THE RADIO DETECTIVES UNDER THE SEA

A. HYATT VERRILL

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THE RADIO DETECTIVES UNDER THE SEA

BY

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“THE RADIO DETECTIVES SOUTHWARD BOUND,”
“THE RADIO DETECTIVES IN THE JUNGLE,”
“THE DEEP SEA HUNTERS,” ETC.

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THE RADIO DETECTIVES UNDER THE SEA

CHAPTER I—IN THE BAHAMAS

“Oh, look, Tom! There’s land!” cried Frank Putney as, coming on deck one beautiful morning, he glanced across the shimmering sea and saw a low cloud-like speck upon the horizon ahead.

“Hurrah! it must be the Bahamas,” exclaimed Tom Pauling, as he saw the first bit of land they had sighted since leaving New York three days previously. “Say, isn’t it bully to see land again? And isn’t this water wonderful?”

To the two boys, the short sea trip had been a constant source of interest, for while they had both been on ocean-going steamships before and Frank had crossed the Atlantic, yet neither had ever visited the tropics. The glistening flying fish which had skittered like miniature sea-planes from under the plunging bows of the ship had filled them with delight; they had fished up bits of the floating yellow sargassum or Gulf Weed and had examined with fascination the innumerable strange crabs, fishes and other creatures that made it their home; they had watched porpoises as they played about the ship and they had even caught a brief glimpse of a sperm whale.

The wonderfully rich indigo-blue water of the Gulf Stream was a revelation to them and now that they were rapidly approaching the outlying cays of the Bahamas, with the surrounding water malachite and turquoise, emerald and sapphire with patches of dazzling purple and streaks of azure they could scarcely believe it real.

“It doesn’t look like water at all,” declared Tom, as his father joined them.

“It looks like—well, like one of those futurist paintings or as if some one had spilled a lot of the brightest blue and green paint he could find and had slapped on a lot of purple for good measure:”

Mr. Pauling laughed. “That’s accurate if not poetical,” he replied, “and you’ll find, when you go ashore, that the imaginary man with the paint pot did not stop at the water. The land is just as gaudy and incredibly bright as the sea.”

“Is that Nassau ahead?” asked Tom.

“No, that’s a small cay,” replied one of the officers who had drawn near the little group, “Egg Cay they call it. We’ll raise Rose Cay next and should sight New Providence and Nassau about two o’clock. Pretty, isn’t it?”

So intensely interested and excited were the two boys that they could scarcely wait to eat their breakfast before they again rushed on deck to find the little islet close to the ship, its cream-colored beaches and purplish-gray coral rocks clear and distinct above the marvelously tinted water edged by a thread of surf and with a few straggling palm trees nodding above the low, dull-green bush which covered the cay.

But to the boys, there were more reasons for being interested and excited than the mere fact that they were gazing for the first time at a tropical island or were about to visit a strange land. They were on an exciting and strange trip, a remarkable mission for two boys and one which promised an abundance of adventure.

Like so many boys, they had become interested in radio and during their experiments with various sets had heard peculiar messages from some unidentified speaker. With their curiosity aroused, they had tried, merely for the fun of the thing, to locate the sending station by means of loop aerials or radio compasses.

Having decided that the voice came from a certain block on the East Side of New York, they had reported their discovery to Mr. Henderson, a federal employee and an associate of Tom’s father, for their boyish imaginations had been fired with the idea that the speaker was a lawbreaker associated with a gang of rum smugglers whom Mr. Pauling was endeavoring to run down. But when a search of the block by Mr. Henderson’s men failed to reveal any trace of a radio outfit the boys had lost interest in the matter.

Then, when Mr. Pauling had returned from a mission to the Bahamas and Cuba, he had told the boys of a young man named Rawlins who had devised a remarkable type of diving suit which required no life line or air hose, the oxygen for the diver to breathe being produced by means of certain chemicals. Mr. Pauling had mentioned that the inventor of the suit had stated that its one fault was that the user could not communicate with those on a ship or on shore and Tom; his mind ever on his favorite hobby, had suggested that radio might be used. Later, when Rawlins met the boys in New York and Tom told him his ideas, the diver fell in with the scheme and declared that he believed it would be

feasible to make a radio telephone apparatus which could be used under water.

Fitting up his father's dock on the East River front as a workshop and laboratory, Rawlins and the boys worked diligently at Tom's invention and at last succeeded in devising a radio set with which the diver could talk freely and easily with people on shore or with others under the sea.

While trying out the device Tom and Rawlins discovered two other divers whose actions were suspicious, and watching them, were amazed to see the men enter an old disused sewer. Following them into the sewer Tom and his companion were startled at hearing a conversation in some foreign tongue and Rawlins insisted it came from the other divers and that they too possessed undersea radio telephones. Hiding in the shadows the two saw the strangers standing under a trap-door into which they disappeared, taking with them a mysterious, cigar-shaped, metal object like a torpedo.

A little later, as Tom and Rawlins were about to return to their own dock, they again saw the men and following them were thunderstruck to discover that they were about to enter a submarine lying at the bottom of the river. Curious to find out more about the undersea craft, Rawlins approached it and was suddenly attacked by the two men. Tom unconsciously screamed and at the sound Frank, who was anxiously waiting at the receiver on shore, asked what was wrong. Suddenly, realizing that he was in touch with his friends, Tom called for help asking Frank to send for the police. At his cries the submarine quickly got under way, deserting the two strange divers who, seeing their craft had left, surrendered to Rawlins.

In his excitement one of the men had been careless and as a result the chemicals in his suit had flamed up at the touch of water and the man had been seriously injured. With the captured diver, Tom and Rawlins had made their way to the dock, carrying the wounded man and had arrived just as Mr. Pauling with Mr. Henderson and the police arrived. Tom had fainted from strain and excitement and when he recovered consciousness found that the captive had been recognized as a dangerous escaped criminal, a Russian "red" and that the other man was at the point of death.

Mr. Pauling, having heard Rawlins' tale, suspected a connection between the deserted sewer, the strange divers, the submarine and the mysterious messages the boys had heard and at once sent the police to surround the block and search the buildings. As a result of the raid, a garage had been found with a secret passage connecting with the sewer and in which were stored vast quantities of

liquor, contraband goods, Bolshevist propaganda and loot taken from hold-ups and robberies in New York.

Feeling that they had stumbled upon the key to a wave of crime and “red” literature which had been sweeping the country, Mr. Henderson questioned the captive, Smernoff, who confirmed the suspicions and confessed that the submarine had been used for smuggling liquor and other contraband into the united States and taking the ill-gotten loot out and that the contraband had been picked up by the sub-sea boat in mid ocean at spots where it had been dumped overboard from sailing vessels by previous arrangements.

He insisted, however, that he knew nothing of the headquarters of the gang or of their leader whom Henderson and his associates believed was a master criminal, an unscrupulous, fiendish character who, during the war, had undertaken to destroy the *Leviathan*, Brooklyn Bridge, the Navy Yard and many buildings as well as thousands of people in America and England, but who, failing in this, dared not return to Germany. The government officials felt confident that this same master mind was responsible for the wave of crime, the flood of Bolshevist literature and the threatening letters which had baffled them.

Mr. Pauling and Mr. Henderson were also most anxious to secure a statement from the other man, who was still unconscious in the hospital, and when at last he was able to speak Mr. Pauling hurried to his side. The dying man, thinking that his comrades had betrayed him, related an astounding story, admitted the existence of the master criminal and was on the point of revealing his headquarters when he died.

At almost the same time word was received that the submarine had been picked up, drifting at sea, by a destroyer despatched to find her, but that she was absolutely deserted. When at last she was towed into New York and was examined by Mr. Pauling, Rawlins and the boys she was found stripped of everything which would have thrown light upon the mystery. Questioning the crew of the destroyer, Rawlins discovered that a fishing schooner had been sighted near the drifting submarine and from the description he recognized it as a Bahaman vessel and jumped to the conclusion that the crew of the submarine had transhipped to it.

Believing that he could locate the headquarters of the plotters, Rawlins suggested that he and the boys should go to the West Indies and, after some objections had been overcome, this plan had been agreed to by Tom’s father. Thus it came about that the two boys were now upon a steamer’s deck as she

churned her way through the intensely blue sea towards the palm-fringed islands beyond her bows.

“I wonder when Rawlins will get here with that sub,” remarked Mr. Henderson.

“Not for several days yet, I imagine,” replied Mr. Pauling. “There was a lot of work to be done upon her and she cannot make much over fifteen knots on a long cruise. I’m personally more anxious to hear from the destroyers that are chasing the schooner. I wonder if Rawlins was right in his surmise regarding her.”

“We should hear from them soon after we reach Nassau,” declared the other. “We left three days after the destroyers and that schooner certainly could not beat the destroyers to the islands or evade them. I don’t think there’s the least question about their overhauling her.”

“Say, won’t it be great if they *do* catch her,” exclaimed Tom, “and find the crew of the submarine aboard?”

“Yes, but it’s very evident they have not even sighted her as yet,” replied his father. “If they had we would have received a radio.”

“Perhaps they’re out of range of communication,” suggested Mr. Henderson.

“Oh, no,” Tom assured him. “The operator says all those naval vessels can send for several hundred miles and the weather’s been fine—no static to speak of. We were talking to a Porto Rico liner this morning.”

“I hope you haven’t given away any information in your enthusiasm over radio,” remarked his father. “Remember we don’t want any one—not even ‘Sparks’—to have the least inkling of our purpose or plans Always bear in mind the famous Spanish proverb that ‘a secret between two is God’s secret but a secret between three is everybody’s.’”

“You needn’t worry about us, Dad,” Tom assured him, “we haven’t breathed a word—not even about our under-sea radio, although we were just wild to tell about it. You know our motto is ‘see everything, hear everything and say nothing.’”

“Stick to that and you’ll be a credit to the Service,” laughed his father as he and Mr. Henderson moved away.

Tom and Frank soon forgot all about radio or the chances of the swift destroyers overtaking the schooner in the many interesting sights about: the long-tailed graceful tropical birds whose snowy breasts appeared a delicate sea-green from

the sunlight reflected through the clear water by the white sandy bottom of the sea; the bigger Booby gannets that kept pace with the ship, seeming to float without effort just above the rails, and that kept turning their china-blue eyes with a curious stare upon the boys; the big, clumsy pelicans that, in single file, flapped along a few inches above the sea, rising and falling in unison with the waves and now and again plunging suddenly with a tremendous splash into the water as their sharp eyes spied schools of small fish. All these were new and strange to the boys and once they caught a glimpse of a V-shaped line of twinkling red dots against the blue sky which one of the officers assured them was a flock of flamingoes.

“Gosh!” exclaimed Tom suddenly. “Say, just look there, Frank! See, down there between the waves—I’m dead sure I saw the bottom!”

The officer chuckled. “Of course you did!” he assured Tom. “Why not? You can see bottom at ten fathoms down here anywheres. Water’s as clear as glass. Why, when you get to Nassau you can look down and see the sea-fans and corals and marine growths perfectly plainly—sea-gardens the Conchs call ’em—regular places for tourists to go. And you can sit on the dock and fish and watch the fool fishes nibbling at your bait—red and blue and yellow and every color of the rainbow. Then, when you see one that suits your fancy you can just yank him up—great thing this being able to pick your fish!”

The boys looked at him half suspiciously. “Say,” exclaimed Frank, “are you trying to kid us?”

“Not a bit of it,” replied the purser. “Just wait and see. Why, if I told you half the truth about such things you’d swear I was lying.”

“Golly!” ejaculated Tom. “Wouldn’t it be fine to go down in a diving suit in such water. I don’t wonder that R—” Tom checked himself just in time and asked, “But what do you mean by saying the ‘Conchs’ call the places sea gardens?”

The purser laughed. “Oh, I forgot you’d never been down here,” he said. “Conchs is the local name for the Bahamans. Guess it’s because they’re always diving for conchs or maybe because they’re as much at home under water as on land. Greatest divers in the world; fact, I’ve seen ’em diving for sponge and coral many a time and when we get to Nassau this afternoon you’ll see about ten thousand naked nigger boys crowding about, begging you to toss pennies to ’em so they can dive and catch them. Little beggars can grab a coin long before it gets to the bottom and if you toss a penny off one side of the ship they’ll dive off the other, swim under the keel and get the coin before it reaches bottom. And

speaking of diving—say, this is the real home and headquarters of that. Met a chap down here last winter—Rawlins is his name—was taking a lot of movies under water, fact. Had a new-fangled sort of suit that didn't have ropes or hose or anything and just plumped overboard as easy as is and wandered around making friends with the fishes."

The boys nudged each other and winked. "Oh, now you *are* kidding us!" said Tom. "How could a fellow go down without air and how could he take movies under the sea? That's too big even for us to swallow."

"Fact, just the same," the other declared. "Had some sort of gadget fixed up on his suit to make air and he took the movies in a big steel room or chamber at the end of a jointed, water-tight pipe—had electric lights and everything in it. Sure thing and no fooling. Saw some of the pictures up in New York too. Yep, one of 'em was called 'Drowned Gold' or something of the sort—story of a treasure under the sea—gathered in by Huns in a submarine and cached in an old wreck. Rattling good picture too! Say, you boys want to see his place—got a regular studio here. I don't think Rawlins is here though."

"That would be interesting," agreed Frank, "I'd love to go down in a diving suit and walk about on the bottom. Don't the fish and things ever trouble him?"

"No," responded the purser, "even sharks keep off—only danger's in devil fish—octopus, you know. They grow mighty big hereabouts and are likely to grab anything. Rawlins was making one picture of a whopping big octopus fighting with a diver—fake devil fish made out of rubber, but natural as is. Don't know how it turned out but I tell you I'm not keen on running foul of any of the real thing. And speaking of sharks—say, here's a fact that you boys will think's a whopper. Niggers down here dive in right among the sharks—carry a long knife in their teeth—and grab hold of a shark's fin and knife him, fact!"

"Well, you can't tell any yarn bigger than that!" laughed Frank. "Imagine a man tackling a shark under water! Oh come, you must think we're easy!"

"Well, just wait and see," replied the purser, "but I'll have to be running along. There's New Providence ahead—we'll be getting into port within the next hour."

"Gosh, he's some talker!" exclaimed Tom with a laugh when the loquacious officer had left. "And wasn't it rich—his telling us about Rawlins and the suits and never guessing we knew him or had been down in those suits ourselves! Say, I'm beginning to think there's a lot of fun in being Secret Service people. It's sport listening to folks telling all they know about a thing that you know more about and they never guessing it."

“Yes,” agreed Frank, “and I can understand now how detectives and Secret Service men find out so much without any one suspecting them. They just start a conversation and then let the other fellows do the talking and pick up a lot of information. But that *was* rich about the sharks!”

“And the devil fish too!” added Tom. “Wonder if there *is* any danger from being attacked by an octopus. Say, if there is that’s where our undersea radio would come in mighty fine.”

But whether or not the purser’s tales were true in regard to the sharks and octopus the boys soon discovered that he had not in the least exaggerated the clarity of the water or the skill of the native diving boys when their ship steamed slowly into Nassau harbor.

It was all so wonderfully fascinating and beautiful that the boys kept constantly uttering exclamations of surprise and delight. Never had they dreamed that there could be such vivid colors anywhere in the world. The sky, so blue it resembled a dense solid dome of blue silk; the water, ultramarine, emerald and turquoise streaked with gold and purple; the vivid green foliage with masses of scarlet hibiscus and flaming poinciana trees; the glaring, snow-white coral streets; the pink, blue, green, yellow, and lavender houses with their red roofs and green shutters; the bright-hued orange and red bandannas and gleaming costumes of the negro women crowding the dock; the lofty nodding palm trees above the beaches and looming like gigantic feather dusters above the buildings; the crimson and blue flags of England flying everywhere; the scarlet tunics of strolling soldiers from the garrison; the little shore boats bobbing upon the water and painted every color of the rainbow and scores of sponging and fishing smacks as brilliant in hues as the smaller craft, all combined to form a kaleidoscopic picture of gaudy tints and blazing colors such as can be found only in the tropic islands of the Caribbean. But all these sights were of less interest to Tom and Frank than the naked black, brown and yellow diving boys who paddled about the ship in crude home-made boats, formed from discarded packing cases, or straddled lengths of bamboo and with grinning faces and rolling eyes begged the passengers to throw coins into the water exactly as the purser had described. And when Tom and Frank tossed shining nickels into the sea and the score of black bodies left the makeshift boats as one, the two American boys burst into roars of merriment.

“Gosh, they’re just like a lot of black frogs!” cried Tom. “And just look at them, Frank! See them! Look there! They’re after those nickels and you can see them as plain as if they were under glass! There! Look! One of them’s got a coin! And

see how funny the pink soles of their feet look! Say, it’s wonderful!”

For the next half hour the diving boys reaped a rich harvest of small coins and then, the customs and port doctor’s men having completed their inspection, Tom and Frank followed Mr. Pauling down the gangway and a few moments later stood upon the first West Indian island they had ever visited.

CHAPTER II—A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE

For the first few days of their stay in Nassau the boys found plenty to amuse them. They rowed out in a bright-hued rowboat with a glass set in the bottom and gazed at the famed “sea gardens” and found them even more wonderful than the ship’s purser had described. They clambered over the ancient forts Williams and George; they bathed, swam and fished to their hearts’ content and they visited the sponge docks where the speedy little schooners and sloops with their grinning black crews brought their catch of sponges to barter and trade.

The huge turtles, lying on their backs upon the decks of fishing boats, were a novelty to the boys and they were absolutely fascinated by the rainbow-tinted fish that swarmed in the waters and were sold in the market. And they learned many new and interesting things also. They had seen the bleached white corals in museums and saw the same everywhere for sale in Nassau; and the first time they visited the sea gardens and gazed down through the crystal clear water they were surprised that no corals were visible.

There were huge sea-fans—purple and golden brown, long, black sea-rods, brown and purple sea plumes, huge dull-orange and maroon starfish, innumerable sea anemones with immensely long and bright-colored tentacles and everywhere red, pink, yellow, blue and particolored fish, like some sort of exotic butterflies, flitting lazily among the marine growths. But not a white coral was visible. Great rounded mounds of orange, bits of scarlet, masses of green and lavender, of old rose and soft fawn brown were cluttered upon the bottom, but in vain the boys sought for the massive brain corals and graceful branched corals they knew so well.

“Well I don’t see any corals,” declared Tom after he had gazed at the multicolored objects upon the ocean bottom for some time. “It’s pretty, but I thought corals grew everywhere down here.”

The black boatmen chuckled. “Beggin’ yo’ pardon, Chief,” he remarked, “tha’s plenty coral down tha’, Chief. Yaas, sir, all erbout. Doan’ yo’ di’sarn ’em, Chief?”

“No,” replied Tom, “I can’t see a single white thing there—all I see are bright colored weeds and sea-fans and rocks.”

The negro looked genuinely surprised. “Bless yo’ soul!” he exclaimed. “Yo’ cawnt be a s’archin’ fo’ white coral is yo’? White coral’s jus’ dead coral, Chief. Tha’s da culmination o’ tha’ manner o’ it’s prep’ration, Chief. Yaas, sir, all tha’ objec’s yo’ di’sarn growin’ down to tha’ bottom is corals, Chief. Yaas, sir, some of tha’ kin’s is yellow an’ some red an’ some green.”

It was the boys’ turn to be surprised. “Why, you don’t mean all those things like stones covered with bright-colored weeds are coral!” exclaimed Frank incredulously.

“Yaas, sir, Chief,” the negro assured him. “Ah’ll demonstrate it to yo’ entire satisfaction, Chief.”

As he spoke, the half-naked negro stood up in the little craft and before the astonished boys realized what he was about to do he had plunged into the clear water and the boys watched in wonder as they saw him swimming easily straight towards the bottom, a little string of bubbles rising from him and the pink soles of his feet flashing strangely. In an instant he had reached the masses of growth on the sea floor and the boys saw him pulling and working at a projecting ledge of vivid violet and green. Then he turned and shot up to the surface like a flash. As he broke through the water he tossed a large lump of brilliant material into the boat and clambered over the stern.

Interestedly the boys examined what he had brought and to their absolute amazement discovered that it really was coral, but as the man explained, completely concealed under the fleshy covering of the animals which resembled tiny sea anemones of wonderful tints.

But after their first momentary surprise and interest at the discovery the two boys found much more to attract them in the denizens of the mass of coral than in the coral itself. Odd red and white crabs emerged from their hiding places, a tiny fish that glittered with the dazzling hues of a fire opal flapped from under a bit of adhering seaweed, funny slug-like molluscs of intense blue and gold crawled about the mass, queer little snails were everywhere and when the boys disturbed the coral or handled it they heard odd snapping noises like lilliputian firecrackers.

For a time this puzzled them until Frank discovered to his intense delight that the sounds were made by tiny lobster-like crustaceans that dwelt in holes in the hard coral and viciously snapped their claws when disturbed.

“Say,” asked Tom presently, “weren’t you afraid of a devil fish—octopus, you know—down there?”

“Bless your soul, no, Chief!” grinned the negro. “Tha’ fellow doan’ never humbug us. We eats them down here, Chief.”

“Eat them!” exclaimed Frank in surprise. “Gee! I’d hate to eat the slimy things. But I thought they attacked divers, pulled them down with their tentacles and killed them.”

“No, sir!” declared the boatman. “Tha’s jus’ foolishness. 'Cose a big fellow *might* humbug a diver, but Ah ne’er knew o’ such a happenin’ an’ Ah was spongin’ fo’ ten years an’ mo’.” Then a broad grin spread over the man’s face and he shook silently as though laughing to himself over some amusing memory. “Yaas, sir,” he went on. “Come to take consideration o’ the matter Ah did know o’ one o’ tha’ fellows makin’ to fight with a diver. Yaas, sir, a almighty big fellow—jes erbout three fathoms across he was, Chief. Yaas, sir, he went fo’ to make trouble with Mr. Rawlins, Chief, jus’ fo’ to commo-date the picture, but tha’ one was a tame orctopus—made out o’ rubber an’ springs fo’ the occasion, Chief.”

“Oh, yes, we heard about that,” said Tom, “but do you know Mr. Rawlins?”

“Bless yo’ soul, yaas, sir,” the negro assured him. “’Cose Ah knows Mr. Rawlins, ev’yone here knows he. Why, Ah been we’kin fo’ Mister Rawlins fo’ mos’ two years, Chief. Does yo’ know he too, Chief?”

“Oh, slightly,” replied Frank casually, realizing that they had not adhered strictly to their motto. “But how about sharks? Don’t they attack people in the water?”

The darky fairly guffawed with merriment. “Ah speculate some folks been a yarnin’ to yo’,” he declared. “Yaas, sir, das’ it. Sharks! Lord a’mighty 'cose tha’s sharks plenty hereabouts, but no one don’ make no flust’ration 'bout those fellows, no, sir! Why, Lawd bless yo’ soul, Chief, we Conchs goes down an’ kills sharks weselves. Yaas, sir, jus’ take a knife erlong an’ cotches hoi’ o’ a fin an’ slashes of them.”

“Gosh! then it’s true after all!” cried Tom. “The purser on the ship told us that, but we wouldn’t believe it.”

But despite the boys’ desire to see a shark and their boatman’s promise to demonstrate the fact that it is an easy matter to kill a ten-foot man-eater single-handed in his native element, none of the sea tigers presented themselves for the sake of the exhibition.

“Tha’ don’ is such a plenty o’ sha’ks roun’ here 'bout as tha’ was,” the boatman informed them when the boys expressed their surprise at seeing no sharks in waters which they had imagined teemed with them.

“Yo’ see tha’ tourists an’ folks what comes here-'bout cotches he an’ shoots at he an’ causes such a flustration 'mongst ’em tha’s mos’ all scared away, Chief. Yaas, sir, I 'spec’ if yo’ wants to see sha’ks yo’ll bes’ take a cruise 'board one of tha’ spongers. Tha’s plenty o’ sha’ks roun’ erbout tha’ cays an’ the sponging grounds.”

But the boys did see an octopus or “sea cat” as the natives call them. As they were returning to Nassau they passed a fishing boat and going alongside to see what the men had caught they were shown one of the devil fishes which had just been hauled up from its home on the ocean floor. It was not a large specimen—barely five feet across its outstretched tentacles, but as it writhed and squirmed upon the sloop’s deck the boys shuddered at its sucker-covered, snake-like arms, its hideous pulpy body and its cold, cruel, lid-less, unwinking and baleful eyes.

“Gosh! how can any one eat such things!” exclaimed Tom.

“And say, just imagine being tackled by such an awful beast down under the sea!” added Frank. “I’d die of pure fright, I believe.”

Little did the boys realize that they would have a chance to test their sensations under such circumstances and little did they know that the delicious, thick, stew-like soup which they had enjoyed so much was made from the repulsive octopus.

When the boys reached Nassau they found a trim little gray destroyer anchored off the town and the American flag, flapping gently in the breeze at her stern, left no doubt as to her nationality.

