

“It don’t stand to reason we can do much more this season. Commodore Preble has not failed to take advantage of every opportunity; but even the wind and the sea will soon be against us, an’ they are enemies which cannot well be overcome. The crew of the *Philadelphia*, as well as those who have been so many years in slavery, will remain yet a little longer; but the time is near at hand, lads, when we shall humble the pirates of this coast, and that you may set down as a fact.”

We soon had good proof that the first of Master Cutbush’s statements was correct.

Two days later the *John Adams*, *Siren*, *Nautilus*, *Enterprise*, and *Scourge* were ordered to take the bombards and gunboats in tow for the port of Syracuse.

The *Constitution*, *Argus*, and *Vixen* remained behind to maintain the blockade, and while Seth and I had no especial friends aboard any of the ships that had left the station, it seemed much as if we were abandoned by all the world.

We were left in our comparative desolation only three days, and then the *President*, bearing the broad pennant of Commodore Barron, hove in sight, with

the *Constellation* in company, and the word was passed from one end of the gun-deck to the other that our commodore was relieved from duty by the coming of this other commander.

From such moment until the matter was fully settled, the tongues of the old shellbacks were loosened, and the one topic of conversation was as to who would command the *Constitution* after Commodore Preble went away.

As a matter of fact, we lads, and every seaman and gunner might be counted with us, saw little or nothing of the officers aft, yet from the youngest to the oldest all felt uneasy and even distressed in mind by the knowledge that soon the frigate would be in the charge of another.

How I wished that my term of service had expired, so I might return home in the same ship that bore the commodore.

Both Seth and I felt as if Commodore Barron was the enemy of all on board, because he had simply obeyed orders in taking command of the squadron.

However, common seamen and boys have little to say regarding the management of a ship of war, else had our commodore remained, and it made absolutely no difference whatever in the situation whether we were disgruntled or pleased.

Forty-eight hours after the transfer of authority, two vessels loaded with wheat were cut off while trying to enter the harbor of Tripoli, the *Argus* doing all the work, and these prizes were sent to Malta, with the *Constitution* as convoy.

At this last port Commodore Preble took leave of the ship to sail for Syracuse on his way home, and to the delight of all our crew Captain Decatur came on board as captain in command of the frigate.

He was an officer whom we knew to be a brave man, and the old shellbacks wisely concluded that we need borrow no further trouble, so far as the handling of the frigate was concerned.

We returned to the blockading station, and before a month had passed Captain Decatur was given command of the *Congress*, while Captain Rodgers, who had commanded the last-named frigate, came on board the *Constitution*.

There is little more for me to tell concerning what Seth Gordon and I saw off the coast of Tripoli, for the stormy season was passed in the monotonous work of blockade duty, during which time we made no captures, and never a gun was fired at the stronghold of the pirates.

There came a decided change in our position, how-

ever, yet one concerning which I can say but little because of the fact that this yarn has already been spun to too long a length.

The first American ship which came out from the United States after Commodore Preble relinquished command of the squadron brought that which was of the greatest importance to Seth and me, although we had never so much as an inkling of it until twenty-four hours had passed, when, to our great surprise, one of the marines came with the order for us to report to Captain Rodgers in his cabin.

Such a summons as this frightened me so much that my knees shook until it was difficult to stand erect, and I am certain my face was as pale as Seth's.

We had never been further aft than the break of the deck. It was something so out of the ordinary routine for the captain of a frigate to hold speech with the boys on board that I felt positive we had, unwittingly, of course, committed some grave fault.

Master Cutbush was also considerably disturbed; but yet, as I learned afterward, there was a suspicion in his mind as to the reason for this unusual summons.

We hurried into our best shirts and trousers, for there was little time to spend in primping lest the captain be kept waiting, and as we left the gun-deck

a chorus of good wishes from the old shellbacks followed us.

It seemed to me as if some great misfortune threatened, and I had the greatest difficulty in making my way along the deck to the cabin entrance, where stood a marine on guard.

A moment later we were facing the captain, looking, I doubt not, much as we felt, like two culprits.

The commander began the interview by asking us a host of questions concerning ourselves. He seemed particularly desirous of knowing what kind of an education we had received, and although I blushed at being forced to admit that I had not taken such advantage as a lad should of my opportunities to gain knowledge, I was by no means an ignoramus.

When he had satisfied himself by actual trial that we could make a decent showing as mathematicians, were fairly good penmen, and had a general idea of other branches of study, he handed to each of us a bulky paper, folded twice, in such manner that we could not see what might be printed or written on it, saying as he did so:—

“In consideration of your bravery and devotion to duty on the occasion of the *Philadelphia's* destruction, your courage during the bombardment when

No. 8 gunboat was blown up, and the general good character given you by all the officers of the frigate, the Congress of the United States has promoted you to the rank of midshipmen, the same to date from August 7. You will take up your quarters aft immediately, and at once set about familiarizing yourselves with your new duties. Until we put in at Malta or Syracuse, you will be forced to get on as best you may without uniforms, but from that time on I shall expect you to dress as becomes your rank."

When the captain ceased speaking, I was in such a state of bewilderment as to hardly realize what he had been saying, and did not hear his command for us to follow him on deck.

Had Seth not plucked me by the sleeve I might have remained in the cabin staring stupidly at the folded paper in my hand, which proved to be a commission, properly signed, promoting Richard Cutbush, boy on board the frigate *Constitution*, to be midshipman, etc.