“Oh, say!” cried Frank. “There she is! Gee! why weren’t we here when she came in?”

“May not be,” declared Tom. “Lots of American destroyers drop in here and we won’t miss anything anyhow. The boat’s only reaching the dock now. She must have just come in.”

By the time the boys stepped ashore the officer from the destroyer’s boat had entered a rattle-trap carriage and had driven away, while about the white-clad bluejackets in the waiting cutter were crowds of blacks, laughing and jabbering and striving to sell the sailors everything from seed necklaces and bits of coral to pineapples and mangoes.

As they pushed through the close-packed, brightly-garbed throng the boys caught a glimpse of one broad-shouldered sailor who was arguing over a bunch of bananas with an immensely fat colored woman and instantly they recognized him.

“Say, ’tis the destroyer,” exclaimed Tom. “Look, there’s the bosun’s mate who told us about the schooner. Gee, I wonder if they got her!”

Hailing a carriage, for they were too eager to hear the news to walk, the two boys were driven quickly to their hotel and hurrying to their rooms found Mr. Pauling and Mr. Henderson talking with an officer in a commander’s uniform.

“Hello, just in time, boys!” exclaimed Mr. Pauling as the two appeared. “Commander West just got in and was about to give us the news.”

“I’m sorry it’s not very good news,” said the officer. “In fact no news at all—as far as results are concerned. We sighted the schooner just north of Watling’s island and signaled her to heave to, but she did not pay the least attention. We couldn’t send a shot after her, you know—serious matter to fire on or near a vessel on the high seas, and she was flying the British flag. Before we could come alongside she slipped in between the reefs and we had to slow down and feel our way—dangerous channels those between the coral, you know—and by the time we rounded the next cay she’d completely disappeared. Strangest thing I’ve ever seen. Not a trace of her, if she’d sunk with all on board she could not have vanished more mysteriously. Of course we supposed that she’d slipped into some little bay or cove where we couldn’t follow so we anchored and sent our boats off. They ran around every cay and island within sight, but not a sign of that blessed packet. It gets me, I admit.”

“H-m-m!” muttered Mr. Henderson. “Sort of phantom ship, eh? Was it possible she slipped away behind the islands while you were getting through the reefs?”

“Don’t see how she could,” replied Commander West. “Her topmasts would have shown up somewheres. No, she must have got into some landlocked bay that our men missed—hard thing to see some of those with the fringe of palms along the outer beach hiding the entrance, you know. Well, to continue. We decided to search every cay the next morning—it was pretty near dark then—and we did, but not a sign. Then we gave up and were cruising about, thinking she’d slipped out during the night and we might pick her up and the next day what do you think? Why we got a radio from Haverstraw of the *Porter* saying they’d sighted her over by the Caicos and that she gave him the slip among the reefs the same way. He had a little better luck though. Found her all right.”

“Hurrah!” shouted Tom as the commander hesitated. “Did they get the men?”

“They found her, as I said,” continued the officer, “anchored off one of the cays and—absolutely deserted!”

“Jove!” exclaimed Mr. Henderson. “Deserted! Confound those fellows. They seem to have a habit of deserting their ships! First the submarine and now the schooner. Did Lieutenant Haverstraw find anything on her?”

“Nothing suspicious,” replied the commander. “To all intents and purposes she was merely a fishing smack. Didn’t even have a wireless aboard. He might have towed her to port as a derelict, but he radioed for advice and I told him to leave her. If he’d brought her in there might have been too many questions asked—Admiralty investigation and all—these Britishers are just as particular about a smack as a liner when it comes to maritime law, you know, and they have a blamed uncomfortable way of asking too many questions sometimes. Of course I realize that the two governments would straighten it out and keep matters quiet, but the local authorities might not and she’s just as well off there as here as far as I can see.”

“Yes, no need of arousing curiosity,” agreed Mr. Pauling. “Did you search the islands near her to see if the men had gone ashore?”

“Haverstraw tells me he even looked inside the conch shells on the beach,” replied the officer with a laugh. “Says if he finds another abandoned ship he’ll resign—getting on his nerves. He’s the one who picked up the submarine, you know. However, I’m sailing for the Caicos this evening—if those men are on any of the cays or took to another vessel we’ll find them.”

“Oh, I’ve an idea!” exclaimed Tom who had been thinking rapidly. “If those fellows on the submarine deserted her and took to the schooner as we thought, perhaps they left the schooner and went to a submarine.”

“Well, I’ll be——” began Mr. Henderson. “Why in thunder haven’t we thought of that before? What did I tell you, Pauling? Didn’t I say these boys would give us old hands some new ideas? Jove! I’ll wager that *is* the solution. Probably knew where the sub was waiting and made for it. Had her ready for just such an emergency.”

“That may be it,” admitted Commander West, “but if ’tis where in the name of the Great Horn Spoon do they get the subs? They’re pretty darned expensive little toys, you know, and a chap can’t buy or build one the way he can a skiff. Seems to me some one would have known if there were mysterious submarines

knocking about."

"It is a mystery," agreed Mr. Pauling, "but the whole affair has been full of mystery. I think, however, there may be a simple solution to this one. If we assume that the head of the organization is whom we suspect it to be he might well have obtained German U-boats. We must remember that in his original undertaking he possessed unlimited means and almost unlimited authority and had the confidence of the Prussian government. Is it not possible or even probable that he had several sub-sea craft on this side of the Atlantic—we know he made use of one in his nefarious scheme—and that with the failure of his plans and the collapse of Germany he appropriated the subs for his own private designs? The crews in fact might have joined with him—we have proof that some of those on the captured U-boat were formerly in the German navy and if he has a secret headquarters down here is it likely he would risk all on one submarine?"

"I imagine your theory is very nearly correct," replied Mr. Henderson. "If so, there is little use in attempting to accomplish anything until Rawlins arrives. When should he be here, Commander?"

"That's hard to say," replied the officer. "We had a code message several days ago to the effect that she had completed refitting and was expected to sail any time. If she left the following day—let's see, that was last Friday—she might be at her rendezvous by day after to-morrow—Thursday. I should hardly expect her before then. But Disbrow is posted near there and will undoubtedly notify you the moment she is sighted. You know the plan was for Rawlins to signal our ship about thirty miles off the island and then run submerged to avoid any possibility of being seen. Then Disbrow will radio you—Rawlins' outfit might not reach you and a simple and innocent-appearing message from Disbrow would excite no comment. Well, I must be getting off. If we stay here too long these Conchs will wonder why we're here. I gave out we just dropped in for fresh vegetables and fruit and I expect my gobs have loaded up by now."

After the commander left, the conversation was all of this latest development in the search for the mysterious conspirators and every phase and theory was thoroughly threshed out without coming to any more definite conclusion than before.

"It's just one confounded disappearance after another!" declared Mr. Henderson. "I shouldn't be surprised now if Rawlins vanished or even if that Smernoff had gone up in a wisp of smoke."

CHAPTER III—SURPRISES

As if in answer to his words, there was a knock at the door and as Tom opened it a colored boy handed him an envelope which he instantly recognized as a cable.

It was addressed to Mr. Pauling and as Tom's father tore it open and glanced at its contents a strange expression swept over his face and he uttered a sharp ejaculation of surprise.

"Speak of angels, Henderson!" he remarked, as he passed the cable to his associate. "What do you think of that?"

"Well, I'll be——" began Mr. Henderson as he hurriedly read the familiar cypher message, "Smernoff has escaped! Confound those fellows! Can't they keep any one under lock and key? The second time too. Now there will be the devil to pay."

"Yes, it's regrettable," agreed Mr. Pauling, "but I wouldn't worry over him. The chances are they'll get him again and I can't see how it will be possible for him to reach his friends down here or even to communicate with them—with his submarine gone and his confederates arrested or dead. And we have all the information he could give us. No, I don't think his escape will trouble us much in this undertaking. I'd hate to be in your shoes and in the States with him though. He's sworn to 'get' you, Henderson, and he's absolutely reckless and ruthless, as you know."

"Gosh, he might come down here!" exclaimed Tom.

"Little chance of that," his father assured him. "Every ship will be watched and don't forget he has neither diving suit, radio nor undersea boat to help him. Besides he'll find it a hard job to discover where we are. Don't be nervous over him, boys."

For several days nothing eventful occurred and the boys began to find time hanging heavily on their hands. Mr. Pauling would not consent to their taking a trip on a sponging vessel as they had hoped, for, as he pointed out, word from

Rawlins might be received at any moment and there could be no delay. But the arrival of the mails from New York, bringing the latest radio news and radio periodicals, proved a godsend to the boys who had discovered that a tiny island the size of New Providence was somewhat limited in the interests it possessed for two go-ahead, strenuous lads, despite its picturesque town, its odd people and its beauties.

The two were soon deep in the latest developments of radio and were eagerly discussing plans for the wonderful things they would do when the present trip was successfully ended and they were once more in New York. Tom was just reading an article on the almost miraculous properties of specially prepared crystals of Rochelle salt when his father entered the room.

“Better pack your duds!” he exclaimed. “Here’s good news for you.”

“Oh, I bet Mr. Rawlins’s arrived!” cried Tom, throwing aside his magazine and jumping up.

“Right the first time!” his father replied, smiling. “That is, he has not arrived, but I have just received a radio message from Disbrow saying ‘William sends regards’ which means that the submarine has signaled and that all is well. He is probably close to the prearranged meeting place now and the launch is ready. Get your things together and we’ll be off. Remember, if any one questions you we are off for a fishing trip.”

Half an hour later the four were aboard a fast cabin launch which had been purchased and held in readiness for the news of Rawlins’ arrival.

Leaving Nassau astern, the launch was headed towards the north, but no sooner were they out of sight of any prying eyes which might be watching from the island, than they slipped behind some low cays and shifted their course to the east. At the wheel was a stalwart brown-skinned young man and Tom in whispers asked his father if he was sure the negro could be trusted.

Mr. Pauling laughed. “You’re getting as suspicious of every one as an old hand,” he replied. “Don’t fret over Sam, Tom. He’s been with us for years and very luckily too. He was born and bred in the Bahamas and these natives never forget a channel or a reef. He was with me when I was down here in the spring.”

“But I never saw him before,” said Tom, rather puzzled to know where this chocolate-colored addition to their forces had been hidden.

“Of course not,” chuckled his father, “and you never saw several other men in Nassau whom I might name. I might add another sentence to that excellent motto

of yours and that is: ‘and be seen by no one until occasion calls for it.’ However, Sam saw you and was never very far from you. In fact I believe he once taught you that living corals are not white.”

“Jehoshaphat!” exclaimed Frank. “You don’t mean to say he’s the boatman!”

“Exactly!” replied Mr. Pauling. “Didn’t you recognize him?”

“But, but, the boatman didn’t look like him,” declared Tom, staring at the pilot, “he had a gray beard and gray hair and talked like one of the Conchs.”

“A little gray wool and a gray wig will work wonders—especially on a black man,” replied Mr. Pauling. “And remember Sam is a Conch as you call them and can naturally talk his native dialect.”

“Well, I never believed all those detective stories about men disguising themselves,” said Frank, “but I will hereafter.”

Mr. Henderson laughed heartily. “No real detective or Secret Service man uses disguises—that is false beards and wigs and make up—nowadays,” he declared. “To attempt a disguise would be to excite suspicions at once—any crook with half an eye would penetrate such makeshifts in New York; but with a colored man down here it’s different. The natives are not observant and there are few if any skillful crooks, and who would imagine for a moment that a negro was in the Service? No, boys, you must learn to believe only what you actually see.”

“Even less than that,” added Mr. Pauling. “I should say ‘believe only half that you see and nothing you hear.’”

“Then I only believe half of Sam and nothing he told us,” laughed Tom. “Did he really work for Mr. Rawlins?”

“Yes and no,” replied his father. “He met Rawlins when I did last spring and did take a part in one film—Rawlins wanted a man to tackle a shark under water and Sam volunteered; but he was not regularly employed.”

“Gosh, then Sam really has done that!” cried Frank. “Say, I hope we see a shark so he can do it for us.”

“Sam has other matters to attend to,” Mr. Pauling reminded him, “but if he has time when we reach the place we’re bound for he will no doubt gladly accommodate you and any sharks that may be about.”

Now that the boys knew the secret of the black man they decided to have some sport themselves and after securing Mr. Pauling’s and Mr. Henderson’s promises

that they would not tell Sam that the boys knew that he was their former boatman, the two lads plied Sam with questions, pretending to swallow everything he said without hesitation. Then, very adroitly, they led the conversation into other channels and let out many hints that led Sam to believe they had penetrated his former disguise.

“What do you dye your hair with?” asked Frank innocently. “It used to be gray.”

Sam looked troubled. “Dye ma hair?” he replied, striving to maintain a puzzled expression and to speak in casual tones. “I guess you is jokin’. Ah don’t dye ma hair, Boss. No, sir, ma wool’s jus’ as the Lord made it.”

“Well why did you shave off your whiskers?” asked Tom. “Thought you looked too old to suit those darky girls in Nassau?”

Sam was now genuinely uneasy. “Ah doan’ bother wif she,” he declared indignantly, and unconsciously lapsing into the Conch vernacular. “Ah always shaves. Yaas, sir, Ah never grow no whiskers. Wha’ fo’ yo’ arsk such interrogation, Chief?”

“I guess a shark must have bitten it off,” suggested Frank in an undertone nudging Tom slyly, “or perhaps it was in the way when he dove after corals to show to some other Northerners looking for white corals.”

Sam turned and stared at the boys in amazement. “Lawd bless yo’!” he exclaimed. “Den fo’ a fac’ yo’ knowed me an’ was jus’ pretendin’ yo’ didn’t all tha’ time!”

“Of course!” replied Tom trying to keep a sober face as he saw Sam’s surprise and chagrin at having been discovered, “you must have thought we *were* green.”

For a moment, poor Sam seemed utterly dispirited. He had taken the utmost pride in his clever disguise and now, after all, these two boys had penetrated it. If that were so, then no doubt, others had done the same and Mr. Pauling and Mr. Henderson would blame him.

But the next instant a relieved look swept over his good-matured face as he caught sight of the two gentlemen trying to stifle their laughs, and, realizing it had all been a plant, he burst into a hearty roar of merriment over the way he had been fooled.

“Ah guess yo’ young gent’men did sure 'nough get ma goat!” he exclaimed, “an’ Ah’m jus’ boun’ fo’ to get yours an’ knife a sh’ak.”

Now that the boys had had their sport with Sam they found him a most

interesting companion, and standing in the bows of the speeding launch, asked him innumerable questions about the various islets, the birds, the fish and the reefs they passed. It was nearly sundown when they sighted the island where it had been agreed they would meet Rawlins—a lovely palm-fringed islet with silvery-white beaches, and, much to the boys' surprise, they saw the roofs of buildings peeping from among the foliage.

"Why, people live there!" cried Tom. "Say, we can't meet Mr. Rawlins there."

"Those are Rawlins' buildings," replied his father smiling at Tom's distressed expression. "Didn't I tell you? This is where he takes his undersea pictures—his studio and workshop, you know—but at this season it's deserted. We're perfectly safe there."

A few minutes later the launch slipped through a narrow channel between outjutting ledges of jagged, gray coral rock and entered a beautiful little harbor or cove. On one side was a low point, covered with coconut palms, and on the other a white sand-beach with a small dock and with a large wooden building,—red roofed and with green shutters—just beyond.

"Well we're here first," exclaimed Tom as the launch forged slowly towards the dock. "There's no sign of the submarine."

"No, but some one's here!" cried Frank.

As he spoke a figure appeared upon the dock holding glasses to his eyes and the next moment the boys recognized it.

"Gosh! It's Mr. Rawlins!" shouted Tom. "But where *is* the submarine?"

A moment later the launch grated alongside the pier and Rawlins with a grin welcomed them.

"But—but, where's the submarine?" demanded Tom before Rawlins could speak.

"Safe and sound!" he replied. "Welcome to my kingdom!"

Then, when the first greeting was over, he exclaimed. "I'll say I've news for you! Couldn't guess what 'tis. When we were tinkering around in that old sub, we found a secret compartment—sort of locker—and some darned queer things in it—radio stuff of some sort, I expect. I didn't show it to any one—not even to our 'Sparks' but I've got it up at the house. Come on and have a look at it. And I've another surprise for you too—but that will keep—that's for you, Mr. Pauling. Come along."

Hurrying up the path between the hedges of gay-flowered hibiscus the party entered the building which served Rawlins as den, living place and workshop combined.

The boys were amazed as they glanced about. They had not expected to find anything on the island and here they were surrounded with every comfort. Luxurious wicker-work furniture all about; enlarged photographs-and paintings of scenes from Rawlins' sub sea films on the walls; rugs of woven grass and matting on the polished floors; a phonograph in one corner and shelves of books.

On a stand at one side of the room was a model of a submarine complete in all its details; there were models of sailing vessels on shelves and freshly cut flowers filled vases and bowls.

"Say, you've a regular house here!" cried Tom, "It's fine!"

"Oh, it'll do for a hang-out," replied Rawlins as he began to undo a package, "But you'll like the studio better. Look here, what do you make of these?"

As he spoke he showed the boys the contents of the package. There were one or two of the single control coils the boys had already seen, a pair of peculiar phone receivers, several beautiful shining crystals, one of which was secured in a metallic stand or ring and an odd affair about two feet in length and three inches in diameter looking like an overgrown walking stick wound with wire and with a sliding ring upon it.

For an instant, the two boys gazed at the collection with puzzled, uncomprehending faces and then, suddenly, a queer look of mingled surprise, delight and understanding swept across Tom's features.

"Gosh!" he cried, picking up one of the crystals, "Gosh! I'll bet I do know what these are. Say, they're those wonderful Rochelle salt crystals I was reading about. Now we *will* have something worth while! But I can't imagine what this thing is, it looks like a funny big coil, but whoever saw a coil like it and with this sliding ring on it?"

It was now Frank's turn to exhibit his knowledge of the latest discoveries in radio. "Hurrah, I know!" he exclaimed. "It's a resonance coil! Don't you remember, I was just speaking about it when your father told us to get ready? Say, these things beat loop aerials all to pieces. Why, that magazine said that with one of 'em you could tell where a sending station was and even how far away! It's an aerial and tuning coil in one. Gee, Tom, we *are* in luck! If we want to find those chaps now we'll have a regular cinch!"

At the boys' excited exclamations Mr. Henderson, who had been examining a picture, turned to them.

"What's all the excitement, boys?" he asked. "Anything interesting that Rawlins has found?"

"Well I should say *so*!" declared Tom. "Look, here's some of those Rochelle salt crystals and a resonance coil. Do you know about them, Mr. Henderson?"

"Jove, you're right!" ejaculated the other. "Yes, I've seen experiments made with the salt—and have seen them used in submarine work during the war too, and I've read Gen. Squiers' articles on the resonance coil and its properties. No wonder those fellows in the sub got by with such things to aid them."

"Well I suppose it's all mighty plain to you, but I'll be hanged if I can see where Rochelle salts come in," declared Rawlins. "I thought that was medicine."

"So it is, under certain conditions," agreed Mr. Henderson, "but if the salt is prepared or 'grown' so as to form a certain kind of crystal it possesses almost magical properties. By its aid one can hear a fly walk, insects talk or molecules of metal turning over in an iron bar."

"Nothing doing!" exclaimed Rawlins. "I can believe pretty big yarns after seeing what radio does, but I'm from Missouri when you talk about a bit of salt making a fellow hear a fly's trotters or the inside of iron getting restless. You'll have to show me."

"That will be easy, I imagine," replied Mr. Henderson. "Tom says he's been reading the accounts of it. I expect he can make you hear your own thoughts almost. But with no exaggeration it is a most marvelous thing. During the war we used it as a detector to hear vessels at a distance—particularly subs, and it saved countless thousands of lives. One man in Washington is employed to devote all of his spare time merely to growing these special crystals. If Tom can arrange the apparatus on the submarine we can locate the other sub if we get near her. You've made a great find, Rawlins."

"What's that you said about another sub?" asked Rawlins. "Don't tell me they've got another one!"

"That's what we think," replied Mr. Pauling. "I forgot you didn't know." In a few words he related Commander West's story of the finding of the deserted schooner and the disappearance of the crew.

"I'll say they're some little deserters!" exclaimed Rawlins, "and you're dead

right about another sub, I'll bet. And say, that helps us some too. They left that schooner and took to the U-boat—that is if they did have a sub at the Caicos. Well, that fits right in with my theory about the latitude and longitude. If they left the schooner there and took the sub you can bet the Caicos are not far from their hang-out. I'll bet they knew the destroyer wouldn't touch the smack and expected to lie low and take her again after the boys had cleared out. Why, they might have been lying submerged right alongside of her or with their periscope sticking up watching the destroyer from back of some reef or a bunch of mangroves. Yes, sir—if we hit the Caicos we won't be far off."

"H-m-m, there's a lot of good reasoning there," agreed Mr. Pauling. "And if we're to prove the theory the quicker we get started the better."

"Right you are," agreed Rawlins. "We're ready to sail any time. I just want to get a few things together and I'll be with you. Want to have a look around the studio and shop, boys?"

The boys would gladly have remained for hours or even days in the studio but they realized there was no time to be lost. Here were diving suits of all kinds, sets representing the interior of ships and submarines, the yards and rigging of a bark complete, but with no hull, strange devices at whose use they could only guess and in one corner the enormous intricate octopus of rubber, springs and wire which when occupied by a man, could be made to imitate so perfectly the real creature that scientists who had seen the picture in which it figured had insisted that it was a genuine octopus.

The workshop also was full of interesting things. Here was where Rawlins and his assistants made the diving suits, the under-sea apparatus for taking the films, the lifelike octopus, the miniature ships, the complicated and wonderful counterfeits of the interiors of the submarines and many other objects.

But long before they had half time to examine all these things Rawlins was ready and leading the way along a narrow path through the brush headed for the other end of the island.

"Aren't you afraid some one will disturb your property?" asked Mr. Henderson, "I shouldn't think it safe to leave all these things unguarded."

"I don't," replied Rawlins. "I have an old colored chap and his wife who live here. That's why I kept the submarine out of sight."

"Where are they now?" asked Mr. Pauling. "Are you sure their curiosity won't be aroused and that they may not wonder at your sudden appearance and

departure and our arrival?”

Rawlins laughed. “They might be curious or talk about a sub—if they saw it, but as far as I’m concerned they are quite sure I’m an obeah man—sort of witch-doctor you know—and absolutely incomprehensible. If I dropped from the sky in a parachute and left in a pillar of flame they’d think it quite in keeping with my habits and no more remarkable than walking into the sea and out again at will. Just at present they’re so busy over some things I brought ’em that they wouldn’t see a sub if it poked its nose into their cabin. And even if they wanted to talk they couldn’t, there’s not a soul living within a dozen miles.”

They had now come out of the brush upon a second miniature harbor where a small boat was drawn up on the smooth beach.

With Sam helping, Rawlins shoved off the boat as the others climbed in.

“We might have come around by the launch, I suppose,” Rawlins remarked, “but it’s safer over at the dock and this boat’s handier.”

Sam at the oars and Rawlins steering, the boat swept away from the beach and headed for a jutting point.

As they drew near and the boys were watching the circling seabirds and admiring the beautifully colored water, Rawlins spoke to Sam and ordered him to stop rowing.

“See anything of the sub?” he asked as the boat lost headway.

Every one gazed about, expecting to see the undersea boat just awash or just emerging from the surface, but not a ripple broke the glassy water. Along the shore they were approaching was a dense belt of green trees—mangroves and sea grape—with a few ragged coconut palms above all, but not a sign of anything remotely resembling a submarine.

“No, I give up,” said Mr. Pauling at last.

“So do I,” added Mr. Henderson.

“Me too,” said Tom.

“I don’t believe it’s here,” declared Frank.

Rawlins chuckled. “Thought it was pretty good,” he exclaimed. “You’ve been looking right at her, too.”

“Looking at her!” exclaimed Mr. Pauling.

“Where?”

“Straight ahead,” laughed Rawlins, “over against that point.”

All eyes were now turned towards the point and as Sam again took to his oars and they drew nearer and nearer the two men and the boys searched the rocks and greenery in vain.

Not until they were within one hundred yards of the shore were they rewarded. Then Tom uttered a cry. “Hurrah, I see it!” he shouted. “Gosh, but she *was* hidden! Say, how did you do it?”

“Just a bit of camouflage,” chuckled Rawlins. “Idea I got when making a set once. Thought it might be handy to be able to lie on the surface and not be seen sometime.”

“Well you’ve certainly succeeded,” declared Mr. Henderson. “The effect of the rocks and foliage is perfect. I’d defy any one to see her five hundred feet distant.”

Even now the outlines of the submarine were so hidden by the clever painting on her upper works and hull that the boys could not have been sure what was boat and what was foliage if a man had not appeared, emerging from a hatchway, and followed by two others.

The next minute the boat was alongside the craft, and scrambling onto her decks the boys gazed about with interest.

They had been on this same underseas boat before, but then she had been tied up to a dock in the Navy Yard and only curiosity to see what she contained had filled their minds. But now she was riding on the waters in the West Indies, she was manned and ready to sail and the boys were wildly excited at the thoughts of adventures to come and of sailing on a real submarine under the sea.

CHAPTER IV—RADIO MAGIC

“It appears to me there’s one point you’ve overlooked,” remarked Mr. Pauling as he glanced about. “I thought your main idea in using this submarine was that if sighted by any of those we are after they would recognize it and their suspicions would not be aroused. With this disguise they would never know the boat.”

Rawlins laughed. “Oh, I’ve kept that in mind,” he responded. “This is just a camouflaged camouflage.”

Then, before Mr. Pauling could ask for an explanation, he turned to the members of his crew, gave an order and, to the amazement of Mr. Pauling and his party, the men commenced to strip a layer of painted canvas from the submarine.

“By Jove!” exclaimed Mr. Henderson, “that’s cleverly done. I never realized it was not painted upon the vessel herself. You’re some artist, Rawlins.”

As soon as the canvas disguise had been removed, preparations were made to get under way and all entered the hatch in the superstructure.

“How about the destroyer?” inquired Mr. Pauling. “Did you arrange with Disbrow to be near in case of need?”

“Yes,” replied Rawlins. “We simply have to give him our position and he’ll be within an hour’s run.”

“Didn’t I understand you had a surprise in store for us?” asked Mr. Henderson. “What was it, that canvas camouflage?”

“Not a bit of it!” declared Rawlins. “It’s down below. Come along and have a look at it.”

Descending into the submarine, Rawlins led the way through the narrow passage past the engine room and stopped before a small iron door. “Be prepared for a jolt!” he warned them and as he spoke threw the door open.

As the two men glanced within they fairly jumped and both uttered involuntary cries of utter amazement. Seated upon a bunk in the small steel walled room was

a man and no second glance was needed to recognize him. It was Smernoff!

But what a changed Smernoff! No longer did the small piglike eyes glare defiance and hatred at the Americans. His head was bowed upon his chest, his mouth, once so hard and cruel, drooped at the corners, his face was lined and seamed and his eyes held a far-away, wistful look.

“Where did he come from?” exclaimed Mr. Henderson, when he recovered from his surprise at this totally unexpected and almost miraculous reappearance of the Russian.

“And what on earth’s happened to him?” added Mr. Pauling. “Why, the fellow looks absolutely tamed and cowed—in fact broken. What *have* you done to him?”

“He’s tame all right,” replied Rawlins. “But we haven’t done a thing to him—except keep him locked up until we had orders from you. He’s no longer either an enemy or a ‘red,’ Mr. Pauling.”

“Well, you’re a most surprising man—I don’t wonder your darky caretakers believe you are in league with the devil—and you speak in riddles. Come, what’s the story? Why is this fellow so changed and what on earth do you mean when you say he’s no longer a ‘red’ or an enemy?”

But before Rawlins could reply a deep voice came from the room and with a start Mr. Pauling whirled about to find that Smernoff was speaking; and in English.

“Excuse, please,” he said in slow hesitating words. “Me, I no mek trouble, no. Me, I theenk maybe can help. Me, I want keel all Bolshevik fellow. Ah! heem, I dreenk he blood!”

“By Jove, he speaks English!” cried Mr. Henderson.

“I’ll say he does!” agreed Rawlins with a grin. “Always has, just been bluffing all along, but he’s through with that now. I’ll tell you the story in a few words. Two days out we sighted a disabled powerboat and running alongside found Smernoff just about all in lying in the bottom. You can just bet I was about knocked clean over when I saw him. Last I’d seen of him he was under lock and key in jail and here he was bobbing up in a little power boat in the middle of the Atlantic. Of course none of the men knew him so I said nothing—told them he was a bit looney and we’d have to keep him locked up.

“The next day he spoke to me in English and nearly bowled me over again by

doing so. Then he told me he'd escaped and all about it. Said he'd got away by the aid of some 'red' sympathizers in the prison and had hidden with friends on the East Side somewhere down in Allen Street. While he was lying low he got word from Russia that his whole family—kids and all—had been murdered by the Bolshevists and he went clean off his head at that. It was one thing to be a 'red' and kill others and a different matter to have the 'reds' killing your folks.

"Well, the upshot of it was that he swung clean around and only had one thought and that was to get even. He started in by doing up all the 'reds' he knew around his hang-out and then hit it for the docks with the idea of clearing out—stowing away—in some ship that would get him to Europe. But he couldn't make it. Too many cops about and so he grabbed a powerboat, paddled away from the docks at night and started for the open sea.

"He wasn't nutty enough to expect to cross in the craft, but he had an idea he could get well off the land and sight some outward bound ship and get picked up. Only trouble was he hadn't figured on a northwest gale which drove him off the steamships' courses and left him disabled and without grub or water. Drifted three days and nights before we hove in sight. He thinks it's a direct act of God and I don't know but he's right. At any rate, he's keen on being with us and if he is in earnest—and I reckon he wouldn't have taken the chance he did if he wasn't—he'll be a help to us all right."

"It's one of those miraculous coincidences that are far stranger than fiction," commented Mr. Pauling. "But I am skeptical about his story. How do we know it is not a tissue of lies? He may have merely tried to escape the police in the launch and invented this yarn to hoodwink us. I guess we'd better keep him locked up."

"Well he's got the letter telling about his folks being killed," said Rawlins.

"H-m-m, and his face *is* changed—I'm inclined to believe him," declared Mr. Henderson. "You know, Pauling," he continued, "there are no more vindictive enemies of the 'reds' than one of their company who suffers at their hands. You must remember that Ivan was as fanatical a Soviet as ever lived until his parents were butchered."

"Yes, you're right, Henderson," admitted Mr. Pauling. "We'll have a long talk with Smernoff and get at the truth. But for the present we'll leave him. Plenty of time after we're under way."

Rawlins grinned, "We're under way now," he remarked. "Have been for the past fifteen minutes. Didn't you hear the engines?"

“Jove, you don’t say so!” exclaimed Mr. Henderson.

“Gosh, I can’t believe it!” cried Tom.

“Why, I thought that noise was just the dynamos!” put in Frank. “Say, are we under water?”

“Surest thing you know!” replied Rawlins. “She’s under her electric motors now and runs smooth as a watch. Come on, boys, and have a squint through the periscope.”

“We’ll stay behind a bit and talk to Smernoff,” said Mr. Pauling. “No use in keeping him locked up if he’s in earnest.”

Reaching the observation room Rawlins led the boys to the eye-piece of the periscope and as Tom squinted into it he gave a delighted cry.

“Gosh, Frank, we *are* under water! Say, I can see the island back there pretty near two miles away. Isn’t it great! Think of being in a real submarine under the sea!”

Frank was as delighted and interested as Tom when his turn came to have a look. Then, a few minutes later, the louder rumble of the Diesel motors throbbed through the undersea craft and Rawlins announced that they were on the surface.

“No use running submerged except when in sight of land or a vessel,” he said, “she doesn’t make half her speed underwater and it’s a strain on her and we might bump into a reef. I’m not any too familiar with the channels that will accommodate her submerged.”

Hurrying up the steel ladder the boys and Rawlins reached the deck and gazed about, delighted at the speed the craft was making and the novel sensation of traveling on a submarine. But there was really little to be seen and the vessel might have been an ordinary ship as far as appearances or sensations were concerned. Noticing the aerial overhead, the boys’ minds at once turned to radio.

“Are our things all right?” Tom asked Rawlins. “I guess we might as well get busy and set them up. We may need them at any time.”

“Sure they’re all right,” replied the diver. “But say, I’ve been wondering how you’ll work this thing. Won’t the steel hull interfere with the waves?”

“I don’t know,” admitted Tom, “but we’ll soon find out. At any rate if the others sent and received messages in this craft we can.”

“Well if they could and they did why did they need this gadget overhead?” asked

Rawlins.

“Maybe that was just for sending when on the surface,” suggested Frank. “You know those sets of ours would only send a short distance under water and we used mighty short wave lengths. If they wanted to send and receive ordinary messages they’d need this aerial, I expect.”

“Hadn’t thought of that,” said Rawlins. “I never can get onto this radio stuff. By the way, how about showing me how a fellow can hear a fly jazzing and all that?”

“Gosh!” exclaimed Tom, “I’d almost forgotten those crystals. Say, I’ll bet that’s how they received under water. Come on, let’s try some experiments.”

Descending the ladder, they made their way to the radio room and Rawlins hauled out the cases in which the boys’ undersea radio sets were packed. The naval operator who was in charge of the room looked rather contemptuously at the “kids” as he considered them, but his attitude underwent a tremendous change when he learned that the “kids” were in control of the radio aboard and that he was subject to their orders.

“Let’s try those crystals first,” suggested Frank. “I’m crazy to see if they’ll really do all that article said they would.”

As the boys got out the big crystals the regular operator’s eyes gleamed. “By Jupiter!” he exclaimed, “That’s the first time I’ve seen those since the war. We used ’em in submarine detectors you know—could hear a sub’s screw whirring three miles off.”

“Hurrah, then you know about them!” cried Tom. “I’m awfully glad you do. We only read about them and Mr. Rawlins wouldn’t believe the things we told him, so we’re going to show him.”

“Well, I don’t know such an all-fired lot either,” admitted the naval man. “But I know they worked wonders as we used ’em.”

“Let’s see,” said Tom as he examined the crystal in its metal support. “We have to connect it with our amplifier. There, that may not be right, but it’s the way I understand it. Then we connect another crystal to the amplifier. Now let’s see. They say that if this is done right and the first crystal is scratched or rubbed on something, the second one will reproduce the noise, only thousands of times louder.”

As he spoke, he gingerly touched the crystal, but nothing happened. With a

puzzled look he rubbed his finger across it and still no result. Then, opening his pocket knife he scratched the crystal deeply, but still nothing occurred.

Rawlins began to laugh. “Nothing doing!” he exclaimed. “I’ll bet they’re only good for medicine.”

“I expect we haven’t got it connected properly,” said Frank. “Let’s try a different combination.”

While he spoke the two boys were busy disconnecting and rearranging the wires while Rawlins chuckled and kidded them good-naturedly.

Finally the boys had the wires connected and as Tom turned on the filament to the amplifier tubes in preparation for another trial Rawlins, who had been casually examining a bit of crystal tossed it onto the table. Instantly there was a shivering crash.

“Struck a reef!” cried Rawlins, and with frightened eyes all stood motionless, silently staring at one another and expecting each moment to feel the craft reeling or to hear excited shouts from the engine room. Was she injured? Was their cruise to end so soon? Was the submarine sinking? Such thoughts sped through the boys’ minds and each wondered how long they would stand there waiting for the order to desert their craft. But the steady throb of the engines continued. No sounds of excitement came from the engine crew. No signal from the navigator.

“Well I’ll be jiggered!” ejaculated Rawlins. “Must have just scraped bottom. Close shave though. Well, I guess you’re satisfied those salt rocks aren’t all they’re cracked up to be.”

As he ended Rawlins contemptuously flipped his finger nail against a crystal and almost bumped his head against the low ceiling as he leaped aside, for at the touch of his finger nail a high-pitched shriek seemed to issue from the crystals.

“Hurrah!” shouted Tom. “Hurrah! Now do you say they don’t work!”

“Oh, oh!” cried Frank between peals of laughter. “Oh, oh! That *is* one on you, Mr. Rawlins. That ‘struck a reef!’ Say, that wasn’t a reef, that was just the crystal you tossed on the table!”

Rawlins stood staring with gaping mouth and incredulous eyes.

“Sure it was!” repeated Frank. “See here!” Picking up the fragment of crystal he dropped it on the table top and again the rattling crash resounded through the room.

“Well!” cried Rawlins. “That beats anything I ever saw or heard by twenty miles.”

Half fearfully he reached forward and moved the crystal and a dull grating noise resulted. He tapped gently on the table and the blows resounded through the room like strokes of a sledge hammer.

“Beats the Dutch, don’t it!” exclaimed the operator. Then, taking out his watch he placed it on the table near the crystals and instantly steady beats like a hammer ringing on an anvil came from the crystals.

“Oh, here you are!” exclaimed Mr. Pauling who now entered the room. “What are you up to? Oh, I see—trying to show our Missouri friend! Well, how does it work?”

“I’ll say I’m shown!” declared Rawlins. “Darndest thing I ever saw! Just look here, Mr. Pauling. Drop something on the table there.”

Rather curiously, Tom’s father drew a coin from his pocket and dropped it on the table as suggested and at the resounding bang that followed he uttered an exclamation of amazement and involuntarily jumped back.

“You don’t mean to say that was the sound of a dime dropping?” he cried. “Why, it’s simply marvelous—absolutely uncanny.”

“Now don’t you believe you could hear a fly walk?” demanded Tom of Rawlins.

“You bet, and a mosquito sneeze!” replied the diver. “I’ll wager you could hear a man write his own name.”

Drawing a pencil from his pocket he wrote his name upon the paper covering the table, and all gasped in wonder as each stroke of the pencil came to their ears in grating, reverberating howls.

“Ah ha!” ejaculated Mr. Henderson who had approached unseen. “So you’ve found the magic in the crystals! But I’d wager you haven’t found all the wonders they contain yet. I suppose you haven’t a phonograph on board?”

“One of the men has,” replied the naval operator. “Shall I fetch it, sir?”

“Yes, if you will,” said Mr. Henderson. “I’ll show you a singing crystal in a moment, and there’s another thing. These crystals possess another remarkable property—they generate electricity.”

“Generate electricity!” cried Tom in puzzled tones. “How can they do that?”

“I’ll try to show you when we have tried the phonograph test,” replied Mr.

Henderson. “Ah, here’s the machine.”

Shutting off the current to the tubes, Mr. Henderson removed the sound box from the phonograph, fastened a needle to the crystal with a bit of thread and sealing wax, fastened the whole to the arm of the machine and adjusting the needle so it rested on a record set the phonograph in motion.

“Now turn on your filament rheostats,” he said, and as Tom did so, the second crystal suddenly burst into a rollicking song.

“Absolutely amazing!” declared Mr. Pauling as the record stopped.

“Here’s another!” laughed Mr. Henderson, as he again started the record moving. Then, lifting the second crystal, he placed it in his pocket with the result that he seemed to be singing himself.

The boys roared with merriment.

“Why,” cried Tom. “With one of those any one could be a ventriloquist. All you’d have to do would be to have wires leading out of sight and keep the crystal in your pocket. Wouldn’t it be rich!”

Mr. Henderson now took the singing crystal from his pocket and placed it on a bare spot of wood and to every one’s amazement it jumped and leaped about as if endowed with life.

“Dances while it sings,” remarked Mr. Henderson. “That shows how strong the vibrations are. Now let’s try the test for electricity I mentioned.”

Selecting a large crystal Mr. Henderson placed it in one of the metal frames whose use the boys could not fathom and after fastening wires to it asked if they had a voltmeter.

The operator brought one and attaching the wires from the crystal to the instrument Mr. Henderson told them to watch the needle. Then, turning the knob on the frame and thus twisting it slightly, he brought a strain upon the crystal and instantly the needle of the voltmeter soared upward to 500.

“Jehoshaphat!” cried Frank. “That beats all yet!”

“I’ll say it does!” agreed Rawlins.

“But, why have you never told us about them before?” asked Tom.

“Simply forgot them,” replied Mr. Henderson. “I never made use of them and had merely seen their wonders demonstrated out at the Bell laboratories when I was inspector there. Thought them remarkable but of no practical value at the

time, although I knew later they were used as submarine detectors and for deep-seas sounding. I can see now, however, how useful they will prove. What are you boys intending to do with them?"

"Well, we hadn't exactly decided yet," replied Tom, "but we thought the fellows that had this sub probably used them in receiving undersea radio and we were going to rig up something of the same sort."

"I expect they did use them," agreed Mr. Henderson, "and you should be able to arrange a set with them. Does Bancroft here know how those submarine detectors were arranged?"

"Well, not exactly, Sir," replied the operator, "but I think I can manage after a bit of experimenting, Sir. That is, with the young gentlemen's help."

"Very well, go to it," replied Mr. Henderson, "but you'll find they're doing it with your help if you don't watch out. I'll wager they can teach you a lot about radio."

But both Bancroft and the boys found it a far more difficult matter to rig up a detector than they had imagined.

"The trouble is we can't tell when it's right," said Tom, "and we don't know yet whether or not we can hear even without the crystals. I vote we get Rawlins to stop the submarine and go down and test the thing out."

This seemed a good plan, but they were now well away from land and both Rawlins and Mr. Pauling told the impatient boys that they would have to wait until the next day when Rawlins said they would be near one of the cays and could run into shoal water and test the instruments.

In the meantime Smernoff had been put through a severe grilling and at last, Mr. Pauling and Mr. Henderson being convinced that the Russian was cured of Bolshevism forever and really wanted to do anything in his power to aid in stamping out the gang of which he had been a member, he was freed, but cautioned to remain within certain bounds and was turned over to the chief engineer.

"He's a machinist and engineer," Mr. Henderson explained, "but he's also a desperate character, or at least was, and has escaped from prison twice. For reasons which I need not mention we are inclined to think he's reformed and may be of help. Let him work, but keep an eye on him constantly and if you see anything suspicious or any attempt to disable the machinery or to do anything that savors of treachery have him put in irons if you have to tap him over the

head with a spanner to do it."

The engineer squinted at Mr. Henderson with a quizzical expression. Then, wiping his big hairy hands on a piece of cotton waste he pushed back his greasy cap exposing a shock of flaming hair.

"Verra weel, Sir," he replied. "I ken his breed an' ye can trust me ta see nowt happens as shouldna'. But I ne'er used spanner on lad yet, Sir, an ne'er expect to hae to. Naw, naw, Meester Henderson, Sir; 'tis a braw laddie I canna make see the light o' reason wi' me ain han's."

Mr. Henderson chuckled. "Yes, I guess you're right there, McPherson," he replied. "I remember the story about your holding the reverse when the lever broke on the *Baxter*. Personally, I think I'd prefer the spanner to your fists if I were the culprit."

Early the next morning Long Island was sighted and, passing Whale Point with the submarine submerged, Rawlins headed for Rum Cay. Here, under Sam's guidance, the sub-sea boat was brought safely into a sheltered cove and preparations were made for tests of the radio. Rawlins donned his suit and slipped out through the air-lock, for the first test was to see if he could hear what was sent from the submarine. When, after the stipulated time, he returned, he reported that he had heard clearly, but not as loudly as in New York. Satisfied that their sending apparatus would work just as well from within the submarine as from shore Tom also donned a diving suit for the purpose of sending to Frank who was left in charge of the receiving set with Bancroft to help him.

Despite the fact that Tom had been down so often in the north it was a totally new and strange sensation to descend here in the Bahamas and from a submarine. He entered the air-lock with Rawlins, saw the water-tight steel doors closed behind him, saw Rawlins moving a wheel and slowly the water rose about him. Then Rawlins stepped to a lever, a round steel door slowly opened in the floor and following Rawlins Tom slipped through and half floated to the bottom of the sea. For a moment he could scarcely believe he was under water. He had expected everything to be indistinct, shadowy and green as it had been in the north. Instead, he seemed standing in air suffused with a soft blue light. Before him, plain and distinct, was the bulk of the submarine, each seam and rivet clearly visible. Under his feet was a smooth, white, sandy floor. Here and there great purple sea-fans, swaying black sea-rods and masses of gaudy coral broke the broad expanse of sand while, over and about him, brilliant scarlet, purple, blue, gold and multicolored fishes swam lazily, paying not the least attention to

the intruders. Looking up, Tom could see only a marvelously blue void like a summer's sky and on every side he could see for what seemed an interminable distance. It was all very wonderful and very beautiful and he would have liked to stop and admire it, but Rawlins held his arm and was guiding him along the sea bottom away from the submarine.

"Gosh, it's great!" exclaimed Tom, suddenly remembering that he could converse with his companion.

"Didn't I tell you 'twas!" replied Rawlins, his voice coming to Tom so distinctly that the boy started. "Not much like that dirty old river."

"Hello, hello!" came Frank's voice plainly, but rather faintly. "Were you speaking, Tom?"

"Yes, can you hear?" cried Tom.

"What is it you say?" queried Frank's voice. "I can't make out a word. Just a sort of crackling like static."

Tom spoke still louder and at last shouted, but still Frank kept asking what he was saying and declaring he could not make it out.

"Well, something's wrong," Tom announced at last. "Might as well go back. They can't hear."

Ascending through the open door to the air-lock Tom waited while Rawlins manipulated the machinery which forced the water from the tiny chamber and let in the air and a moment later they were again in the radio room.

"I knew you were talking," said Frank, "but I couldn't make out a single word, just buzzes and clicks. What do you suppose is wrong?"

"It's the way we have it connected up," declared Tom, "but it gets me. I can't understand why, if we get sounds through our suits with those little grid antennae you shouldn't get them here with that bigger antenna. Did you try the regular aerial connection too?"

"Yes I tried both—or rather Mr. Bancroft tried one and I tried the other—and he didn't get anything."

"Well, if the fellow who had this sub before used those crystals then they had 'em hooked up differently or something. I wonder if their sets in their suits would work better."

Acting on this idea Rawlins donned one of the suits they had taken from their

captives in New York and again went down, but the results were no better. As Frank had said, there were sounds—buzzing noises which were intermittent and indicated that Rawlins was speaking, but nothing that in the least resembled human voice or words.

“We’ll have to think this out,” declared Tom. “We get the noises, but not the words so it must be we pick up the waves and it’s a question of modulation. Let’s see. Those crystals magnify sounds when they’re touched or vibrated or when there’s a vibration or jar to the thing they’re resting on. Gosh! I believe I know our trouble.”

“Well, what is it?” demanded Frank.

“Why, we’ve got this rigged up for a detector—the way they did for submarines—and we *do* get the noises which was what they wanted when locating a sub, but we don’t get the words. The trouble is we’ve got the cart before the horse. We’ve hooked this up so the crystals come before the phones. What we need is to transfer the sound waves in the phones to the crystals and let ’em amplify them. As ’tis now we’re amplifying electric waves not sound waves.”

“I guess you’re right,” agreed Frank. “Let’s try it the other way.”

It took some time to rearrange the set, but with Mr. Henderson to advise and Bancroft to help, it was done at last and once more Rawlins entered the air-lock.

Hardly had he had time to reach bottom the boys thought when, to their inexpressable delight, his voice came to their ears clearly.

“Hello!” he said. “Do you get me?”

“Hurrah it works!” cried Tom and instantly Rawlins’s voice responded:

“Bully for you!”

“Walk farther off and see if we can get you,” suggested Tom over the phone.

“All right,” responded Rawlins.

Five minutes passed and then, rather faint, but still easily understandable, Rawlins’ voice again came to them.

“All right,” cried Tom. “How far away are you?”

“About five hundred yards,” replied the diver. “I can just hear you.”

“Well that’s about the limit, I guess,” remarked Tom, as Rawlins told him he was returning to the submarine. “Say, isn’t it just immense?”

“Wonderful!” agreed his father. “But let me ask a question. Suppose we overhear some one talking. How will you know where they are or whether they are under water or on land. It seems to me that’s a very important matter.”

“Golly, that’s so!” exclaimed Tom. “I hadn’t thought of that. Our loop aerials won’t work in here, I suppose.”

“Might,” commented Frank, and then, “What about that resonance coil? That might do.”

“Let’s try!” agreed Tom, and calling to Rawlins to wait where he was they hurriedly disconnected their instruments and connected the odd resonance coil in position.

“Now, say something, Mr. Rawlins,” called Tom.

Anxiously the boys waited but no response came although the boys could hear a very faint buzzing sound.

“Well, that evidently is a failure,” said Tom, “but just the same these fellows wouldn’t have had it aboard unless there was some use for it.”

“I’ll tell you what I think,” said Bancroft. “My idea is they used that in the air, when they were running on the surface or just awash. You might get the words from under water then, or perhaps it wasn’t used for undersea work.”

“We’ll have to try that—when Mr. Rawlins gets here,” replied Tom.

Presently Rawlins appeared and the boys told him of their new plans. In a few minutes the submarine had risen to the surface and the boys prepared to test the resonance coil.

“First we’ll try it in the air,” announced Tom. “Walk over on the island there, Mr. Rawlins, and see if we can get you.”

Accordingly, the diver slipped into the sea and a few moments later his head appeared near shore and for the first time the boys experienced the strange sensation of seeing a man walk ashore from beneath the water. That they could receive messages with the resonance coil through the air was soon proved to their satisfaction, and telling Rawlins to go under water and walk about in different directions the two boys and their companions, who were fully as much interested, prepared for the final test. But this was a dismal failure and chagrined and disappointed the boys gave up at last.

“If we hear any one under water we’ll have to find them some other way,” Tom

announced. “We just get that funny buzz we used to hear in New York. And I’ll bet anything that was the men talking under water. But if we hear anyone talking in the air we can locate them all right.”