When we were standing on the quarter-deck just behind Captain Rodgers, I saw that the crew had been called aft, and my cheeks grew crimson with something very like shame at being forced to stand there with every man's eyes upon me.

Then it was that the commander read the order passed by the Congress regarding our two insignificant selves, and when he had finished, the crew sent up such a cheer as must have been heard even in the city of Tripoli.

Again Seth plucked me by the sleeve, else I might not have had sufficient wit to acknowledge the salute by a bow, and when it was all over — when the men had gone forward again — I stood like a simple, not knowing which way to turn.

The captain must have directed one of the midshipmen to take us in charge, for a young gentleman stepped forward in quite the same manner as if we had been his equals, inviting us to go below to our new quarters.

Of course it was necessary we bring our dunnage aft, and Mr. Wilson, he who had us in charge, would have sent one of the marines for our bags, but I made strong objections.

It seemed too much like putting on foolish airs, and after arguing the matter good-naturedly a few moments, the young gentleman said with a smile:—

“Very well, there is nothing to prevent your doing as you please; but I am told that Jacob Cutbush is an uncle to one of you, therefore I do not question

whether you or a marine will bring the dunnage aft."

I was not just certain as to his meaning; but soon came to understand it fully.

We went to the gundeck by the forward ladder, as usual; but immediately we were below, every man jack of the old shellbacks rose to his feet, bowing and scraping, never so much as venturing to speak.

"What is the matter, Master Cutbush," I began; but the old gunner interrupted me very quickly.

"I'm Jacob Cutbush, sir, if you'll excuse me for differin' with you."

I looked around quickly, thinking the old man was making sport of me; but never a man smiled.

"Seein's how all this has come upon you sudden-like, sir, perhaps you'll allow me to speak as I would have done this mornin' —"

"What's the matter with you?" I cried, convinced that he was jeering at me.

"You are now midshipmen on board this 'ere frigate, havin' earned the promotion in a way that makes me proud, sir. From this time on you young gentlemen must take good care not to forget your station, and I'm never again to be called 'Master Cutbush.'"

“I suppose you are still my uncle?” I asked, in what I intended should be a sarcastic tone, whereupon the old man remarked, almost sharply:—

“Not while we are on the same ship, sir. On shore I shall be proud to own the relationship, and it may be I’ll claim havin’ had a finger in the trainin’ up of two young officers who are bound to give a good account of themselves from this day out, or I’m a Dutchman, which I ain’t.”

It was a long while before either Seth or I came to understand what the old gunner was driving at; but once we realized that he was to tack on the “sir” whenever he spoke to us, and that every man jack of that crew would salute when we passed, there was no restraining our mirth.

I laughed until the tears ran down my face at the ridiculous idea that our promotion should work such a wonderful change in so short a time; but yet the fact remained that we must be treated with the utmost respect by those who, an hour previous, would not have honored us by the name of messmates.

It was useless to make any attempt at discussing the new situation with Master—I mean Jacob—Cutbush.

When I said that we had come forward for our

dunnage he looked distressed, and, beckoning for Joe Foster who was standing near by, gazing at us in open-mouthed astonishment as if he had never seen the like of us before, said sharply:—

“Get the dunnage belonging to Mr. Cutbush and Mr. Gordon, an’ carry it aft. Bear a hand, do you hear?”

Joe actually saluted us, after which he was off like a flash, and I said to Master — I mean Jacob — Cutbush:—

“It shames me to pretend I can’t carry my own bag simply because it happens that I’ve been promoted.”

Then the old gunner stepped near me, where he could speak without being overheard by those close at hand, and said in a low tone:—

“Don’t forget, sir, that you’ll be a laughin’-stock aft if you carry gun-deck manners into the cabin. You are one of the officers of this ’ere ship, an’ as such must hold yourself above the crew, else it’s all up with your authority. There’s no foolishness about it, either, sir, for the officer who counts on bein’ obeyed, must keep the men at a respectful distance under all circumstances.” Then in a louder tone, he added, “The dunnage shall go aft at once, sir, an’

if you'll allow it, we old shellbacks want to wish you an' Mr. Gordon joy on the promotion, knowin' as we do that it's been fairly earned."

The crew cheered, and we two lads went on deck in a maze of bewilderment and awkwardness from which we did not recover until many days had passed.

I do not believe another American gun was fired directly at Tripoli.

We remained on the blockading station, or cruised here and there according to orders, while overtures were being made for peace, and after the usual intrigues, delays, and prevarications, a treaty was signed on the 3d of June, 1805, when the crew of the *Philadelphia*, and all other Americans in captivity on that coast, were released.

By the terms of this treaty no tribute was to be paid in future, but sixty thousand dollars were given by the United States for the ransom of the remaining prisoners, after exchanging the Tripolitans in her power, man for man.

It was not easy to be satisfied with such a treaty. We had been contending for the usages of civilization and the rights of nations, and the ransom was a direct abandonment of both. While some con-

demned the purchase of peace at such a price, all rejoiced that so many brave men were restored to their country, and it was the good fortune of Seth and myself to be serving on board the ship which carried them home after so long and painful an absence.

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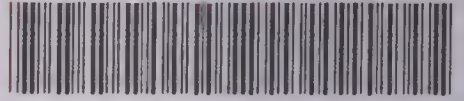
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