As Tom had been speaking he had turned half around and his resonance coil was swung towards the southeast. The next moment, Frank’s excited voice called up from below where he had been seated at the receivers.

“Jehoshaphat!” he yelled. “They’re talking! Those Russians! I hear them plainly!”

CHAPTER V—A NARROW ESCAPE

At Frank's words Mr. Pauling and Mr. Henderson leaped to their feet and Tom almost dropped the coil in his surprise. "By glory!" exclaimed Rawlins, who had just appeared.

"Are you sure?" demanded Mr. Pauling. "Of course I'm sure," replied Frank. "I heard them just as plain as in New York."

Scrambling down the ladder all gathered about the instruments, but despite every effort no sounds came to their ears.

"Well, it did before," insisted Frank. "I hadn't been hearing anything and then, suddenly, I heard the voices."

Tom sprang up and rushed towards the ladder. "Keep listening," he yelled. "I'll bet I know how 'twas."

Hurrying up the ladder, he gained the deck and seizing the resonance coil moved it slowly about as if pointing with a stick. Then, just as it pointed to the southeast he heard Rawlins' voice.

"They've got it again," he shouted up the ladder. "Come down and hear it."

"If I do you'll lose it," Tom shouted back. "It's this resonance coil. You only get the voices when it points to the southeast. Tell them to listen and you yell up when they lose it and get it."

Again Tom swung the coil about and before it had moved two feet Rawlins called up that the sounds had faded away. Once more Tom swung the coil back to its former position and once again Rawlins notified him that the voices could be heard.

But Tom was wild to be down below and hastily hanging the coil to the rail by knotting his handkerchief he hurried down.

"I knew that was it," he declared excitedly. "The coil works and they're southeast of here. Do you know what they're saying?"

“No, it’s Russian or German,” replied Mr. Henderson. “Wish Ivan were here.”

“What’s the matter with Smernoff?” suggested Rawlins.

“Of course!” exclaimed Mr. Henderson. “By Jove, what fools we are! Get him, Rawlins.”

Rawlins dashed from the room and returned a few seconds later dragging the big Russian with him.

“Here, Smernoff!” ordered Mr. Henderson. “Tell us what they’re saying. And no lying, either!”

Clapping the receivers over the Russian’s ears Mr. Henderson shoved him into the chair. For a moment the slow-witted fellow seemed dazed and uncomprehending and then, as the words came to him and he realized what was wanted, a strange look of mingled cunning and ferocity crossed his features and his chest heaved with the intensity of his efforts to catch every syllable.

Impatiently the others waited. To ask him to translate as the conversation went on they knew would merely result in failure; his English was too limited and his brain too slow for that.

“Might let him talk back,” suggested Rawlins in a whisper. “He could put up a yarn about escaping and find out where they are.”

Mr. Pauling shook his head. “You don’t know the men you’re dealing with,” he said. “They probably know all about his escape and his acts in New York and a word from him would simply forewarn them. I had the sending set cut off the moment I came in—I’m not risking any chance of being heard.”

A moment later, Smernoff slowly swung his big body around and with a savage glint in his eyes took the receivers from his ears and rose.

“They been done,” he announced. “No more talk. Me, I hear heem say he been try keel me, me, Alexis Smernoff. Ha! Heem teenk he get me, eh? Me, I make keel heem mos’ likely. Heem say me, I what you say—geef double cross—Ah! heem Bolsheviki keel mine boy, mine girl, mine wife. Ah! me, I help the gentlemen.”

“Yes, yes, we know all that, Smernoff!” cried Mr. Henderson impatiently, “but what else did they say? Where are they?”

The Russian spread his palms and shrugged his shoulders expressively.

“Heem no say notting more,” he declared. “Me, I no know where heem be.

Heem make to talk from boat, heem talk from how you call it—boat same like thees fellow."

"From a submarine?" cried Mr. Pauling.

"Sure, that eet," replied Smernoff. "Sutmavine you call heem? Ah, he same like thees only more beeg."

"Then they have got another sub!" exclaimed Rawlins. "I knew it! Darn it all, why didn't we get him here first thing? We might have got wise to where they are."

"Possibly," agreed Mr. Pauling, "but I doubt it. They would not be likely to give away any secrets."

"Now see here, Smernoff!" cried Mr. Henderson sharply. "You want to be free—you want to go to Russia. Well, you tell us where we'll find this crowd and I'll get you a pardon, see? Now out with it! Where does the crowd hang out—where do they stay? Not the chief—I don't believe you know that—but where do they keep that submarine and where did you live?"

Smernoff listened, a perplexed frown on his low forehead.

"Me, I no know," he replied. "Leetle islan'; Me, I no know hees name. He near one beeg place, one place me, I hear heem say call what you call heem Sam Dora—San Dom—me, I forget heem."

"Santo Domingo!" shouted Rawlins. "Was that it, Smernoff?"

The Russian's eyes lit up. "Sure!" he replied "That eet. Me I hear those fellow say beeg islan' San Dom—San Dom'go."

"I'll say that's a tip!" cried Rawlins, his face fairly beaming. "Hitches right onto the schooner left at the Caicos too. They're almost due north of Santo Domingo and I'll bet it's one of those cays. Come on, let's beat it."

Ten minutes later the cay was a rapidly fading patch of green behind them and at her top speed the submarine tore through the smooth sea with her bow pointed for the Caicos Islands.

But before they reached their goal their hopes were dashed, for through the air from an invisible destroyer lurking below the horizon came a long cypher message from Disbrow which, when decoded, informed those upon the submarine that the deserted schooner had disappeared—vanished as mysteriously and completely as had her crew, and that a careful search of the

islands had failed to reveal a sign of her or of the missing men.

“Well, that’s that,” said Rawlins, when Mr. Pauling told him of the message, “but there’s a bunch of cays and islands down there. I’ll bet Commander Disbrow didn’t hunt every one. I’m for getting down in there anyway. Maybe we can get their talk again.”

There seemed no better plan and so, giving Disbrow their position and course, they continued on their way, passing the Caicos low down on the horizon and making for the remote, uninhabited, outlying cays. In the hopes of again picking up the Russian conversation the resonance coil had been fixed on the superstructure and a man was detailed to slowly swing it back and forth through a wide arc, while below, one of the boys was constantly at the receivers with Bancroft at the regular equipment listening for messages from the destroyer or any other source.

Land was in sight ahead—low-lying, surf-beaten cays on the fringe of the Bahamas—when once more Tom heard the rough gutturals in his ears. Instantly he summoned Smernoff and with the signal bell, which had been arranged, notified the man at the resonance coil to hold it steady. Mr. Pauling, Mr. Henderson and Rawlins appeared at the same instant as the Russian and all waited breathlessly as the big fellow seated himself at the instruments. But only a few words came to him in the tongue of his native land and they were meaningless to him. Mere numbers, but which, after he had repeated them several times and his hearers were convinced he had made no mistake, caused the others to glance at one another and to retire behind closed doors the moment the Russian was out of sight. In the meantime Rawlins had hurried on deck and had asked the man at the coil for the direction in which it had pointed when the bell had sounded.

“Southeast by south one-quarter south, Sir,” he replied.

“Well, they’re not on those cays!” Rawlins announced as he joined the others. “The coil was pointing southeast by south one-quarter south and the cays are just about due south by east. What did you make of those numbers?”

“Latitude and longitude, I should say,” replied Mr. Pauling. “If so, where would they bring it?”

Rawlins left and returned a moment later with a chart. Spreading it on the table he ran his parallel ruler over it.

“If they are latitude and longitude they’re not anywhere within five hundred

miles," he declared, "and," he continued, "I don't believe they were latitude and longitude. One was X 3568 and the other 46 B 15. Whichever way you take it that would be way outside of the West Indies and I'll bet my best hat to a stale doughnut that they're some cypher numbers. By the jumping Jupiter! I have it! That's the way the Hun planes used to signal their gunners to direct their fire! Those fellows on that sub are directing some one to somewhere. Yes, sir, and I'll make another guess and that is they're onto us and are breaking for headquarters as fast as they can beat it. Likely as not those numbers refer to us. I'll say that's it! We never heard a peep from them till we began testing that radio under water. Shouldn't wonder if they were lying low not far off and heard us."

"You may be right," agreed Mr. Pauling. "But it's all guesswork. Of course we did not hear them before as we had not set up the instruments and had not used the resonance coil. But tell me, Henderson, how is it we get them on that and don't get them on the regular instruments?"

"Too weak for the latter," replied the other, "you forget the boys are using three stages of amplification and those crystals. But if that detector is right we should be able to hear that other sub if she's near. Are there any cays southeast by south one-quarter south, Rawlins?"

"Not this side of Haiti or Santo Domingo, but Smernoff said they were talking from a sub so that don't count."

"H-m-m," muttered Mr. Henderson. "Rather like searching for a needle in a haystack. For all we know they may not be headed for their hiding place."

"No, they may not," admitted Mr. Pauling, "but I think Rawlins is right in that part of his surmise. If the submarine picked up the schooner's crew as we assume, then they would naturally go direct to headquarters to report. If they continue to talk there is no reason why we should not trail them and eventually run them down."

"Well I'm going to pump that Smernoff," declared Rawlins. "I'll bet he can tell us something. Not that I think he's lying, but he's just naturally thick as mud and he doesn't get all we say to him. He must be able to tell something about the island if he lived there, and if he does I may be able to recognize it from his description."

"Well, good luck, Rawlins," laughed Mr. Henderson as the diver hurried aft. "Sorry you can't talk Russian."

But when, an hour later, Rawlins reappeared the others knew instantly by the

expression on his face that he had learned something of value.

“I’ll say he knew something!” cried Rawlins gleefully. “Had the deuce of a job getting at it—couldn’t seem to make him understand, but got it little by little. He says the island was about a mile long and half a mile wide, that it was high and rocky in the middle, that one of the landmarks was a big turtle-shaped rock standing out of water just off a point and that the men lived in rooms or barracks which were cut in the solid rock.”

“That’s all very interesting—if true,” said Mr. Pauling, “but how does it help? There are probably a thousand islands of that size with similar high rocky centers and turtle-shaped, undercut rocks off their points. Why, the description might do just as well for New Providence.”

“Yes, except for one thing,” replied Rawlins, “and that of course was the last thing I got out of the old duck. Probably thought it wasn’t worth mentioning.”

“Well, out with it! What was it?” demanded Mr. Henderson.

“Rather I should have said two things,” Rawlins answered. “The first was the fact that there were rooms cut out of the rock and stairways cut from the rock leading up to an old fort or wall also cut from the solid rock. The second was that the place was inhabited by a sort of giant rat and that the men caught and ate them.”

“Might have been China!” laughed Mr. Pauling.

“Yes,” agreed Rawlins, “but it’s not. I know the place as well as I do my own island back in the Bahamas. There’s only one island in the West Indies that it could be. There aren’t many with ruins of forts cut from solid rock. I don’t know of another that has them and a turtle-shaped rock off the point, and I can swear there’s not another that has both those and the big rats as he calls them—the Jutias—and that’s a little island off Santo Domingo known as Trade Wind Cay.”

“Jove!” exclaimed Mr. Henderson. “Are you sure of that?”

“I’ll stake my life on it,” replied Rawlins soberly. “I’ll bet, if we head for Trade Wind Cay, we’ll find their hang-out. And here’s another bet—or hunch, or whatever you want to call it. Smernoff says it never took over a day for the sub to go to the chief’s place and return. Now there’s no blamed bit of land within half a day’s run of that cay except Santo Domingo and it’s dollars to brass tacks the old High-Muck-a-Muck hangs out there. Mighty good place too—lot of it wild and uninhabited, plenty of caves, fine hidden harbors and bush everywhere.”

“Rawlins you should be in the Service!” declared Mr. Pauling enthusiastically. “You’ve the imagination, the perseverance, the energy and the logic. I believe you’re right. I’m with you for Trade Wind Cay.”

“Well I had a sort of an idea I was in the Service, just at present,” laughed Rawlins, “and if the old sub don’t bust or run aground or shake herself to pieces we’ll be within sight of that cay inside of three days.”

No further messages were heard that day and all through the night they kept steadily on. The last bit of land had dropped from sight and far off on the southern horizon a faint misty cloud hung which Rawlins and Sam both insisted was the higher mountain tops of Haiti or Santo Domingo. Then, just before noon, the man in the conning tower called down the speaking tube to those below.

“Sail ahead!” he announced. “Looks like a schooner and about three points off our port bow.”

Ordinarily the sighting of a schooner would have caused no interest or excitement and would merely have called for submergence until out of sight, but with the knowledge that the mysterious submarine was somewhere in the surrounding waters and remembering the strange disappearance of the schooner reported by Disbrow, those on board the submarine hurried on deck to have a look.

“It’s a schooner all right,” declared Rawlins, after studying it through his glasses, “and it fits the description of the one that Disbrow lost to a ‘T.’ Shall we run over and have a look at her?”

“I suppose it would be wise,” agreed Mr. Pauling, “but how about being seen? I think we had better submerge and watch her through the periscope. If it’s another schooner we can get away without being seen—I doubt if these West Indians would notice a periscope—and if it *is* the schooner we want, we can either run alongside and board her or else keep watch at a safe distance and perhaps secure valuable information as to her objective.”

A few moments later only the submarine’s periscope was visible above the sea, and below, Rawlins, Mr. Pauling and the navigating officer kept their eyes glued to the eye-pieces. Now the schooner was plainly visible, even from the low elevation of the periscope, and as they drew ever nearer Rawlins noticed something peculiar about her. Although she had all lower sails spread they were drawing but little in the light wind and yet she was moving at a fairly good speed.

“I’ll be hanged!” Rawlins suddenly exclaimed. “She’s being towed!”

“Being towed?” repeated Mr. Pauling. “There’s nothing towing her.”

“Nothing!” almost shouted the diver. “Nothing! By all that’s holy she’s being towed by a submarine!”

“Yes, Sir; that’s what she is, Sir,” responded the navigator in matter-of-fact tones. “Shall we put a shot across her bows, Sir?”

Mr. Pauling burst out laughing despite the excitement and surprise of their discovery. “This is not wartime,” he replied. “We’d get into no end of trouble by such methods. That schooner is flying the British flag and for all we know to the contrary is an honest vessel in distress being towed by one of our own submarines.”

“What the deuce is up now!” interrupted Rawlins. “Look there! She’s stopped! Say, yes, darned if she isn’t. Jumping jiminy, the sub’s cut loose!”

“She’s no longer moving,” admitted Mr. Henderson. “Perhaps they’re waiting for us.”

“No, the sub’s gone!” declared Rawlins. “Don’t you think so, Quartermaster?”

The quartermaster, a grizzled but husky old sea dog, gazed silently for a minute.

“Yes, Sir,” he replied, “she seems to has, Sir. Sorry we couldn’t have bumped her, Sir.”

By now the schooner was close at hand and Rawlins was on the point of suggesting that they should run alongside and board her when Frank shouted that there was a queer noise in the receivers.

“It sounds like a hard wind or an electric fan,” he cried. “Come on and listen. What do you suppose it is?”

“The sub’s screw!” replied Rawlins. “I’ll bet she’s hustling. Shall we board that schooner?”

“Better,” replied Mr. Pauling, and orders were at once given to emerge. As the submarine, her decks awash, approached the schooner, those upon the under-sea boat’s superstructure gazed curiously at the craft they had overhauled. That she was the missing schooner they had sought all were sure, for she fitted the descriptions perfectly and the fact that she had been towed by a submarine was still further evidence. They were now within a few hundred yards and yet not a soul had appeared upon the schooner’s decks.

“Darned if she isn’t deserted again!” exclaimed Rawlins. “I’ll——”

At that instant the schooner’s masts seemed to spring into the air; a burst of flames and smoke shot from her decks, there was a terrific detonation and as the submarine rolled, pitched and rocked to the force of the explosion those upon her clutched wildly for support while all about fell bits of torn and shattered rigging, spars and canvas. Scared and white-faced those upon the submarine stared at one another, steadying themselves with their grasp of the handrails, soaked to the waist by the great waves that had washed over the half-submerged craft and speechless with the surprise and shock of the explosion. Only bits of wreckage marked the schooner. She had been blown to atoms.

CHAPTER VI—ON THE TRAIL OF THE SUBMARINE

Rawlins was the first to recover from the shock. “I’ll say that was a close shave!” he cried. “The dirty skunks! Missed us though and a miss is as good as a mile.”

Then, before any one had time to speak, he sprang towards the open hatchway. “Quick!” he shouted, as he leaped down the ladder. “Down below! Everybody! Hurry!”

Without stopping to question and only realizing that he must have good reasons for his orders, the others rushed after him and scarcely was the last one at the foot of the stairs when the hatch slid into place, men sprang to levers and wheels and the submarine was diving.

“Jiminy!” exclaimed Tom. “What on earth’s the matter? What do you mean by saying they missed us and then hustling us down below?”

“Don’t you understand?” snapped Rawlins. “It’s clear as glass. They tried to get us—knew we or the destroyer were trailing them and towed that schooner along as bait. Had it loaded with explosives and figured on touching them off when we or the destroyer sighted her and ran alongside. But they failed by about a minute. Probably timed the blamed infernal machine for the destroyer and didn’t allow for our speed—darned lucky for us! I don’t wonder they cleared out as fast as they could leg it.”

“Then if we’d been nearer we’d have been sunk!” cried Frank.

“Sunk!” exclaimed Rawlins. “Sunk! Why we’d have been blown to bits! But by crickey we’ll fool ’em and give 'em the jolt of their lives! Get busy with that detector, boys, and see if we can hear her screw again.”

The two boys sprang to their instruments and clapped the receivers to their ears.

“But what do you mean about surprising them?” asked Tom, still confused and puzzled.

“Why they’re down at the bottom now waiting, but they’ll be up having a look around to see if they made a good job of us,” explained Rawlins, “and while they’re squinting at the water and patting themselves on the back for their cleverness we’ll just bob up alongside.”

“But they may run into us,” objected Frank. “If they’re moving around down here, and they’ll heat our screws too.”

“Don’t you worry, son,” replied Rawlins. “We’re on hard bottom ten fathoms deep and quiet as a mouse and they’ll be on the surface looking for oil or wreckage. And by glory I’ll bump ’em, as the quarter-master says—that is, if I may, Mr. Pauling.”

“H-m-m,” muttered Mr. Pauling. “I don’t think they’re worthy of any consideration. They evidently tried to destroy us and are no better than pirates. I guess we’ll be perfectly safe in firing on them if necessary. But don’t sink them first thing, Rawlins. Put a shot over them—close enough to let them know we mean business. They can give us valuable information if we capture them, but dead men don’t talk.”

“You bet I’ll show ’em we mean business!” declared Rawlins. “I handled a gun and crew during the war and I bet my bottom dollar I can slam a shell so close to ’em it will take their hats off without rumpling their hair.”

“Oh, I hear that whirring again!” cried Frank excitedly.

“Me too!” added Tom.

Bancroft grabbed the receivers and put them on. For an instant he listened attentively and to his ears came the steady unmistakable swishing whir of a vessel’s screw, the sound Frank had so aptly compared to a heavy wind.

“She’s a-coming!” announced the operator. “Not far off, either!”

Rawlins sprang to the periscope and glued his eye to it, swinging it around throughout the entire arc of its movement.

“Now they’re closer!” cried Bancroft. Then a moment later: “Going off again! Sounds as if they’re circling!”

“I see ’em!” shouted Rawlins. “At least, I see their shadow. Yep—they’re circling. All ready! Stand by! Did you squirt that oil, Quartermaster?”

“Aye, aye, Sir,” replied the sailor. “Ready to emerge, Sir?”

“Gosh!” exclaimed Tom, to whom a new thought had just occurred. “Perhaps

they'll drop a depth bomb!"

"Thunderation!" cried Rawlins, "I hadn't thought of that! Don't believe they've got one though and it would be too risky to themselves. We're going up now. All ready for the surprise party!"

Then followed quick, sharp orders, men scurried about, levers were pulled and control wheels whirled while Rawlins stood with his eyes at the periscope and the quartermaster gazed fixedly at the dial of the depth indicator.

"Two fathoms, Sir!" he announced calmly.

"Periscope's up!" cried Rawlins. "I see her—off to starboard! All ready? Come on!"

At his last word he had bounded to the ladder with his men at his heels, the hatch slid open and onto the deck they poured with the two boys, Mr. Pauling and Mr. Henderson bringing up the rear.

A few hundred yards away a large submarine was floating, her upper works high above the smooth sea with a number of men gazing intently at the water from her decks.

The next instant they caught sight of the craft they had thought sunk and were as surprised, dumbfounded and amazed as if they had seen a ghost. Loud shouts and cries came clearly across the water from them, they ran hither and thither, confused, getting in one another's way and utterly at a loss to know what to do.

Before they could make a move, Rawlins and his crew had reached the gun, a shell was slipped into the breech, Rawlins spun the controls, the wicked-looking black barrel swung towards the enemy craft. The next instant there was a blinding flash, a puff of smoke, a deafening report and the wireless mast of the other submarine and the rails of the conning tower vanished as if by magic, while a few yards beyond her a great column of water leaped high in air.

"I'll say I bumped 'em!" fairly screamed Rawlins, as he spun open the breech of his gun and a second shell was slipped in.

At this totally unexpected turn of events the men upon the enemy submarine became panic-stricken. Some flung themselves flat upon the decks, others plunged headlong down the hatch, and still others huddled behind the rails and super-structure.

"Surrender or we'll sink you!" shouted Mr. Henderson who had grabbed up a megaphone.

As if in reply, there was a puff of smoke from the conning tower of the other vessel, a shrill whistle in the air and a bullet spatted spitefully against the steel plates within six inches of Mr. Henderson's head.

Rawlins waited for no further orders. Again came the flash and roar of his gun and in a burst of flame the entire top of the other's conning tower disappeared.

"Hurrah!" shouted the boys fairly dancing about, so excited and thrilled that they did not realize their danger. "Hurrah! That'll teach 'em!"

At this instant, Frank caught sight of a strange thing—a slender line of white moving swiftly through the blue water from the injured submarine and headed directly towards where he stood.

"Jimmy!" he yelled. "What's that? Look, coming right towards us! Looks like a big fish!"

The others glanced towards the spot indicated. "It's a torpedo!" cried Mr. Pauling. "Back her! Full speed astern! Quick or we'll all be killed!"

But it was too late. The engines had been stopped, the crew were on deck and long before they could start the motors and get under way the awful death dealing torpedo would be upon them and all would be over. It was traveling at a terrific speed and the white, foaming trail of its wake was plainly visible. Barely 500 feet lay between those on the submarine and instant death.

They were helpless, numbed, frozen with horror. Utterly unable to move, powerless to escape they stood there, the boys clinging to Mr. Pauling, the men with set faces, gritted teeth and grim eyes watching the oncoming, inevitable death.

But Rawlins had spied the torpedo as soon as Frank. With feverish haste he had loaded his gun; like a madman he swung it and depressed the barrel all unnoticed by those who were watching the oncoming torpedo and were hoping against hope, praying with heart and soul that by some miracle, some chance, it might miss, might fail to explode.

And as they prayed the miracle happened. A flash, a roar and where, an instant before, the torpedo had been, a huge column of water and foam sprung like a gigantic geyser high in air. There was terrific detonation, a concussion that threw the boys flat upon the deck, a shower of spray and as the submarine rocked, reeled and plunged to the waves the white-faced boys rose trembling and shaken to their feet. They were saved! Rawlins' skill had won, his well-aimed shot had been the answer to their prayers!

But Rawlins seemed suddenly to have gone mad. He was leaping, dancing and shouting.

“Darn their hides!” he screamed. “They got away! They’ve submerged! By glory if I’d only had another shot at ’em!”

It was true. Where the other submarine had been the water stretched unbroken, unruffled even by a periscope.

“Get down below!” ordered Rawlins racing towards the group upon the deck. “They may fire another torpedo or ram us! It’s risky up here!”

Pellmell after him the others pushed down the ladder and an instant later the submarine was once more under the sea while Rawlins swung the periscope about and Bancroft listened at the detector.

“I’m getting them,” he announced presently, “but pretty well off. Yes, getting fainter all the time. Expect they’re only too glad to get away.”

“Oh, hang the luck!” cried Rawlins flinging down his cap. “Why didn’t I shoot a bit lower and disable ’em!”

“Why, man, you saved us!” cried Mr. Pauling, grasping Rawlins’ hand and patting him on the shoulder. “You made a wonderful hit! Absolutely marvelous! Aren’t you satisfied with that?”

“We owe you our lives,” put in Mr. Henderson. “It was the finest thing I’ve ever seen—wonderful marksmanship, Rawlins.”

Rawlins flushed. “Oh, shucks!” he exclaimed. “Didn’t I save my own hide too? More luck than anything else. A fellow has to depend a heap on luck in my business, you know.”

“Well all the luck in the world without a clear head, quick mind, steady hands and a true eye wouldn’t have helped in that case,” declared Mr. Pauling. “I certainly thank Heaven for our escape—whether through luck or expert gunnery, my boy.”

“Yes, but we might have got those dirty Huns at the same time,” lamented Rawlins. “If I hadn’t been so all-fired afraid of sinking them and had shot a mite lower.”

“Don’t you suppose you did sink them?” asked Mr. Henderson. “I shouldn’t think they could maneuver with their superstructure and conning tower smashed.”

“No, they got away all right,” replied Rawlins. “Didn’t we just hear them—and they’re beating us even with a shell through their upper works, As long as the hatches and bulkheads weren’t hit they’d be all right, of course they’re running blind, my shot carried away their periscope—that is, unless they’ve got another one—but as long as it’s open sea and they know their course that’s safe enough. Of course they’ll come up pretty soon—as soon as they’re well out of range of our gun; but I’ll bet we don’t sight them again. Guess we might as well go up to the top. No use ambling along down here. We’d better hike it to Trade Wind Cay.”

As Rawlins had foreseen, they did not catch a glimpse of the other submarine and very soon the faint whir of her screws was lost. It was evident that even in her partly disabled condition she was a much faster craft than their own and Rawlins declared that he believed her one of the very latest types that were launched just before the close of the war and very few of which actually left German harbors.

“Funny she didn’t carry a gun,” commented Mr. Henderson, “and lucky she didn’t for us.”

“She did,” replied Rawlins. “Disappearing gun, but they were either too rattled or too surprised to use it. Probably thought it easier and safer to sneak that torpedo at us. I’ll say they were some surprised when it didn’t hit!”

“Begging your pardon, Sir, they never knowed it didn’t hit, Sir,” remarked the quartermaster. “They was all below when they fired it, Sir, and were just awash when you exploded it. I was a-noticin’ of that, Sir.”

Rawlins slapped his thigh and let out an exultant shout. “By crickey, then we may get ’em yet!” he exclaimed. “If they think the torpedo got us they’ll make straight for their hang-out and think we’re done for. I was afraid they’d keep off and not show up.”

Throughout that day nothing occurred. A message was sent to Disbrow giving him their course and the position of the Cay and the submarine kept steadily on her way. Early on the second morning a faint blur showed upon the horizon ahead and after studying it through his glasses Rawlins announced that it was Trade Wind Cay.

“Guess we’d better submerge,” he said. “If they’re there they’ll spot us mighty quick and when we get closer we’ll even get our periscope down. No use of taking any chances. Smernoff says they used to sink to the bottom off the coast and let the men walk ashore, so we can play that same game—only in a different

place. But we'll have to keep the men on board ready to come up the minute we need 'em. If there's a big bunch on the Cay there's no use in tackling them single-handed."

"Yes, that's the best plan," agreed Mr. Pauling, "but there's one matter we must bear in mind. Whoever goes ashore to scout must be able to communicate with those aboard here. If we use radio the others will also hear it and be suspicious—we have every reason to think they already know we are, or rather were, following them and we must not count too much on their thinking they sunk us. How can we arrange that? Have you any suggestion, Henderson?"

"Have to arrange some sort of signal, I suppose," replied Mr. Henderson. "Possibly by means of these submarine detectors. I imagine that a bell could be fixed to ring under water so we could hear it."

"I've a better scheme than that," declared Tom. "Wired wireless."

"Wired wireless?" exclaimed his father. "How can you wire wireless and what's the idea?"

"Why, you just run a copper wire under water and attach the radio sets at the ends," explained Tom, "Then you can talk back and forth and no one else can hear you."

Mr. Pauling laughed. "Don't you know that the electricity will run off in the water, Son?" he asked. "Water's a conductor of electricity and even the cables have to be heavily insulated in order to carry the current."

"Well, this is different," insisted Tom. "The electricity doesn't run through the water, it's just the radio or electromagnetic waves and they follow the wire and don't get lost."

"Who put all that nonsense into your head?" demanded Mr. Pauling. "Radio is a wonderful science, I'll admit, but that's a little too fishy."

"Well, General Squiers did it—across the Potomac and used it during the war," declared Tom, "so it must be so. It was in that same article that told about the resonance coils."

"It's quite true, Pauling," Mr. Henderson assured him. "It *does* sound ridiculous, I'll admit, but radio and the modern theory of electrons is upsetting all our old-fashioned ideas and Squiers proved conclusively that radio waves *will* follow a bare copper wire under water. They'll even go around corners or turns with it—not only under water, but under ground. It was one of those lucky discoveries

that helped win the war, too. If General Squiers hadn't discovered it we would have been in a pretty fix. There was not one-thousandth enough insulated wire on hand and we needed hundreds of times more than all the factories together could supply. There was plenty of wire, but not enough machines for insulating it. We were right up against it when Squiers got his hunch and found it worked. And just as Tom says, no one except those with the instruments at the ends of the line can pick up the messages—a big advantage over wireless or ordinary telegraph or telephone messages."

"All right," laughed Mr. Pauling, "I give in. Another miracle added to the long list of radio magic. I'll believe almost anything now. Go ahead, Tom, you're the radio boss, you know. Get your wired wireless ready and we'll soon see how it works."

The submarine was now submerged, but with the periscope out, and each minute the Cay was becoming plainer and plainer.

"If those chaps are there, won't they hear our screws and clear out?" Mr. Henderson asked. "I suppose they'll have a detector on their boat or ashore."

"I don't see how we can avoid that," declared Mr. Pauling. "It's one of the chances we'll have to take. I wish——"

"No, they won't hear!" interrupted Rawlins. "I'd been worrying over that myself, but luck's with us again to-day. There's a tramp steamer over yonder—heading the same way we are and with her screw thrashing the water like a dying whale. These laddies we're after 'll never be able to pick up the sound of our little wheel. I'm going to edge over towards the tramp a bit so as to make it still safer."

"Jove, that is luck!" exclaimed Mr. Henderson. "I only hope our luck holds and we find our friends at home."

It was soon evident that the tramp steamer would pass close to the island and that the submarine could hold her course and yet be within half a mile of the tramp as she slipped by the Cay which both were rapidly approaching.

“Better let Smernoff have a look and see if he knows the place,” suggested Mr. Henderson. “Perhaps he can even pick out the location of the houses and where the men land.”

“All right, have him come right up then,” said Rawlins. “I’ll have to drop down and get the periscope under water in a minute; we’re getting too close to the island and that tramp to risk being seen.”

Presently the Russian arrived and bending his huge shoulders peered into the eye-piece of the periscope.

“Sure, that heem,” he announced in broken English, and then pointed out a row of coconut palms on the western end of the Cay which he said was the spot where the men landed, and indicated a hill just to the left which he declared was where the men had dwelt in the old stone rooms.

“Well, that’s all hunky-dory!” declared Rawlins jubilantly. “Now we’ll just drop down and run along easy and come to rest on a nice sandy bottom around the point and walk ashore and ask our ‘red’ friends how they feel after the surprise party we gave ’em back there. Say, these chaps picked out a mighty fitting place for themselves—just the spot for a gang of pirates and thugs. Trade Wind Cay used to be a real pirate hang-out. Back in the buccaneer days they held the place and defied all the world for years—it was those old chaps cut the stairs and forts and rooms out of the living rock. Used prisoners to do the work and then murdered them afterwards. Spooky sort of place. That’s why the natives fight shy of it; and they say there’s a lot of treasure buried there.”

“I expect it’s being a ‘spooky’ place, as you say is one reason these men selected it,” commented Mr. Pauling. “They probably knew they would not be disturbed. But how do you account for the fact that they found a few natives there whom they killed according to Smernoff’s story?”

“Most likely smugglers or political refugees,” replied Rawlins, “Every time there’s a row in Santo Domingo a bunch of the natives clear out to save their skins and a place like this would suit ’em first rate. And there’s always a crowd of smugglers knocking about. Or they may have been fishermen or settlers from some of the others islands—from over Porto Rico or St. Thomas way, who didn’t know the reputation of the Cay.”

“Say,” said Tom, who had been listening attentively as Rawlins had been speaking. “If there’s treasure there perhaps we can find it. Wouldn’t that be great?”

His father laughed. “If there’s any treasure there it’s what the men we are after have brought there,” he declared. “And if any was there before they’ve probably found it. No, Son, every island and cay in the West Indies has treasure on it, if we believe the natives.”

“Well, some of ’em really do have and some of it’s been found,” said Rawlins. “First time I was down here I was diving for a crowd who were searching for treasure.”

“Did they get it?” asked Frank.

“I’ll say they did!” replied the diver. “Got it out of an old wreck—old galleon they said it was. I don’t know how much, but big piles of old gold and silver coins all stuck together with coral and old bronze bells and cannon. I’ve often wondered if they got it all. A storm came up so we couldn’t work and we had to clear out. They said they were coming back, but I don’t think they ever did, and I’ve been meaning to have another look myself, but never got around to it. It’s not far from here either. Over close to the Santo Domingo coast.”

“Jehoshaphat!” exclaimed Frank. “Let’s go over and try for it now!”

“This isn’t a treasure hunt, Frank,” Mr. Pauling reminded him. “We’ve far more important matters on hand. Uncle Sam isn’t paying us to hunt old galleons.”

“Oh, hang it!” ejaculated Tom in disappointed tones. “That’s what I call rotten. Here we are with a submarine and a diver and suits and all and right near a sunken galleon with millions and millions of dollars on it for all we know, and we can’t even hunt for it. It makes me sick.”

Mr. Pauling laughed. “You’ll never do for the Service if you’re so easily sidetracked,” he declared. “Of course I understand how fascinating such a story is to you boys, but business is business, treasure or no treasure.”

“We’ll have to go up and take a squint now,” declared Rawlins a moment later. “We don’t want to bump into the rocks.”

With the engines stopped the submarine was slowly raised until her periscope broke through the surface and Rawlins announced that the Cay was within half a mile.

“We can’t run into shoal water blind,” he said. “And if we go in with our eye out they’ll spot us perhaps. I’d like to wait until night, but then the old tramp wouldn’t be wallowing along to drown the sound of our screw. What shall it be, Mr. Pauling?”

“I think we’d better risk running in with the periscope out,” he replied. “Of course, as you say, there *is* a risk of being seen, but if we’re on the other side of the point and they don’t expect us it’s a much smaller chance than we’d take by running in at night. It’s highly probable that they maintain a pretty close watch and some one is at the instruments constantly and they’d be certain to pick us up. Yes, if you keep your periscope low and go slowly, so as not to make a white wake, I think we can risk it.”

So, under half speed and with the slender periscope barely projecting above the water, the submarine edged slowly in towards the Cay, until in about five fathoms of water, when Rawlins brought her to a stop and let her slowly sink until she rested on the sandy bottom.

“Well, we’re here,” he announced cheerfully, “About three hundred yards from a nice smooth beach. Now, how about going ashore?”

“Better wait until dark,” suggested Mr. Henderson. “A diver coming out of the sea is easily seen and would be helpless until he took off his suit. I would advise laying that copper communication wire and getting everything in readiness for a scouting party after dark.”

All agreed that this was the wisest plan and so, donning his suit, Rawlins entered the air-lock and carrying a coil of copper wire slipped into the sea, paying out the wire as he walked slowly towards the shore. He was strongly tempted to sneak to land among the rocks of a nearby point and have a look about on his own account, but knowing that if anything went wrong he would be to blame for having disobeyed orders, he regretfully refrained and having crawled as close to shore as he dared without showing himself above the surface he weighted the remainder of the coil with coral and returned to the submarine.

Before he had taken ten steps he halted in his tracks, listening half incredulously, every nerve and sense alert, for in his ears he had heard the rough, guttural voices he knew so well. For the time being he had forgotten that he wore the receiving set and the sound of human voices coming to him so unexpectedly and suddenly under water startled him.

To be sure, the voices sounded faint and far away, but that they were voices and voices of men speaking in Russian or some similar tongue there could be no doubt.

“Confound it!” he muttered to himself. “Why the dickens didn’t I learn Russian! Wonder if they’re hearing it on the sub!”

But he could not ask. He realized that if he could hear the others they might hear him if he attempted to speak to his friends and with this thought another flashed through his mind. Suppose the boys should not hear the Russians and should speak to him! Or suppose, without stopping to think, they too should hear the voices and ask him if he did! In either case the enemy would be forewarned and on the alert. The only thing was to make all haste to the submarine and warn those upon it to listen and not to speak into the transmitters. Without waiting to hear more, Rawlins hurried as rapidly as possible to the submarine, climbed into the air-lock and soon reappeared among his friends.

“Did you hear them?” he asked the moment he entered the door.

“No, hear who?” demanded Mr. Henderson.

“Those Bolsheviks,” replied Rawlins, “I heard ’em not five minutes ago. I didn’t dare call you or say anything for fear they’d hear me and I was nervous as a cat fearing you fellows might call into the transmitter and they’d hear.”

“We’ve been right at the instruments and didn’t hear a thing,” declared Tom. “Gosh, but it’s funny you got ’em and we didn’t.”

“They were pretty faint and far off,” said Rawlins. “Maybe they were out of your range.”

“No, I guess it’s that same old effect of the sounds inside the helmet,” said Tom. “Remember, up in New York, we could always hear under water better than ashore.”

“Well, I don’t think it makes much difference,” declared Mr. Pauling, “but it proves they’re here or near here. You’d better take some one ashore with you to-night, Rawlins. Whom would you select?”

“Guess it’ll have to be Smernoff,” replied Rawlins. “I’ll need some one who can savvy Russian more than anything else.”

“Do you think you can trust him?” asked Mr. Henderson. “You’re taking a risk with him alone on that Cay in the dark and with his old-time friends and comrades there.”

“Sure, I’m taking a risk,” agreed Rawlins with a grin, “but a diver’s always taking risks—been taking them ever since I was knee high—and a few more or less don’t cut any ice. Anyway, I don’t believe Smernoff will turn traitor. You see, he looks upon me as a sort of hero—saving his life and all, and besides, he’s as keen on evening up scores with this bunch as any of us. He’s got everything to

win and nothing to lose by betting on us and my experience is that if it's an even toss up with a fellow he'll chip in with the side that he'll gain the most with."

"That's sound philosophy," chuckled Mr. Pauling. "I don't think there's any danger with Smernoff and of course there's the advantage that he can use a diving suit."

The time dragged slowly until sundown and as soon as darkness fell Rawlins summoned the Russian and prepared to go ashore on his dangerous mission.

"Just as soon as you get ashore, or even before, try this wired wireless," Tom admonished him. "Then we'll know if it works. It's too bad you can't keep it fastened to your set while you sneak over the island, but that's impossible."

Then, showing Rawlins how to snap the wire onto his set, the boys bade him good-by and the two men entered the air-lock. For a long time after they had left, those upon the submarine sat silent, the boys listening at their receivers, the men thinking deeply and in their minds planning their moves should Rawlins locate the camp of the "reds." At last, after what seemed an interminable time, Tom heard Rawlins' voice rather thin and faint, coming in over the wire.

"Safe ashore," he said, "and talking mighty low. Can you get me all right?"

"Hear you finely," replied Tom. "We'll stick right here. Good luck!"

Minute after minute dragged by, the little clock upon the bulkhead ticked off an hour and no sound or word came from shore. What had happened? Had Rawlins found the camp? Had he been seen and captured? Was he even now struggling for his life? Had Smernoff betrayed him? The suspense was nerve-racking. It anything happened to Rawlins, if he failed to return, their quest would come to an abrupt end. They depended upon him for guidance, for advice, for diving. Never until now did any of them realize to what an extent everything depended upon him.

"If he's not back soon I'll take a landing party ashore," declared Mr. Pauling. "We've got arms and a dozen men and more. I can't stand this uncertainty much longer. They've been gone an hour and a half. I'm sorry he took Smernoff. I ____"

At that moment Frank heard the long-hoped-for voice. "Coming back!" was all it said.

"Well, he's safe at all events!" exclaimed Mr. Pauling fervently.

CHAPTER VII—THE FIGHT WITH THE OCTOPUS

A few moments later Rawlins appeared with Smernoff close behind him.

“Gone!” Rawlins announced before a question could be asked. “Cleared out bag and baggage. We went over every inch of the Cay and there’s not a living soul on it. Just too late.”

“Jove, that’s too bad!” exclaimed Mr. Henderson. “Looks as if they’re bound to be a jump ahead of us. Lord alone knows where they’ve gone.”

“You’re dead wrong there!” declared Rawlins. “The Lord’s not the only one knows. We know.”

The others leaped to their feet. “Are you serious?” cried Mr. Pauling, hardly able to believe Rawlins’ statements. “What do you mean by that, Rawlins?”

“Where are they?” demanded Mr. Henderson. “*How* do you know?”

“You bet I’m serious,” declared Rawlins. “Heard ’em talking. Last of ’em was just leaving and I had one devil of a time stopping old Smernoff from running amuck and doing up the bunch single-handed. They’ve gone over to Santo Domingo where the Grand Panjandrum stops.”

“Well, for Heaven’s sake, begin at the beginning and tell us what happened,” cried Mr. Pauling. “First you announce they’ve all gone and then you talk about hearing them and knowing their plans. Make a sensible consecutive story of it, Rawlins.”

“All right,” grinned the diver, seating himself. “We got ashore all right and I called the boys and heard them—say you must have been shouting, Tom—and then we took off the suits, tucked ’em out of sight among the brush and started overland, Smernoff leading. Found a nice spot overlooking the beach and there was a bunch of men standing by a pile of dunnage and jabbering away to beat the band. Old Smernoff wanted to butt right in and clean up the crowd, but I managed to stop him. Thought he’d spoil the game by yelling or something. Well, after I’d got him quieted down we sneaked in close—they were so blamed

busy gassing away they wouldn't have seen us if we'd walked in and said 'how-de-do.' Got close enough so Smernoff could understand them and told him not to try to translate, but just to take it all in and tell me later. I thought at first of coming back and reporting, but I could see they were just ready to clear out and knew they'd be gone before we could get over here and back and decided the talk was more important so hung on. Pretty soon up bobs their sub—I could tell her by that smashed conning tower—and a boat comes ashore and takes off the bunch. Then the sub clears out and we are alone."

"Well, what did Smernoff tell you?" demanded Mr. Henderson as Rawlins concluded.

"I was coming to that," went on the diver. "There were so many talking at once he didn't get it all, but he got enough. He says they had word this morning or this afternoon—he isn't sure which—that their sub had been attacked and was being followed by a destroyer, and a sub, but that the sub—meaning us—had been done for. And they were talking a lot about him—I expect he was so busy listening to that part he couldn't get all the rest—swearing vengeance on him for betraying them. They knew about his getting away and doing up a few 'reds' in New York—though how the dickens they got the news beats me, and one of the men from the sub—he'd come ashore in a diving suit to see if the coast was clear—was telling them how Smernoff and his mate had betrayed the sub in the East River and the narrow escape they'd had. Funny how they got the idea old Smernoff did that when really they deserted him. Anyhow they were mad as hornets when their nest's been poked by a kid and at the same time they didn't dare wait for the destroyer to come up, so all hands decided to pack up and go over to Santo Domingo. It seems they've a place all ready over there close to the big chief's and had been planning to move for some time. Now, just where that is I don't know, but Smernoff says they talked about a cave and I heard one of 'em say something about Caña Honda. Over Caña Honda way there are lots of caves so I've got a hunch the whole shooting match are beating it for over that way."

"You've done a good night's work, Rawlins!" cried Mr. Pauling. "You did quite right in listening rather than notifying us. All we wanted of this crowd was information—it's the head of the gang we're after—and we've got what we want, or nearly what we want—without capturing or alarming them, which is a big point. Always keep the other fellow guessing in this game is a good thing to remember—let him think he's safe and he'll be less careful. I imagine you are right about the locality, your hunches have proved very accurate so far, so let us get under way for Caña Honda."

“No hurry,” declared Rawlins. “Those chaps won’t be over there until morning and I don’t want to take any chances of bumping into them or a reef at night. We can get started and loaf along a little later, but we want to be dead careful or they’ll hear us. They think we’re at the bottom of the Caribbean so we’ll let ’em keep on thinking so. If they are at Caña Honda we won’t have much trouble finding them. We can either pick them up by radio or spot them by smoke. They can’t cook without fire and where there’s fire there’s smoke. My plan would be to wait until nearly daylight and then start and take it easy and submerge before we get in sight of Caña Honda. Then slip in, find a good hiding place and do our hunting in small boats or afoot after dark. A sub’s a mighty poor sort of thing to go moseying around with. If we locate them we can slip off, notify Disbrow and corral the whole bunch.”

For a few moments Mr. Pauling was silent, thinking deeply.

“Yes,” he assented at last. “That will be the best plan. No use in rushing matters to such an extent that we overdo it. And I quite agree with you in regard to tracing them. As you say, a submarine is too clumsy and large a craft for scouting—it’s too easily seen or heard.”

Everything being thus arranged, the submarine was raised to the surface, anchored securely and the occupants retired. The boys, however, got little sleep, for they were nervous and excited and filled with expectation of thrilling adventures to come.

As soon as the first faint streaks of dawn showed upon the horizon, the anchor was hauled in and, swinging her bow towards the dim, black bulk that marked the mountains of Santo Domingo to the westward, the submarine slipped silently from Trade Wind Cay.

Hour after hour they moved steadily across the calm blue sea and as they drew ever nearer to the big island the boys gazed upon it with wonder. They had never dreamed that an island could be so large. They had imagined, from the tiny dot that represented Santo Domingo in their geographies, that it would be a low, flat spot somewhat like the Bahamas, but a little larger, and now before them, they saw what appeared to be a continent. As far as eye could see on either hand the forest-covered hills stretched away. Inland and up from the shores rose tier after tier of mountains, the farthest nearly two miles in height and half-hidden in clouds, and between them were immense valleys, deep ravines and wide plateaus. And everywhere, from sea to topmost mountain peaks, the vivid green of forest and jungle, broken only by a few isolated patches of light-green sugar

cane upon the lower hill slopes or in the valleys.

“Jiminy!” exclaimed Tom. “That *is* an island!”

“I’ll say ’tis!” agreed Rawlins. “Mighty fine one too.”

“It’s beautiful—but awfully wild-looking,” declared Frank. “Is it full of Indians and wild animals?”

Rawlins laughed heartily. “Wildest animals are the natives,” he assured them, “and the old Spaniards killed off the last poor Indian over two hundred years ago.” Then, a moment later, he continued: “By the way, speaking of Spaniards, that old galleon I told you about is right over yonder. See that line of reefs? Well, she’s just on the outer edge of those in about 20 to 25 fathoms.”

“Oh, Gosh! why won’t Dad let us stop and go down to it?” cried Tom.

“Say, perhaps he will!” exclaimed Frank jubilantly. “He wouldn’t before, but now he’s in no hurry—they can’t go in shore until dark—and I’ll bet he’d just as lief wait out here as anywhere else. Let’s ask him.”

At first Mr. Pauling refused to listen to the boys’ pleading, but when Rawlins pointed out that they had time to kill and added that he personally would like to have a look at the old wreck, Tom’s father yielded.

“Very well then,” he agreed, “but don’t waste any time. We’ll expect you to bring up a fortune, Rawlins. Let us know when you go down so we can see the fun.”

“And for heaven’s sake take care of yourself,” added Mr. Henderson. “If anything happens to you where will we be?”

“Oh, I’ll be safe enough,” laughed Rawlins. “I’m safer under water than on top any day.”

“Come on then!” cried Tom, “let’s get our suits ready.”

“No, boys, you’re not going down here,” declared Rawlins. “Too deep.”

“Oh, confound it all!” cried Frank. “Everything has to be spoiled. What’s the use if we can’t go down to the old wreck?”

“You can look through the underseas ports and watch me,” Rawlins reminded them. “Honest, I’m sorry you’re disappointed, but this is real diving. I’ll have to use my regulation suit here too. Too deep for those self-contained ones.”

For a time the disappointed boys sulked, but presently, realizing that there were

limits to what they could expect to do and also realizing that they were more than fortunate to be able to watch Rawlins as he investigated the old galleon, their high spirits returned and they became as interested, excited and enthusiastic as ever.

The submarine was now close to the spot where Rawlins stated the wreck had been before and he busied himself getting out his suit, oiling and testing the air pump and making everything ready while the submarine slowed down and came to a stop.

“It’s a heap easier now—with a submarine,” said Rawlins, as he slid back the heavy metal cover to the thick glass port. “We can look about a bit and locate the wreck before I go down. Last time it took us nearly a month to find it. You see, it’s too deep to see bottom from the surface and—look here, boys—ever see anything prettier than that?”

The boys crowded to the small port and stared out It was like the sea-gardens at Nassau multiplied and glorified a thousandfold. The submarine was now submerged and floating at a slight angle a few fathoms above the bottom and her powerful electric lights, such as Rawlins used in his sub-sea photography, were casting a brilliant beam of soft greenish light upon the ocean floor and the marvelous growths which covered it. The boys, dry and safe within the submarine, could scarcely believe they actually were gazing at the bottom of the sea. It was more like some strange and marvelous painting or, as Tom said, like the models on exhibition in the American Museum. It was all unreal, weird, beautiful, unbelievable. On all sides was a dim, green void, with half-revealed forms, shadowy outlines and indistinct objects showing through it as through a heavy green curtain, while the beam of light, stabbing through the water gave the effect of the curtain being drawn aside to disclose the beauties and wonders behind it. Back and forth in this light clear space flitted gaudy fishes; fishes of grotesque form; fishes with long, trailing opalescent-hued fins; fishes large and fishes small; and once the boys cried out in momentary alarm and drew quickly back from the glass as an ugly hammer-headed shark, six feet or more in length, bumped his clumsy-looking head against the port.

“Gosh! Mr. Rawlins, aren’t you afraid to go down among those fellows?” cried Tom.

“Not in the least,” Rawlins assured him. “They won’t touch a man in a diving suit—come up and rub their backs against him or stare at him, but never anything else. They’re a blamed nuisance at times—get in a man’s way, but we

can drive ’em off by hitting them. Look, there’s a moray!”

As he spoke, an immense greenish, snake-like eel wriggled past so closely the boys could see his throbbing gills.

“They’re worse than sharks,” Rawlins told them. “Bite anything and savage as tigers. Good to eat though.”

But the boys found the other wonders and beauties even more interesting than the fishes. Gigantic cup-shaped sponges grew upwards for six or seven feet. Immense sea-fans and sea-plumes formed a forest that might have been of futuristic palms. Huge orange, green and chocolate domes of brain corals were piled like titanic many-colored fruits. There were great toadstool-like mushroom corals of lavender, pink and yellow and everywhere, above all, the wide-branching, tree-like madrepores or stag-horn corals of dull fawn-brown. Back and forth among this forest under the sea darted schools of tiny jewel-like fishes; great pink conchs crawled slowly about; a little flock of butterfly squids shot past, gleaming like bits of burnished metal in the light; ugly long-legged giant spider crabs scuttled into their shelters among the corals and everywhere the ocean’s floor was dotted with huge starfishes, brilliant sponges, big black, sea-cucumbers and crabs and shells by hundreds.

“Jove, it’s the most wonderful sight I’ve ever seen!” declared Mr. Henderson who, with Mr. Pauling, was also gazing at this wonderland beneath the sea.

“Yes, simply marvelous!” agreed the other. “Boys, I’m mighty glad I gave in. I wouldn’t have missed this for anything. No wonder you’re fascinated by a diver’s life, Rawlins!”

“But I want to see that wreck!” cried Tom. “Do you suppose it’s gone?”

“Ought to be pretty close to it by now,” said Rawlins. “Yes, there ’tis! See it, boys? Look, over beyond that big bunch of sea-fans!”

The boys strained their eyes in the direction Rawlins pointed, but could see nothing that even remotely resembled a wreck.

“No, I can’t see it,” admitted Tom, at last.

“Neither can I,” said Frank.

“Why it’s plain as can be,” declared Rawlins. “Can’t miss it.” Then, an idea occurring to him, he burst into a hearty laugh. “Why, I suppose you’re looking for a ship!” he cried. “Masts and stern and rails and all! Nothing like that, boys. This old hooker’s been down here a couple of hundred years and more. She’s

just a mass of coral now. See that sort of mound there—that one with that lop-sided stag-horn coral growing out of one side?"

"Oh, yes, I see that," declared Tom. "Is that the wreck?"

"I'll say 'tis," Rawlins assured him. "Well, we're near enough. Too bad we can't let the old sub down to the bottom, but it's too rough. I guess she'll be pretty steady here though—isn't any current or those sea-rods would be waving."

"But I don't understand how you can go down with life-lines and things when the submarine is under water," said Frank. "I thought we'd have to be on the surface."

"And I don't see why it makes any difference about the suits, no matter how deep it is," added Tom.

"I don't use life-lines and 'things' when I'm diving from a sub," explained Rawlins. "In the first place they're no use. When a fellow goes down from the surface he can't be seen and so he has to have a signal line and a rope for hauling him up. But down here I can come back to the sub whenever I please and just climb into the air-lock on the ladder, and if I want to signal I can do it without any line—just wave my hands—as you can see me all the time. The airhose runs from a connection in the air-lock and I carry a light line along just as a safeguard and have a man in the air-lock holding it. Of course I *could* go down in one of the self-contained suits, but the pressure's pretty big down here and it's no fun working in one of them when the pressure outside is just about the limit of what I can get with the oxygen generators. It's different with the air—I don't have to bother with that—the pump looks after it."

"Oh, I understand," declared Frank, "but who's going to tend the line for you?"

"Sam," replied Rawlins. "He's worked with me before and he's a wonderful diver and swimmer. You see the pressure in the air-lock is the same or even a little more than outside and it takes a chap who's used to deep-sea diving to stand that. Sam could go down here without a suit—but not for long of course—pressure's too great. Well, so long. Keep your eyes on the wreck and you'll see me out there among the fishes in a minute."

Rawlins entered the air-lock with Sam and presently the boys saw him—a grotesque, clumsy figure in the baggy diving suit and big round helmet—laboriously making his way along the bottom almost below them. Turning, he waved his hand reassuringly and then resumed his way towards the coral-encrusted wreck.

“Doesn’t he look funny!” cried Tom, “leaning way forwards and half swimming along, and aren’t those bubbles coming up from his escape-valve pretty? Say, it must be fun to be way down there. Gosh, I wish we could have gone!”

“It takes years of practice to enable a man to stand that pressure,” his father informed him, “and even expert professional divers cannot keep it up long. If you boys should go down here you’d probably be terribly injured—your ear drums burst and perhaps your eyes ruptured. A diver begins in shoal water and gradually goes deeper and deeper and Rawlins has been at it since he was a youngster.”

“Yes,” commented Mr. Henderson, “and some men never can dive. Divers are born not made.”

“Well it’s the next best thing to be able to watch him,” said Frank philosophically. “Oh, look, Tom, he’s nearly at the wreck!”

Rawlins was, as Frank said, close to the mound of coral and sea-growth that he had told the boys was the wreck of the old galleon and a moment later they saw him stoop and begin working with the heavy crowbar he carried.

Breathessly the boys watched, thrilled with the idea of thus seeing a deep-sea diver at work and speculating on whether he would find treasure. Then they saw Rawlins suddenly start back, almost losing his balance and in recovering himself the crowbar dropped to the ocean’s floor. The next instant Tom uttered a frightened, horrified cry. From among the mass of corals a long, snake-like object had shot forth and had whipped itself around Rawlins’ body like a living rope. They saw Rawlins grasp it, strain at it, and then, before the white-faced, terrified watchers in the submarine fully realized what was taking place, another and another of the livid, serpent-like things were writhing and coiling about the diver.

“It’s an octopus!” cried Mr. Pauling.

“Oh, oh! He’ll be killed!” screamed Frank. “Oh, isn’t it terrible?”

But they were helpless, powerless to aid. All they could do was to gaze fascinated and terror-stricken at the awful tragedy, the fearful struggle taking place there at the bottom of the sea before their very eyes.

And now they could see the loathsome creature itself. Its great pulpy body, now pink, now blue, now green; its huge, lusterless, unwinking eyes—an enormous creature whose sucker-clad tentacles encircled Rawlins in a grip of steel, binding his signal line and making it useless, reaching about as if to grasp the air-hose,

swaying like serpents about to strike before his helmet. Madly the diver was fighting for his life, bracing himself against the corals, grappling with the slimy tentacles, wrenching his hands and arms free. Then the terrified, breathless watchers gazing at the nightmare-like scene saw Rawlins lift his arm and through the water they saw the blade of his sheath knife flashing in the beam of light. Again and again he brought it slashing down, hacking, stabbing at the clinging tentacles. Bits of the writhing flesh dropped off at the blows and a cloud of inky water that shot from the repulsive creature's syphon for a moment obscured the scene. But the savage blows, the slashing cuts, the lopped-off tentacles seemed not to affect the giant devil fish in the least and slowly, steadily, inexorably Rawlins was being drawn closer and closer to the cruel eyes, the soft toad like body and the wicked, parrot-like beak.

The boys screamed aloud, the men muttered under their breath. Members of the crew, attracted by the frightened cries, rushed to the port and peered horrified at the terrible scene being enacted under the sea.

Rawlins' fate seemed sealed, he was now bound fast by the eight tentacles, even the hand with the knife was wrapped around by the relentless, sucker-armed things.

And then, from below the submarine, a strange shape darted through the water—a dark form which, for an instant, the boys took for some huge fish.

Straight towards the struggling diver it sped and as the light fell upon it the boys shouted and yelled, the men cheered, for it was no fish but a man! A man, naked and black, swimming at utmost speed—Sam the negro hurrying to Rawlins' aid!

Hardly had those at the ports realized it was Sam before he was at the scene of battle. For a brief instant he poised motionless above the diver and his antagonist and then, quickly and gracefully as a seal, he plunged straight down at the octopus. There was a flash of steel in the light, the water was blackened with the polyp's ink. Through the thick, murky, discolored water only confused, rapidly moving forms were visible and scarcely breathing, those within the submarine gazed and waited. Would Sam be able to kill the creature? Could he hold out long enough to win the battle? Could he free Rawlins?

Then as the water cleared and the light once more penetrated the depths, rousing cheers went up from the watchers, they laughed hysterically, tears rolled down their cheeks, for slowly, painfully but surely, Sam was coming back, while behind him, half dragging himself along, but apparently uninjured, was Rawlins. Upon the bottom where he had stood a shapeless squirming, pulpy mass was all

that remained of the octopus and about it, swarmed voracious fishes snapping at the dying, flaccid tentacles. The battle was over. Rawlins was safe. Sam had won. Naked, armed only with a knife, he had attacked the monster of the sea, had literally hacked it to bits and had returned unharmed.

“Gosh!” cried Tom. “Gosh!” and unable to say another word, utterly overcome, he slumped down upon a cushioned seat faint from the strain he had undergone.

Frank swayed unsteadily and sank down beside his chum while Mr. Pauling and the others wiped their wet brows, licked their dry lips and grasped one another’s hands in silent thanksgiving, too overcome to speak.

CHAPTER VIII—LOST

Long before they had recovered from their fright, from the strain and the reaction, Rawlins appeared, his face pale, but with its habitual cheerful grin and half-carrying Sam.

“I’ll say that was a close call!” he exclaimed, as he placed the negro on a seat. “Say, get some brandy or whisky quick! Sam’s all in.”

As the others crowded about, laughing, congratulating, expressing their relief and joy at his escape and forcing liquor between Sam’s blue lips, Rawlins was busily chafing and rubbing the man’s cold body and limbs, slapping his chest and back and giving orders.

“Get some hot coffee,” he commanded, “and blankets. He’ll be all right soon. Went to pieces in the air-lock—couldn’t help me off with the suit and had a devil of a time with it. Bully boy, Sam! There, old sport, how do you feel?”

A sickly smile spread over Sam’s haggard features.

“Ah’s all right, Chief,” he whispered. “Did Ah finish tha’ sea-cat, Chief?”

“I’ll say you did!” cried Rawlins. “Cut him clean in two! Blamed lucky for me too. Here, take this coffee!”

Sam gulped down the steaming coffee and was wrapped in the blankets and slowly the color came back to his lips and he took deep, long breaths.

“You’re all right now,” declared Rawlins. “Be fit as ever and ready for another scrap with an octopus before dinner. Say, Sam, I can’t——” Rawlins swayed, his face went white as a sheet and he grasped wildly at a stanchion. Willing hands seized him and carried him to a couch where, for five minutes, they worked feverishly over him before he opened his eyes and regained consciousness.

“By Jove, but you’ve got grit!” exclaimed Mr. Henderson. “Nerviest thing I ever saw! Imagine going through that horror and then bringing Sam in and tending to him before you gave in! Rawlins, old man, you’re a marvel!”

Rawlins grinned and rose to a sitting posture.

“Guess I was a bit knocked out and shaken,” he admitted. “I’ll say it’s no sport fighting a darned octopus!” and then, with a whimsical smile, “Say, I’ll be able to make a corking film of an octopus next time. I thought that last one of mine was a peach, but it didn’t have enough pep to it. Never thought when I invented that rubber beast I’d ever get in a scrap with a real one.”

“Oh, it was terrible!” cried Tom. “How can you joke about it?”

“Easy to laugh as to cry,” replied Rawlins. “All’s well that ends well, you know. I guess you’re glad you didn’t go down now.”

“You bet we are!” declared Frank. “Gee! I don’t believe I’ll ever go down again. I’d imagine there were devil fish waiting for me everywhere. Ugh!”

“Never had to tackle one before,” said Rawlins, “and I’ve been diving for years. Well, I guess I’m O.K. I’ll get busy on that wreck again.”

“Not for one minute!” said Mr. Pauling decisively. “You’ll just forget that wreck —at least as long as you are with me. If you feel all right we’ll get out of here as quick as we can and get some fresh air—I’m stifling and my heart’s still beating like a trip hammer.”

“Well, I suppose you’re the boss,” grinned Rawlins, “but it’s a shame to clear out with that old galleon and a lot of loot so handy.”

“Bother the galleon and her loot!” burst out Mr. Henderson. “No more nonsense on this trip. We’ve had enough of under-sea work to last a lifetime.”

Ten minutes later, the submarine was floating on the surface and standing in the bright warm sunshine on deck, with the placid blue sea about and the rich green island beyond, the boys could scarcely believe that they had really undergone such a frightful experience. It seemed like some unreal, horrible nightmare, but the round raw spots on Rawlins’ hands where the creature’s suckers had gripped him were proof of the reality of the battle, and every time the boys thought of it they shuddered and cold chills ran up and down their spines.

Rawlins made little of it, joking and laughing as if such matters were of everyday occurrence, while Sam, fully recovered from the effects of his daring rescue, refused to be considered a hero and was ill at ease and embarrassed whenever a word of praise or commendation was expressed.

Very soon Santo Domingo was so close that Rawlins advised running submerged and, pointing out a low valley-like expanse extending far into the hills, declared

it to be the entrance to Caña Honda Bay. With the periscope just visible above the sea, and hugging the shores as closely as they dared, the submarine was run slowly into the narrow opening while the boys, stationed at their instruments, listened for the faintest hint of a whirring screw in their vicinity. But no sound broke the silence under the sea and no sign of another craft was seen.

Well up the bay and behind a densely wooded point the sub-sea craft was run into a smaller bay and then, emerging, Rawlins piloted her through a crooked river-like channel until safely screened back of a low sandy beach covered with a grove of coconut trees.

“We’re pretty safe here, I think,” he announced. “I came here once with a party of scientists and we camped here when we were on that trip looking for the wreck yonder. If the 'reds’ are hanging out near here they’ll be over the other side of the bay, I think. Those hills over there are full of caves and it’s a wild country. Just the place for such a gang. We can keep an eye on the entrance and the channel from here and go snooping around after dark and maybe pick up a radio message or see a fire or smoke.”

“You’ve selected an ideal spot,” agreed Mr. Pauling. “Safe harbor, fresh coconuts, a nice beach for bathing and safely hidden. I don’t know how we could get on without you, Rawlins.”

“Well, if I hadn’t got the crazy idea of coming down here you wouldn’t have been here,” the diver reminded him. “So you couldn’t have been without me. But I’m mighty glad I’ve helped a little.”

“How about fresh water?” asked Mr. Henderson. “Ours is getting pretty low, you know.”

“There’s a stream back on the mainland—just over by that point,” replied Rawlins, “and there’s a sort of inner harbor here too—fine place for fishing and hunting, though of course we can’t hunt—and beyond that a big mangrove swamp that runs clean around to the opposite side of the bay. By going through that we could sneak over around the caves without being seen. Devil of a place to get through, though—regular labyrinth. A man would get lost there in a jiffy without a compass.”

It was now nearly sundown and preparations were at once made for the night.

It was agreed that no time was to be lost. That as soon as darkness came Rawlins and Mr. Pauling with one of the boys should go out in a boat carrying a receiving instrument and the resonance coil while the others remained in the submarine

and listened for any sounds or messages which might come to them.

“The trouble is we cannot communicate safely,” remarked Mr. Pauling. “That’s the one great shortcoming of this radio. Any one within range can hear. I don’t know much about the technical end as you know, but I can see that the man who invents a method of communicating by wireless secretly, or so others can’t hear him, will make his fortune and revolutionize the science.”

“You’re quite right,” agreed Mr. Henderson. “That’s why it will never take the place of wire telegraphy or telephone—that is, until such a discovery as you suggest is made. However, the very fact that it’s not possible to keep messages secret at present is to our advantage now. It’s an ill wind that blows nobody good, you know.”

“We’ll hope we don’t need to communicate,” said Rawlins. “I don’t see why we should. If we hear anything and locate the gang we can come back here, slip away and call Disbrow. We’re in no shape to make an attack by ourselves.”

“I’d like to know why not?” demanded Tom. “We could turn the gun on ’em and we’ve got rifles and pistols and everything.”

“Sure,” laughed Rawlins. “I suppose we’d pick up that two-inch gun and lug it over in the small boat and dump it down in their front yard while they looked on. No, Son, if they got wise to us being here they’d either clean out by their sub or scatter in the bush or go for us tooth and nail. A crowd that don’t hesitate to try to torpedo us isn’t going to stop at a scrap and the Lord alone knows how many of ’em there are.”

“Rawlins is right,” declared Mr. Pauling. “If we locate them we must plan to make a concerted raid, surrounding them on all sides and with a large enough force to make resistance useless. The man we want may or may not be there, but we must be absolutely sure to get him if he is. If he gives us the slip our troubles will have just commenced.”

“Yes, I suppose that’s so,” admitted Tom. “Gosh, I hope we do find them.”

Everything was now in readiness, the night was inky black, not a glimmer of light showed upon the submarine and silently embarking in the small boat, Rawlins, Mr. Pauling, Tom and two of the crew pushed off and were instantly swallowed up in the darkness.

Sitting at his instruments and listening for any chance sound or message was dull work for Frank and his mind was constantly on what Tom and the others might be doing. Once, very faint and far away, he thought he heard the whirring sound

of a screw, but Bancroft, who listened in at Frank's request, declared he did not believe it was.

"At any rate," he said, "if 't is, it's a long way off. Maybe some ship outside the bay."

Then followed absolute silence. Bancroft, at the regular instruments, picked up some dot and dash messages flying back and forth between passing ships and the big station at Santo Domingo City, but there was nothing suspicious, nothing that hinted of the proximity of the men they sought. Slowly the time dragged on, hour after hour passed by. Frank yawned and almost dozed while sitting at the instruments. Would the boat never return? Had they heard or seen anything? How, Frank wondered, could Rawlins find his way in such dense blackness? Would they get lost in the swamp he had mentioned? Suppose they never returned? Perhaps they might be captured or killed by the outlaws. The thought startled him. It had not occurred to him before that there was any danger. But once that current of thought was started it ran riot in his brain. He grew nervous, excited, worried, and Bancroft could not cheer him or disabuse him of the premonition that something serious had happened.

"Oh, you'd hear 'em, if anything happened," declared the operator. "They'd call you or something. If they were discovered there'd be no need of keeping quiet. Trouble is, your nerves aren't over the excitement of this afternoon yet. Cheer up. They're all right. No news is good news, you know."

"Yes, I suppose you're right," admitted Frank, "but just the same I'm worried."

Then to his ears came a faint sound; before he could grasp its meaning he heard footsteps overhead and a moment later Rawlins and Tom descended the ladder with Mr. Pauling close behind them and Mr. Henderson, who had been keeping watch on deck, bringing up the rear.

"Gee, I'm glad you're back!" cried Frank. "I thought sure something had happened to you! Did you find them?"

"Not a sign!" replied Rawlins. "Don't believe they've got over here yet."

"Gosh, but it was black!" exclaimed Tom, "and weird. What did you think could happen to us?"

Frank, rather ashamed of his unwarranted fears, tried to explain, but Rawlins laughed.

"Don't you worry over anything of that sort," he told him. "We can take care of

ourselves."

"And, as Bancroft said, if anything went wrong we'd let you know," said Mr. Pauling. "Remember, all of you, if you have trouble or are attacked or anything goes wrong don't hesitate to call for help or give information. Safety first is the rule and it's better to lose the game by having the rascals hear us than to come to grief ourselves. I should never forgive myself if anything serious happened to any of us through lack of communicating with the means at hand, regardless of the results as far as catching the criminals is concerned."

"Didn't you hear anything on the detector?" asked Tom.

"Nothing but the splash of your oars when you came and went and, yes, I heard something once I thought was a screw, but is was too faint to be sure and Mr. Bancroft didn't think it was."

"Funny," commented Mr. Pauling. "Of course we didn't go very far—it was slow work getting about in the dark—and we had to turn back as the moon began to rise. They are either not here or else were not talking through their instruments. To-morrow night we'll have an hour longer and can go farther."

"I think the very fact that they were not conversing by radio proves one of two things," declared Mr. Henderson. "Either the submarine has not 'come within speaking distance or else all are ashore together when there would be no need of talking by wireless. I imagine that, as they know the destroyer is looking for them, and are aware that we or those on the destroyer have some form of under-sea radio, they would be very cautious about using it and would do so only when absolutely necessary."

"Yes, and they'll lay low for a while too," said Rawlins. "They know about the raid in New York and about Smernoff's escape and they wont try any of their tricks for a time you can bet. They'll just listen and say nothing and wait until the excitement blows over. It'll be like stalking a deer to find 'em."

"Yes, or like looking for a needle in a haystack," agreed Mr. Pauling, "although I should not be surprised if they are occupying one of those caves you mention. Our best plan will be to make a thorough search and trust to luck."

The night passed uneventfully and the boys awoke the next morning feeling as if the adventures of the previous days were all a dream. Nothing could be done during the day and so, after breakfast, they paddled to the beach, had a splendid swim, gathered coconuts to their hearts' content and came back to lunch with hearty appetites. In the afternoon they went with the two boats to the stream for

fresh water and the boys thoroughly enjoyed themselves wandering about in the jungle while the men filled the casks. They had never been in a tropical forest before and they were filled with wonder at every turn. The enormous trees, with their wide-spreading buttress-like roots and the drapery of lianas; the great, broad-leaved air plants and gay orchids; the innumerable palms and brilliant flowers were fascinating. They exclaimed with delight at the gaudy butterflies, the tiny humming birds and bright-plumaged tanagers and were tremendously interested in the hosts of big busy ants carrying bits of leaves in their jaws and moving across the forest floor in an endless procession. Rawlins told them these were “drougher ants” and stated that the scientists with whom he had visited the spot before said they used the bits of leaves for propagating a species of fungus in their nests—“sort of ants’ mushrooms” as he put it—on which they fed.

Once the boys were puzzled by a shrill, rather pretty song which seemed to issue from the sky and in vain they searched for the singer until Frank’s sharp eyes spied a tiny atom perched on the topmost leaf of a tall palm—a very midget of a bird—a diminutive humming bird no larger than a bumblebee, whose fluttering wings and trembling throat proved him to be the singer. Again, they were startled by harsh, discordant cries and were just in time to see a flock of green and red parrots winging swiftly away from a tree where they had been feeding. It was all very novel and strange and to the boys, who for so long had been confined to the submarine. It was a most delightful change, and even after the casks had been filled and the boats were ready to depart they insisted on remaining, telling the men to come back just before sundown.

With nightfall, the small boat again started forth on its search, Frank this time going with the party while Tom remained on board, but once again they returned unsuccessful.

The following day Rawlins suggested going for a fishing trip and with the two boys rowed up through the narrow, winding channel to the inner harbor and for several hours caught fish as fast as they could bait their hooks and drop them into the dark water.

Then, with enough fish and to spare, Rawlins rowed them into the dismal mangrove swamp among the maze of trunks, aerial roots and winding channels. This was another new and wonderful experience to the boys. It was low tide and between the densely growing mangroves the mud was exposed and with countless brilliant scarlet and yellow crabs scuttling about everywhere, across the mud, up and down the tree trunks, over the roots, even on the overhanging branches. Many of the trees with their sprawling roots were overgrown with

oysters and the boys gathered half a boatload of the bivalves. Rawlins too showed them how the mangroves spread and grew by means of the roots descending from the branches, how the slender but tough cable like roots supported the trees and bound all together into a compact mass and how the trees, ever growing out into the water and accumulating mud and drift about them, formed land.

“Some day,” he declared, “this whole swamp will be dry land. After the mangroves come black-jacks and sea-grapes, then palms and other trees, and at last it will be all forest. I’ve seen lots of places like that.”

There was bird life in plenty in the swamp too. Green and blue herons, white egrets and scarlet-faced white ibis that flapped up at the boat’s approach and stared curiously at the intruders, uttering half-frightened, hoarse croaks like giant frogs.

“Say, it would be fine hunting here,” declared Frank when, a little later, a flock of tree ducks whirred up and perched upon the trees within easy gunshot. “It’s too bad we can’t shoot. Roast duck would go fine for a change.”

“I’ll say it would,” agreed Rawlins, “but a fellow could hear a gunshot miles off here and it would give us away in a minute.”

Night after night the boat left the submarine, ever going farther and farther in its search, but without results, and each day the boys amused themselves by exploring the adjoining woods and swamps, sometimes with Rawlins, and sometimes by themselves.

At first Mr. Pauling had objected to the two youngsters going off alone, but after they had promised always to carry a compass and to be very careful he consented, on the condition that they did not go far and always took along their radio set.

“Not only that you may use it in case of real need,” he explained, “but also as it is always possible that you may hear messages. Remember and don’t use the set unless absolutely compelled to, but don’t hesitate if in danger or lost.”

On their first two excursions they enjoyed themselves hugely. They had caught plenty of fish, explored a small island in the swamp and found a colony of egrets and herons and had even seen a few of the wonderful, pink, roseate spoonbills. Also, they had been terribly startled when a big broad snout broke through the water a few yards from the boat and with a terrific bellow plunged out of sight.

Rawlins laughed heartily when they told of this. “Just a manatee or seacow,” he

said. “Perfectly harmless creatures and usually very shy. I’ll bet he was more frightened than you two boys.”

On the third day, hoping to again catch sight of a manatee, and intent on exploring another small island they had seen, the boys set forth in high spirits, taking along a lunch and planning to be away until afternoon. Rawlins had planned to go with them, promising to show them an alligator’s nest, but at the last minute changed his mind and decided to tramp inland and ascend a high hill with the hopes of sighting smoke which might divulge the presence of the men they sought.

For a time all went well with the boys. They paddled to the portion of the swamp they had already visited, took compass bearings and continued on their way. They found the island they had sighted and spent several hours exploring it and, finding a pleasant sandy beach on the farther side, decided to eat lunch there. Returning to their boat they rowed around to the beach and, seated in the shade of the trees, ate their midday meal while laughing and joking over the clumsy pelicans diving and fishing in an open area of water a short distance away. Suddenly, from beyond a thick grove of mangroves, came the startling bull-like bellow of a manatee.

“Come on!” cried Tom. “Let’s go and find him. He’s just back of that point. If we sneak up on him carefully we’ll see him!”

Hurrying to the boat they tumbled in and rowed as silently as possible to the point and peered beyond. There was no sign of a manatee, but ever-widening ripples on the calm water showed where some creature had been a few moments before and presently, from up a narrow lane of water, they heard a snort and a short bellow again.

“He’s gone up that channel,” declared Frank in a whisper. “Come along! He’s bound to come up. Gee! I *would* like to see one. Mr. Rawlins says they’re eight or ten feet long and with skin like an elephant.”

Paying little heed to where they were going the two interested and excited boys, keen on their chase of the elusive manatee, paddled up the winding channel among the mangroves while ever just beyond, they could hear the snorts or the rumbling bellow of the creature they were following.

Presently they swung around a bunch of the trees and found themselves upon a small lake-like lagoon several hundred acres in extent and surrounded by the mangrove swamp.

“I’ll bet he’s in here,” declared Tom. “Let’s sit still and watch.”

Taking in their oars the boys sat motionless, gazing about the tranquil surface of the lagoon and watching for the expected appearance of the sea-cow.

Suddenly Frank gripped Tom’s arm. “Look!” he whispered. “There he is. See, crawling up on that mud bank!”

“Gosh! that’s so,” agreed Tom and fascinated, the two boys watched as a big, bulky, black creature emerged from the dark still water and slowly and with great effort drew himself onto the wet mud flat among the trees.

“Jimmy, isn’t he a queer beast!” exclaimed Frank in an undertone. “Looks like a seal; and what a funny head!”

“I wish we were closer,” whispered Tom. “Don’t you suppose we could sneak nearer?”

“Well, we can try,” agreed Frank. “We’ve seen all we can from here and if we do scare him we can see the way he dives. Come on.”

Very cautiously, the boys slipped their oars into the water and silently edged the boat closer and closer to the unsuspecting creature.

They had reached a point within a few rods of the manatee when the clumsy beast suddenly lifted his head, peered at them with his tiny eyes in a way which Tom afterwards said reminded him of Smernoff, and so quickly the boys could hardly follow his movements plunged into the water.

“Gosh!” exclaimed Tom, “I didn’t suppose he could move so quickly. Oh, say, here he comes! Look!”

The water where the manatee had drawn himself ashore was shallow and as he strove to reach deep water, frightened out of his few wits by the unexpected sight of the human beings, his broad back broke through the surface like the bottom of a capsized boat and to the boys’ excited minds he seemed headed directly for them.

Although Rawlins had assured them that manatees were gentle harmless creatures, yet here, alone in the big, silent, mysterious swamp, the huge beast seemed fraught with danger to the excited boys and they were fully convinced that he was attacking them. Grabbing the oars they strove frantically to get out of his way, but the boat was heavy and clumsy, the boys were frightened and in their mad efforts to avoid the oncoming sea-cow Frank’s oar slipped from the rowlocks, he lurched backwards and before he could recover himself or cry out

he plunged overboard. Had Tom not been so terribly frightened he would have roared with laughter at the sight, for as Frank fell he pushed the boat aside and was now floundering about in water up to his waist, struggling madly to regain the boat while the manatee, absolutely crazy with fright at the splash and the appearance of the boy, tried to turn and escape in another direction and in his blind rush bumped into Frank's legs and knocked him yelling and screaming head over heels.

But at the time there was nothing humorous in the situation to either boy. To Frank, startled by the manatee in the first place and shocked and frightened at his unexpected plunge, the poor bewildered creature was a terrifying monster bent on destroying him, while to Tom, equally scared, the manatee's sudden turn and collision with Frank appeared as a deliberate attack. But it was all over in an instant. The manatee gained deep water and disappeared and Frank, covered with mud and dripping with the water, wallowed to the boat and pulled himself in.

"Whew!" he exclaimed as he caught his breath. "That *was* a narrow escape!"

Then for the first time Tom became sensible. "Say, I don't believe he was after us at all!" he declared. "He was just frightened half to death. Golly, but you look scared!"

"So would you if you'd been overboard with that big beast in the water alongside of you knocking you down," responded Frank. "Come on, I've had enough of this, let's go back."

"All right," agreed Tom, "Hello, where did we come in?"

As he glanced about he realized for the first time that he was not sure of his bearings. A dozen and more openings showed among the mangroves and try as he might he could not tell which was the one by which they had entered the lagoon.

For an instant Frank looked about. "Over there," he declared positively. "I remember that funny-shaped tree."

"All right then," replied Tom, "I thought for a minute we were lost."

Feeling sure they were right the boys pulled into the narrow channel, chatting and laughing over their adventure until suddenly Tom stopped rowing and glanced about.

"Say, this isn't the place we came in," he declared. "We never passed here. Look

ahead—those stumps are right in the middle of the channel and we'd have seen them sure."

"Golly, I believe you're right!" agreed Frank, "Say, we'll have to go by compass."

Dropping his oars he reached into his pocket and slowly a strange expression of wonder, amazement, surprise and fright overspread his face.

"It's gone!" he said in an awe-struck tone. "It's lost! Gosh, Tom, it must have dropped out of my pocket when I went overboard!"

"Jiminy, that's too bad!" exclaimed Tom. "But you needn't be so frightened, we can go back and start over again."

"Yes, but suppose we can't find the right lead?" objected Frank. "Then we will be in a pretty fix!"

"Oh, we can find it," declared Tom reassuringly. "If necessary we can try every one until we get the right one."

Turning their boat the boys pulled rapidly back to the lagoon and after a careful survey decided on another channel.

"Hurrah, this *is* right!" cried Frank after they had rowed some distance, "I remember that clump of reeds. We're all right."

But after they had rowed steadily for an hour the two boys began to have doubts.

"We ought to be out by that island by now," declared Tom. "I'm beginning to think we're wrong again."

"I was just getting that same way myself," admitted Frank. "Say, if we don't look out it'll be dark before we get out of here."

"Well we can use the radio," suggested Tom.

"Not unless we have to," replied Frank. "We still have time to go back and—hello, there's the island now!"

Glancing over his shoulder Tom saw that they had reached a bend in the waterway and beyond it loomed a wooded island. For a moment he gazed at it.

"That's not the island," he announced. "Look, it's got palms on it."

"Jehoshaphat, so it has!" exclaimed Frank. "Say, Tom, we're lost. We'll have to use the radio."

“Yes, I guess we will,” agreed Tom, “if we go back to that lagoon now we’ll never get out until after dark and Dad’ll be worried to death.”

As he spoke, he uncovered the radio apparatus while Frank got out the small portable aerial and erected it over the boat, dropping the ground wire over the side into the water.

Tom picked up the instruments, turned on the rheostat and was about to call into the microphone when his jaw dropped, his eyes seemed about to pop from his head and his hand shook.

“What on earth’s the matter?” cried Frank, alarmed at the strange expression which had come over Tom’s face. “You look as if you’d seen a ghost.”

“Hssh!” whispered Tom in a shaky voice. “I near them! I heard those Russians! Gosh, Frank! they must be close by!”

CHAPTER IX—PRISONERS

At Tom's astounding announcement Frank sank limply onto a thwart. But the next instant he was up, and seizing the resonance coil, hastily connected it to the set in place of the aerial.

"Now signal or tell me when you get them," he said, as, holding the coil horizontally, he commenced moving it in a wide circle. For a time Tom was silent, motionless, listening with every sense and nerve taut; then, as the coil pointed to the right, he raised his hand.

"There!" he whispered.

Presently he took off his phones. "It's no use listening," he declared "we can't tell what they're saying. Oh, thunder, why isn't Smernoff here?"

"Well, we can call to the folks and tell them and they can let Smernoff listen," said Frank.

"Silly!" cried Tom petulantly. "If we called them, these Russians would hear and either clear out or shut up. And, besides, I don't believe they could hear them on the submarine. I'll bet that's been the trouble all along. They've been too far off."

"Well, what can we do then?" demanded Frank. "If we call for help to get back, these fellows will hear us too. We're in a nice fix just from chasing that confounded old manatee. First we get lost and then we hear this talking and can't even tell about it."

"We might row along until we lose these fellows and then call the sub," suggested Tom, "if we get so far away we can't hear them the chances are they can't hear us. Come on."

There seemed nothing else to do and so, choosing a channel that led away from the direction whence the sounds had come, the boys rowed steadily for some time. Then they ceased rowing and picking up the coil Frank held it while Tom listened at the set.

For a space no sounds came to his ears and then he started so violently that Frank was almost upset.

“Gosh all crickety, Frank!” he exclaimed. “Something’s wrong. They sound nearer than ever.”

Puzzled and not knowing what to do, the boys sat motionless and speechless. They seemed to be surrounded by the voices coming from both directions.

“Hello,” ejaculated Frank presently, “We’re moving. Look at those trees!”

Tom glanced up. It was perfectly true, the trees were slowly but steadily slipping past them. They were drifting with the current.

“It must be the tide,” declared Tom. “If ’tis we’ll be out of here soon and if we reach the bay——”

“Hurrah, there’s the bay now!” cried Frank.

A few hundred yards ahead they saw the sheet of open water through the trees and with light hearts grasped the oars and started to row forwards, but before they had taken a stroke Tom uttered a smothered cry, grasped Frank’s arm and pointed a trembling finger at the open water visible through a space between the mangroves.

“Look, Frank! Look!” he whispered

Less than two hundred yards distant, plainly visible and moored close to the edge of the swamp was a big submarine! No second glance was needed to verify Tom’s first suspicions; the shattered conning tower left no doubt as to the craft’s identity.

Frank was too surprised and dumbfounded to speak and stood gazing with unbelieving eyes at the submarine so near to them and so totally unexpected.

“Quick!” whispered Tom. “If we don’t watch out we’ll be drifting in sight on that open water. Grab a root or a branch while I push the boat in.”

Seizing his oars, Tom pushed and pulled, forcing the boat close to the trees until Frank could grasp one of the swaying, descending roots and made the boat’s painter fast to it.

“No wonder we heard ’em,” remarked Tom when the boat was secured. “That creek must turn around a corner and we didn’t notice it. Say, what are we going to do now? We can’t wait here all night and we don’t know where to go and we can’t call our folks without those fellows on this sub hearing us.”

“And if we could call your father or Mr. Rawlins we couldn’t tell them where this submarine is because we don’t know ourselves,” replied Frank.

“It’s awful funny we should find it by getting lost after they’ve been hunting for it night after night,” said Tom, “and now what good does it do? I don’t see but what we’ll have to go back the way we came and trust to luck.”

“Huh!” snorted Frank, “and get lost worse than ever. If this sub came in here there must be deep water leading to sea and if we could sneak out we’d be sure to find the entrance to the bay and then we could call our people or hunt along the shore till we found that beach with the coconut grove.”

“Yes, and a swell chance we have of sneaking out!” Tom reminded him. “Just as soon as we went out of here they’d spot us, sure.”

“Well we’ll have to wait until dark, that’s all,” said Frank resignedly. “Of course they’ll worry, but like as not they’ll call for us and we may hear ’em. Then if these chaps hear, it wont be our fault. I know your father said not to hesitate to use radio if we had to, but he didn’t think we’d be alongside this submarine when we needed to. It’s not going to hurt us to wait here a while and we may see something.”

Tom’s sharp “Hisst!” caused Frank to wheel about. A small boat was now beside the submarine and several men were climbing into it. Presently they pushed off, the men took to the oars and to the boys’ horror and amazement the boat headed directly toward their hiding place.

“Gosh now it’s all up!” whispered Tom in terrified tones, “if they spot us or our boat it’ll be good night for us!”

Breathlessly the boys crouched in their craft, shaking with fright, while nearer and nearer came the boat from the submarine. Then, when the two trembling boys felt that their hour had come, that in another instant they must be seen, the other boat swung to one side and disappeared in a narrow channel among the mangroves not fifty feet from where the boys were concealed. In a few moments the sound of the oars and the voices of the men grew faint in the distance and the boys raised themselves and with relieved, fast-beating hearts exchanged glances.

“Did you see them?” exclaimed Tom. “My, weren’t they a tough looking lot!”

“Regular pirates!” agreed Frank. “Did you see that big fellow with the red beard?”

“You bet, and that thin one with the upturned blonde mustache! Gosh, he looked

like the Crown Prince of Germany!”

“That dark man was the worst,” declared Frank. “That Indian or nigger or whatever he was—the one with the earrings. Gee, I’d hate to have them get us.”

“I never knew Russians were such ugly looking people,” said Tom, “and I thought they were all light. That fellow with the earrings was almost as black as Sam.”

“They’re not all Russians,” Frank reminded him. “Don’t you remember Mr. Henderson and your father saying they were ‘reds’ from every point of the world and that the big chief of the lot isn’t even a German although he worked for Germany. And there was that man that died in New York, he was Irish.”

“Yes, that’s so,” agreed Tom, “but say, let’s get out of here now. They’re gone and maybe we can sneak away. I don’t believe any one’s aboard the sub.”

“Well, I do,” replied Frank, “I vote we turn back and see if we can’t find another channel that leads out below here. We can tell the right way to go by the tide flowing.”

“Golly, that’s so,” assented Tom. “All right, but we’ve got to be careful.”

Unfastening the boat, the two boys pulled slowly up the creek against the current, searching the mangroves on either side for an opening through which the tide was flowing. At last they sighted one and with elated minds turned into it. As they pulled along, Tom noticed that the mangroves were giving place to other trees, that the soft mud banks had changed to sand and that the shores were getting higher.

“We must be getting out of the swamp,” declared Tom. “See! the banks are high and there are trees. We’ll soon be out.”

The stream they were following was now running with quite a swift current and the boys noticed several side branches or smaller creeks flowing into it. They had just passed one of these and were about to turn a bend when with one accord they stopped rowing, their eyes grew wide with fright and they sat listening breathlessly. From ahead had come the sounds of human voices! Just around the bend were men!

To go on meant certain discovery. What should they do? For a brief instant they had thought it might be some of their own party, but the next second they knew better, for the words that came to them were in a harsh guttural tongue—the same tongue they had so often heard through their receivers.

Then, a sudden desire, an overwhelming curiosity to see the speakers, to learn where they were and what they were doing swept over Tom. With signs he motioned to Frank and an instant later they had run their boat into the side creek, had beached it noiselessly upon a narrow strip of soft earth and like snakes were wiggling silently up the bank among the trees. For some strange psychological reason they were no longer afraid; no longer did thoughts of the risk they ran enter their heads. Their entire thoughts were centered on seeing these men, on learning what they could, for they realized instinctively that they had stumbled upon the secret of the gang's hiding place, that they had found what their friends had been searching for night after night and that, did they ever regain their own submarine, their knowledge would be invaluable.

But they were cautious. They had no intention of being either seen or heard and before they reached the summit of the bank they carefully raised their heads and peered between the bases of the trees beyond. They had no means of knowing what lay beyond that bank. It might be open land, it might be brush or woods or it might be water. They knew, however, that the men must be close at hand and yet, when they peered through, they could scarcely repress surprised exclamations at what they saw.

Within a dozen yards, a boat was lying beside the bank of the stream and just beyond, beneath a wide-spreading tree, two men stood talking.

One was the big, red-bearded fellow the boys had seen in the boat as it left the submarine. The other, who half leaned upon a repeating rifle and who wore an immense automatic pistol at his belt, was tall, well-built and most striking in appearance. He was dressed in light, neat clothes and leather puttees; a broad-brimmed Panama hat was on his head, his face was tanned but clean shaven, except for a small, sharply upturned, iron-gray mustache, and in one eye he wore a monocle.

So totally unlike his companions was he that the boys almost gasped in astonishment. There was nothing about him, nothing in his appearance, that spoke of lawlessness, of a thug or a criminal. Indeed, he was a most distinguished-looking gentleman, such a figure as one might expect to see at a meeting of scientists, at some state function, at a directors' meeting in some bank or business house.

But when he spoke the disillusionment was complete. His voice had the strangest sound the boys had ever heard. It was cold, grating, inexpressibly cruel and sent shivers down the boys' backs as they listened. What he was saying they

could not grasp, but that he was angry, that he was reprimanding the giant before him, the boys could tell by his tones, the hard reptilian glitter of his light gray eyes and by the expression of the red-bearded fellow.

The latter, with hat in hand, fairly cowered before the other. His head was bent, his eyes downcast, his face and neck were flushed scarlet and his replies came in a low, humble, apologetic tone.

Those in the waiting boat were silent, only the two uttered a single word. For a space the boys watched, fascinated, and then it occurred to Tom that they must get away, that somehow they had taken the wrong channel and that if they were to escape unseen they must leave at once, retrace their way to where they had seen the submarine and from there try to reach the entrance to the bay.

Touching Frank's arm, Tom signaled for him to withdraw and as silently as they had come the two boys slipped down the bank, shoved their boat noiselessly into the water and crept into it.

With fast beating hearts they paddled towards the larger stream and had almost reached it, when, without warning, a flock of white ibis flapped up before them and with harsh croaks of alarm perched upon the topmost branches of the trees.

The boys' blood seemed to freeze in their veins and their hearts to cease beating. Would the men suspect something or somebody was near? Would they sweep down on the boys?

Instantly, at the hoarse cries of the birds, the voices beyond the point had ceased and the boys knew the men were listening, straining their ears for a suspicious sound. To go on would be to court disaster. The least rattle of oars or squeal of rowlocks would be heard and even if no sound issued from the boat the slightest movement would again arouse the ibis overhead. There was nothing to do but wait, wait with panting, throbbing lungs and heart-racking fears for what might happen next.

But the boys did not have long to wait. From beyond the intervening bank came the rattle of an oar, a sharp, gruff order, the splash of water. The men were coming! To remain where they were meant capture! There was but one thing to be done and that was to turn and pull as fast as they were able into the small creek in the one faint hope that the others might pass it by and look for the cause of the birds' fright upon the main stream. Quickly the boat was swung round and with deadly terror lending strength to their arms, the boys pulled frantically into the trees that formed an archway over the tiny waterway. But their ruse was in vain. The noise of the splashing oars had been heard. The disturbed water of the

stream told the story of their flight to their enemies. Scarcely a score of yards had been covered when the boys heard the other boat following, heard the rough Slavic voices, and the frightened cries of the ibis. Madly they pulled and then, so close that the boys could not avoid it had they wished, the creek came to an abrupt end in a mass of foliage.

Before the boys knew it was there they had bumped into it. Frank's hat was swept off by a branch, sharp twigs and thorns tore their flesh, the boat rocked and grated, and realizing they were trapped the boys screamed in terror. Then, ere they grasped what had happened, their boat had shot through the screen of branches, they were in open water and looking back they saw the fallen trees which had spanned the creek. Before them the stream turned sharply to one side. Only a dozen strokes of the oars would bring them to the bend. They had almost reached it when shouts and curses came from beyond the fallen trees, they heard a crashing of the branches, the sharp reports of revolvers rang out and bullets whistled past the boys' heads.

The next moment the boat shot around the point and, driven to desperation, thinking only of outdistancing their pursuers, the boys rowed like mad, giving no heed to direction, no attention to their surroundings. Then they suddenly realized that the sounds of their pursuers had ceased, that there were no shouts, no splashing of oars, no rattle of wood on wood. What had happened? Why had the others abandoned the chase?

And then it dawned upon Frank.

"Gee Christopher!" he exclaimed under his breath, "that fallen tree saved us, Tom! Their big boat couldn't get through. We're safe!"

"Gosh, I guess you're right!" whispered Tom while the two still continued to row. "But I'm not sure we're safe. There may be another way in here and perhaps they've gone around to cut us off. Say, we've got to row like the dickens and try to get so far they won't find us!"

"Yes, but we're lost!" declared Frank. "We haven't any idea where we are!"

"I know it," admitted Tom, "but we can't help that now. After we've gone farther we'll stop and call our folks. Those chaps back there can't hear us and if their sub does, it won't make any difference now. They know we're here and we've got to get out."

For fully half an hour they toiled on. Their breath came in gasps, their arms ached, their hands were blistered and raw, but they dared not stop. Then, when

they felt they could go no farther, their boat shot out from the mangroves and they found themselves floating on a broad lagoon.

“Hurrah!” cried Frank, “we’re back where we saw the manatee!”

“Golly, so we are!” agreed Tom. “Well, I’m going to use the radio now and see if we can get our people.”

But all attempts to get their submarine proved fruitless. Over and over again they called. Hopefully and patiently Tom listened while Frank moved the resonance coil about, but not a sound came through the receivers.

“It’s no use,” declared Tom at last. “We can’t get them. What on earth will we do?”

“All we can do is to go on,” replied Frank in dejected tones. “It’s almost dark, we may find our way by luck.”

“I can’t row another stroke,” declared Tom. “I’m all in. We might just as well lie here and rest, at least until the moon comes up. We can’t go on in the dark through these creeks.”

“Yes, I suppose so,” agreed Frank who, now the excitement was over, felt utterly exhausted. “We’re as safe here as anywhere.”

Drawing in their oars the two lonely, tired and hungry boys threw themselves in the bottom of the boat and too weary even to talk lay gazing up at the stars. The boat rocked gently to the tiny ripples on the lagoon; from the swamps came the droning chant of frogs and insects; fireflies flitted by like tiny meteors; the water lapped soothingly against the boat’s planks and lulled by the sounds and the soft night air the boys slept.

Tom was the first to awake. For an instant he lay still, dazed, not remembering where he was and dimly aware of a strange, monotonous, resonant sound that somehow seemed to vibrate and throb through his brain, the boat and the night air.

He nudged Frank. “Wake up!” he half whispered, “wake up! The moon’s out and we’ve got to be going on.”

Then, as Frank sleepily opened his eyes and yawned, Tom spoke again.

“Hear that noise?” he asked. “What is it?”

Frank, now wide awake, sat up. He too heard the sound, a noise so unlike anything else he had ever heard that he felt cold shivers chasing up and down his

spine.

“I—I don’t know!” he stammered. “It’s uncanny—perhaps it’s a frog or a night bird or something. Say, where are we?”

Then, for the first time, Tom noticed their surroundings. No longer were they on the lagoon. On either side, rose tall trees looming black and gigantic against the moonlit sky and by the glint of the light upon the ripples the boys could see that the narrow waterway ran swiftly.

“Crickey, we’ve drifted while we were asleep!” cried Frank. “Now we *are* lost.”

“Well, we’re drifting with the tide anyway,” said Tom, trying bravely to be cheerful. “And it’s bound to take us out somewhere to open water.”

“Yes, only it may be coming in and not going out,” said Frank. “What time is it? My watch stopped when I fell overboard.”

Tom pulled out his watch and examined it’s luminous dial. “Gosh, it’s after eleven!” he exclaimed. “Say, we must have slept four or five hours.”

“There’s that noise again!” cried Frank. “What on earth is it? It seems to come from all around and say—— Gee, look there, Tom! What’s that?”

Startled, Tom glanced about. Far ahead between the trees he could see a ruddy glow.

“Golly, it’s a fire!” he exclaimed in frightened tones. “Let’s get out. It may be those Russians again. Perhaps it’s their camp.”

“And the noise comes from there!” stammered Frank. “It’s dreadful!”

Hurriedly grasping their oars the boys pulled, trying their utmost to swing the boat’s bow around, but it was of no use. The current was running like a millrace and despite their utmost endeavors they were being swept irresistibly towards the fire and that weird, uncanny, hair-raising sound.

Nearer and nearer they swept. Now they could see the ruddy light upon the water ahead. They could even see the flames dancing among the trees and the resonant, throbbing boom rose and fell in terrifying cadence through the night. Then, between the throbbing beats, the boys heard voices; but not the harsh guttural voices of the “reds.” It was even worse, for the sounds borne to the boys—frightened, terror-stricken and helpless in their drifting boat—savored of savages. They were high-pitched, yet musical, rising and falling; one moment dying to a low murmur, the next rising to a blood-curdling wail.

Absolutely paralyzed, the boys sat and stared at the light and the fire they were approaching. What was it? Through their minds flashed stories of cannibals, visions of savage Indians, and yet Rawlins had assured them there were no Indians upon the island. But surely these could be nothing else. Those sounds—dimly, to Tom's mind came memories of a similar sound he had once heard—yes—that was it—an Indian tom-tom at a Wild West show. They *must* be savages! Yes, now he could see them, wild, naked, dancing, leaping figures; whirling, gyrating about the fire now less than two hundred yards ahead and within fifty feet of the Lank. Frank had seen them also. He too knew they must be savages. Would they be seen? Would the dancing, prancing fiends detect them as they swept through that circle of light upon the water or were they too busy with their dancing to notice them? Now the drum roared in deafening, booming notes, filling the surrounding forest with its echoes and the savage chant of the prancing figures sent chills over the cowering boys. Just ahead was the expanse of water illuminated by the red glare. In a moment they would be in it. Close to the bank the boys saw canoes drawn ashore, big dug-outs, crude primitive craft. Yes, there *were* Indians in Santo Domingo, Rawlins must have been mistaken. Now they were in the firelight. They held their breaths and then a moaning hopeless groan issued from the boys' lips. Their boat slowed down; before they realized what had happened they were caught in an eddy and the next instant their craft bumped with a resounding thud against one of the canoes.

The boys' senses reeled. They were wedged fast between the dugouts in the brilliant light from the fire and before a cry could escape them, before they could move, two half-naked, awful creatures, hideously painted and with threatening, waving clubs came dashing down the bank.

The boys knew their last minute had come. The savages had seen them. Resistance would be hopeless. They were too frightened, too frozen with mortal terror to move or even scream.

The next second the naked fiends were upon them. Powerful hands seized legs and feet and unresisting, limp, almost unconscious with dread thoughts of their fate, they were borne triumphantly towards the fire and the ring of terrifying figures.

CHAPTER X—RADIO TO THE RESCUE

As the sun dipped towards, the mountains to the west and the boys did not return, Mr. Pauling became worried.

“I was a fool to permit them to go off alone,” he declared to Mr. Henderson. “Even with a compass they might go astray in the swamp. Boys are always careless and they do not realize the danger of getting lost.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t worry yet,” replied the other. “They have their radio sets along and would call us if they had any difficulties. Bancroft has been listening for the past hour and nothing’s come in.”

“Yes, I know,” rejoined Tom’s father, “but if they don’t turn up soon I shall start after them.”

Rawlins, who had returned from his scouting trip and had reported that he had been unsuccessful in seeing a sign of smoke across the bay, now approached.

“I hardly think they’re in trouble,” he said, “I I’d suggest calling them before starting a search, provided they don’t arrive. They can hear much farther than they can send and I don’t believe our messages could be heard by the gang in the sub. We’ve been several miles around the bay and know those rascals are not near.”

“Yes, we can do that,” agreed Mr. Pauling. “Even if they should hear, it is of little consequence in comparison with getting word to the boys. I’m about ready to abandon the attempt to locate the men anyway. Our information is too indefinite to rely upon.”

As time slipped by and still there was no sign of the missing boys and no word came by radio, Mr. Pauling became terribly worried and even Rawlins’ optimism became shaken.

Finally, as the afternoon shadows lengthened, Tom’s father could stand it no longer and he told Bancroft to call their names and see if he could get in touch with them. But when, after fifteen minutes, the operator reported that no

response had been received Mr. Pauling grew frantic.

“Something’s happened,” he declared. “They’ve either gone too far to hear or to reply or they’ve been drowned or have met with some accident. We must set out on a search at once.”

Accordingly, the boat was manned, a radio set was placed in it and Mr. Pauling, Rawlins and Bancroft embarked, leaving Mr. Henderson, who was the only remaining member of the party who understood radio, in charge of the submarine. Sam also went along, for, as Rawlins explained, he had eyes like a cat and at Mr. Henderson’s suggestion Smernoff was included.

“You may hear those rascals talking,” he said, “and if you do you’ll need him.”

Rawlins remembered hearing the boys speak of the island they wished to explore and knew more or less the direction they had gone. It was no easy matter to find an island in the swamp largely by guesswork, but luck favored and just before dark they sighted the higher trees and firm land of the island where the boys had lunched. Calling frequently, both by voice and by radio, the searching party pulled around the island and came to the beach. Something white upon the sand attracted Rawlins’ attention and landing they found the paper wrappings of the boys’ lunch.

“They stopped here to eat,” announced the diver. “Now the question is in which direction they went. They might have gone up any one of these creeks or they might have started for the mainland. It’s all guesswork.”

It was now dusk and the swamp was black with impenetrable shadows, but as they circled around the swamp in vague hopes of finding some clue or of hearing the boys by the radio instruments, Sam’s sharp eyes caught sight of a bunch of water plants.

“Tha’ boat parsed by here, Chief,” he announced, pointing to the bruised and bent stems. “Ah’m sure of that, Chief.”

Rawlins examined the plants carefully. “Yes, either their boat or some other,” he agreed. “We’ll follow up this channel.”

By the time they reached the open lagoon it was pitch dark and their only hope lay in getting in touch with the boys by radio.

“If we don’t look out we’ll get lost ourselves,” announced Rawlins. “You watch the compass, Quartermaster, and keep track of our course and the bearings.”

“Aye, aye, Sir,” replied the old sailor, and once more the boat proceeded through

the black swamp, Rawlins peering ahead and occasionally shouting, Bancroft constantly speaking into the instruments and listening at the receivers and Mr. Pauling, nearly mad with worry, fears and regrets.

For hour after hour they continued, following waterway after waterway, traversing lagoon after lagoon, forcing their way through the dense swamps to the mainland of the island and even emerging on the broad calm bay.

“If they’re lost and unable to get back they’ll probably camp,” said Rawlins. “They have matches and can make a fire. In fact they’ve sense enough to think of making a fire for a signal. I believe it will be a good plan to go ashore; I’ll ascend a hill, and Sam can climb a tree and look about. If there’s a fire anywhere in sight we should see it.”

All agreed this was a good plan and accordingly the boat was headed towards the nearest point and at last grated upon the rocks. With Sam, Rawlins pushed into the brush, stumbling over roots, bumping into trees in the darkness, barking shins and tearing clothes, but steadfastly clambering up the steep slope until they reached the summit. Selecting a tall palm, Sam proceeded to “walk” up the trunk in the native Indian fashion and soon reached the huge leafy top.

Straddling the base of an immense frond, he slowly and carefully swept the horizon with his eyes. From his lofty perch, nearly one hundred feet above the earth and fully two hundred feet above the water, the entire swamp, the numerous lagoons and even the broad bay lay spread before him like a map. Although the moon would not rise until midnight, yet the sky was bright with myriads of stars which cast a faint glow upon the water and served to distinguish; it from the darker masses of mangroves and land. At first he could see nothing that resembled the glow of a fire, but after several minutes his eyes detected a faint light among the trees several miles away and apparently on the mainland across the bay.

As he watched, the spot grew brighter, it took on a pinkish tint and seemed to spread, until at last, it was a distinct ruddy light which he knew beyond the shadow of a doubt was a fire. Carefully taking bearings by the stars and the dark masses of the swamp, he slid to the ground.

“Tha’s a fire yonder, Chief,” he announced. “Ah’ seed it plain an’ clear, an’ it’s just started, Chief. Ah seed it fla’in’ up an’ a-makin’ brighter all the time. Ah reckon tha’ young gentlemens ’s a-makin’ it fo’ a signal, Chief.”

“That’s blamed good news!” exclaimed Rawlins. “You say it’s over on the other side of the bay and you’ve got its bearings. All right, we’ll get over there, but

how the deuce those kids got across the bay without knowing it, stumps me."

Reaching the boat, Rawlins reported their success and with all possible speed the boat was pulled through the winding channels of the swamp in the direction Sam indicated. But it is one thing to take a sight and bearings from a tree top on a hillside and quite another matter to follow those bearings and directions through a mangrove swamp filled with twisting, devious channels. How Sam could manage to keep the general course at all was little short of marvelous, but as the boat turned bend after bend, doubled on its track, found its way blocked and made detours, the Bahaman never missed his general sense of direction, and at last the searching party emerged from the swamp and on the broad expanse of the bay.

Sam glanced about, squinted at the stars and indicated the course to follow. As they rowed swiftly across the bay towards the opposite shores, Rawlins spoke.

"Say!" he exclaimed. "It may not be the boys after all. I've been puzzling all along how they could get over there and I'm beginning to think it's those chaps we're after and not the boys."

"Jove! you're right," cried Mr. Pauling, "and, good Lord! perhaps they've found the boys and taken them prisoners! If the boys used their radio to call us the others may have heard it and located them. What an addle-headed fool I've been to take such risks! No wonder we haven't heard them or got them. Probably they're helpless—bound and gagged and those devils are chuckling to themselves as they hear our calls and are luring us into a trap."

"Well, if they've touched those kids I'll say there'll be some rough-house work when we step into that trap," declared Rawlins, "and they'll find they've bitten off a darned sight bigger hunk than they can swallow without choking. We've got arms, I slipped 'em in the boat, and we're no crew of tenderfeet. Sam's some little scrapper and the quartermaster was champion middle-weight of the Atlantic squadron, old Smernoff's itching for a fight with those whiskered friends of his, and I guess you and Bancroft can take care of yourselves and I'm no quitter myself."

"Yes, yes, Rawlins," replied Mr. Pauling, "but you forget that if they have the boys they can protect themselves by threatening harm to Tom and Frank. They can make their own terms and they are ruthless beasts."

"Well, Mr. Pauling, don't let's cross our rivers till we get to 'em," said the diver. "We don't know if the boys are prisoners yet. We'll go easy and find out how the land lays first. Remember we can see their fire and what's going on a long time

before they can spot us. That’s the worst of a fire. The other fellow can see you, but you can’t see the other fellow.”

“Yes, but the great trouble is, if we call for the boys by radio we’ll warn our enemies instead,” Mr. Pauling reminded him.

“If they *are* prisoners it won’t be any use hollering for them,” replied Rawlins sagely. “I guess the best plan is just to lie low, keep quiet and sneak in. If the boys are alone and it’s their fire we’ll find them just as well without calling and if it’s the ‘reds’ fire and the boys are not there we’ll spring a surprise.”

A few minutes later the boat had gained the shelter of the trees beyond the bay and, still guided by Sam’s almost uncanny instinct or skill, they pushed into the nearest channel among the mangroves. On this side of the bay, however, there was much more open water; the trees were more scattered, and, instead of being made up of innumerable creeks flowing through dense masses of mangroves, the swamp consisted of large lake-like expanses dotted and interrupted by narrow belts and isolated clumps of trees.

They had proceeded for an hour or more and felt that they must be approaching the spot where Sam had seen the fire when they noticed that the darkness was less dense, that there was a subdued light upon the water, and that the clumps of trees were sharper and clearer.

“Hanged if the moon isn’t rising!” exclaimed Rawlins. “Crickey, it must be near midnight.”

Mr. Pauling looked at his watch. “It’s after eleven,” he announced. “We’ve been searching for five hours.”

“I’ll say those kids are some little travelers!” declared Rawlins. “They must have thought they were rowing for a bet to get clean over here.”

“Ah 'spec’ tha’ tide made to help them, Chief,” remarked Sam. “It makes right strong an’ po’ful up these creeks.”

“Yep, that must have been it,” agreed Rawlins. “Hadn’t thought of it before, I’ll bet they got caught in a strong current and couldn’t pull against it. Hello! What the——”

Instantly the men stopped rowing. From far away, as if from the air itself, came a low throbbing vibration, a sound felt rather than heard, and those in the boat stared at one another questioningly.

“Thunder!” suggested Mr. Pauling, in a low tone.

Rawlins shook his head. “Nix,” he replied crisply. “Thunder doesn’t keep up like that and it doesn’t throb that way. Sounds to me more like a ship’s screw half out of water.”

“Some bird then,” suggested Mr. Pauling. “Bittern or owl, perhaps.”

“I’ll say it’s *some* bird—if ’tis a bird!” exclaimed Rawlins. “What is it, Sam?”

The quartermaster spat into the water and before the Bahaman could reply he remarked: “’Course 'taint possible, Sir; but if I was a-hearin’ o’ that 'ere soun’ an’ was in the South Seas 'stead o’ here in the West Injies—I’d say as how ’twas a tom-tom, Sir—you knows what I means, Sir—savage drum such as they uses for a-havin’ of a cannibal feast, Sir.”

“Well we’re not in the South Seas,” returned Rawlins, “and there aren’t any cannibals here. Say, what the devil’s the matter with you, Sam?”

It was no wonder Rawlins asked. The Bahaman was staring open-mouthed across the water, his eyes rolling, his face drawn and awful fear depicted upon his black features.

“Here, wake up! Seen a ghost?” cried Rawlins, shaking the negro roughly. Sam’s jaws came together, he licked his dry lips and in terror-striken, shaking tones murmured, “Voodoo!”

Something in his tones, in the way he pronounced the one word, sent shivers down his hearers’ backs.

“Voodoo?” repeated Rawlins, recovering himself. “What in thunder are you talking about?”

“Ah knows it!” replied the negro, in a hoarse whisper. “Tha’s the devil dance! Yaas, Sir, tha’s Voodoo goin’ on!”

“Well, I’ll be sunk!” ejaculated the diver. “A Voodoo dance! By glory! I didn’t think they had ’em over here. I’ve heard of 'em in Martinique and Haiti, but I never took much stock in the yarns. Are you sure, Sam?”

The cowering negro had sunk to his knees in the boat. All the long-dormant superstition of his race, the soul-racking fear of the occult and supernatural which was the heritage of his African ancestors had been stirred into being by the throbbing pulsations borne through the night, and he was an abject, terror-stricken creature.

Rawlins jerked him to athwart. “Brace up, you fool nigger!” he commanded.

“No one’s hurting you yet! You’re a blamed coward, Sam! What if ’tis Voodoo? What in thunder are you scared of?”

Slowly the negro came back to his senses; shaking like a leaf, sickly ashen with fright, he steadied himself. “Ah aint 'fraid,” he stuttered, his tones belying his words. “Ah was jus’ flustrated, Chief. But Ah don’t mek to meddle with Voodoo, Chief. Better go back, Chief.”

“You bet your boots we’ll go back—not!” declared Rawlins. “I’d like right well to see a Voodoo as you call it. And if there’s any folks around here—black or white, tame or savage, we’re out to find ’em and have a pow-wow with ’em. Maybe the boys saw their fire and made for it, and maybe the fire’s nothing to do with the tom-tom, and more likely than all it’s not a devil dance at all but just those blamed Bolsheviks having a vodka spree all on their own—celebrating the boys’ capture or something. Come on, men, let’s get a move on.”

“Perhaps we’d better try to call the boys,” suggested Mr. Pauling. “Your hint that they may have seen the fire, or that they may have heard the drum is reasonable, but they are cautious and might be near, hesitating to approach the fire or the sound. The noise of that drum—supposing it should be the ‘reds’ and not from a negro dance—would prevent others from hearing us.”

“Sure, that’s a good idea,” agreed Rawlins. “Maybe they’re near, right now.”

As Rawlins spoke, Bancroft was adjusting his instruments and the next instant gave an exultant cry.

“I hear ’em!” he announced.

Then: “Tom! Frank!” he called into the microphone. “Can you hear me? It’s Bancroft! We’re near! We can hear a drum and are making for a fire! Where are you? Can you see the fire or hear the noise?”

Faint and thin, but clearly distinguishable, now the throbbing rumble of the drum had ceased, Bancroft heard Tom’s voice.

“We hear!” it said. “Come quick! We don’t know where we are, but we’re here by the fire—we’re prisoners—a lot of savages have us!”

Bancroft, in a strained voice, repeated the words.

“Good Lord!” cried Mr. Pauling, “they’re captives of those crazy devil-worshipers.”

“Attaboy!” yelled Rawlins. “Lift her, boys! Pull for your lives!”

CHAPTER XI—THE DEVIL DANCERS

Perhaps the two terrified boys swooned, perhaps they were literally frightened out of their wits. Neither could ever be sure, but whichever it was, everything was a blank from the moment when they felt the hands of the savage figures grasp them until they found themselves surrounded on every side by a ring of half-naked men and women in the full glare of a huge fire under immense trees.

But they were unharmed, not even bound, and as they realized this their courage in a measure returned and they glanced about, still terribly frightened, shaking as if with ague, and marveling that they were still alive.

Then for the first time they realized that their captors were not Indians. They were hideously daubed with paint to be sure, they were nearly nude, but they were not bedecked with feathers and their black skins and wooly heads left no doubt as to their identity. They were negroes, mostly coal black, but a few were brown or even yellow and the dazed, scared boys looked upon them with uncomprehending amazement. To them, negroes were civilized, harmless, good-natured people and why these blacks should be acting in this savage manner was past all understanding.

And still more puzzling was the fact that they were talking together in a strange, unintelligible jargon. To the boys' minds, all colored people spoke English—either with the broad soft accent of the American negro or the slurring, drawling dialect of the West Indians, and yet here were blacks chattering shrilly in some totally different tongue.

The boys felt as if they had been bereft of their senses, as if, by some magic, they had been transported to the middle of darkest Africa and they wondered vaguely if their fears and worries had driven them mad and the whole thing was a hallucination.

But at this moment four more blacks arrived and to the boys' further amazement deposited their radio sets upon the smooth, hard-beaten earth beside them. These were real; they seemed somehow to link the boys with the outside world, with

civilization, and at sight of them the boys knew they were not dreaming, were not mad.

And the little cases with their black fiber panels and shining nickel-plated knobs and connections had a strange effect upon the circle of negroes also. With low murmurs and sharp ejaculations they drew a step farther from the boys and looked furtively at the instruments, while the men who had brought them from the boat leaped nimbly away the instant they had set them down as if afraid the harmless things might bite them.

“Gosh!” murmured Tom, finding his voice at last. “They’re afraid of us!”

“I believe they are,” responded Frank, who, finding that the savage-looking crowd seemed of no mind to harm them, had regained confidence.

Scarcely knowing why he did so, Tom reached forward, connected the batteries and turned the rheostat. The result was astounding. As the tiny filament in the bulb glowed at his touch an awed “Wahii!” arose from the negroes, and with one accord they retreated several yards.

“Say, we’ve got ’em going!” exclaimed Tom jubilantly. “They’re as much afraid of us as we are of them. It all gets me, Frank. I wonder——”

What Tom wondered Frank never knew, for at this moment the surrounding blacks uttered a weird wailing cry and flung themselves upon the ground.

“Gee!” ejaculated Frank, “look there.”

Over the prostrated blacks, approaching through a lane between their bodies, came an amazing, fantastic, awful figure. Naked, save for a loin cloth, painted to resemble a skeleton, with great horns bound to his head and with a cow’s tail dragging behind him, he came prancing and leaping towards the fire and the boys, shaking a rattle in one hand and waving a horse-tail in the other.

Speechless with wonder, the boys gazed at him. They realized that he was the leader of the crowd, a chief probably, and in his fantastic garb they recognized a faint resemblance to pictures they had seen of wild African tribesmen, but that such a being should be here—here in an island in the West Indies and only a few miles from railways, cities, great sugar mills, wireless stations and even their own submarine, seemed incredible, monstrous, absolutely unbelievable—as dream-like and amazing as the savage-looking figures who had captured them.

But they had little time to think. Suddenly the tom-tom burst forth in thunderous sounds, deep, sonorous, blood-curdling, savage, wild, and to the deafening “turn

—turn, turn, turn—turn—turn, turn, turn," the huge horned figure pranced and danced about the two boys, chanting a wailing song, keeping time to his steps with his gourd-rattle and shaking and waving his horse-tail.

Nearer and nearer he circled, stooping low, leaping high, working himself into a frenzy; twisting, swaying, contorting, while, fascinated, almost hypnotized, the two boys watched speechless and rooted to the spot. Then, so abruptly that the boys jumped, the drum ceased, the dancing figure halted as if arrested in mid-air, with one foot still raised, and then, with a wild yell, he darted towards the boys.

With a startled cry they cowered away. Surely, they thought, he was about to seize them, to kill them. But the next instant the man stooped, and grasping the shining copper resonance coil whirled it about, facing the ring of negroes and waving the coil about his head, while, upon the copper wire, the firelight gleamed and scintillated as though living flames were darting from it.

And then a marvelous, a miraculous thing happened. As the gigantic negro slowly swung the coil, a great hush fell upon the others and clear and distinct in the silence a voice seemed to issue from the black box upon the ground.

"Tom! Frank!" came the words.

At the sounds, pandemonium broke loose. With a wild, terrified scream the horned man flung down the coil and with a tremendous bound burst through the circle of onlookers who, screaming and yelling, turned and fled in every direction. In a breath, the boys were alone. Alone by the fire and their instruments while, crouching behind trees, flat on the ground, wailing like lost souls, the negroes watched from a distance with wildly rolling eyes and terror-stricken faces.

But the boys at the time gave little heed to this. At the sound of their names from the receiver they had been galvanized to life and action. Their friends were near, they were calling them! They were saved! Leaping to the coil, Frank grabbed it up and moved it slowly, until again to Tom's anxious ears came the sound of a human voice. "It's Bancroft!" came the words. "We're near! We can hear a drum and are making for a fire. Where are you? Can you see the fire or hear the noise?"

"Can we?" muttered Tom, his sense of humor coming to him even in his excitement. "I'll say we can, as Rawlins says."

Then, scarcely daring to hope that he could send his voice through space by the coil, he adjusted the sending instruments and called into the transmitter.

“We hear!” he cried. “Come quick! We don’t know where we are, but we’re here by the fire—we’re prisoners—a lot of savages have us!”

Breathlessly Tom listened. Had they heard? Would the resonance coil—that marvelous instrument which had worked the miracle—act as a sending antenna? Tom wondered why they had never tried it, why they had been so stupid, why it had never occurred to them. Had Bancroft heard? Would they come? All this flashed through his mind with the speed of light. And then came another thought. Of course they’d come. Even if they had not heard they would come. Bancroft had said they were making for the fire. They would be there anyway and as Tom realized this a tremendous load lifted from his mind. Whether or not their coil had served to send the waves speeding through the ether, they were sure of being rescued. But the next instant a still greater joy thrilled him. Again from the receiver came Bancroft’s voice. “Hold fast!” it said, “we’re coming! We hear you!” Even Frank had heard.

The boys’ tensed strained nerves gave way. The coil dropped from Frank’s hand, he staggered to Tom’s side and, throwing their arms around each other, the two burst into wild hysterical laughter. Suddenly they were aware of some one speaking near them. In their wild delight, the terrific reaction, they had forgotten their captors, had forgotten the weird dancer whose act had saved them. But at the low moaning voice close to them they came back to earth with a start and wheeled about. Within a few paces, his head bobbing up and down against the ground, flat on his stomach, was the giant negro, and from his lips, muffled by their contact with the earth, came the pleading wail which had roused the boys.

“What on earth does he want?” asked Tom, who could make nothing of the words.

“I don’t know, but he’s scared to death like all the others,” replied Frank, “and I don’t wonder. That voice from the phones was enough to scare any savage. I think he’s begging forgiveness or something.”

“Gosh! I wish he understood English,” said Tom, and then, in a louder voice, “Here, get up!” he ordered. “Can you speak English?”

Slowly and hesitatingly the man raised his wooly head and with wildly rolling eyes gazed fearfully at the boys. His lips moved, his tongue strove to form words, but no sound came from him. So abject, so thoroughly terror-stricken was his appearance that the boys really pitied him, but now, at last, he had found his voice again.

“Messieu’s!” he pleaded. “Messieu’s! Moi pas save. Moi ami, Beke. Ah! Ai!

Beke no un'stan'. Moi spik Eenglees liddle. Moi mo' sorry! Moi fren' yes! Moi no mek harm Messieu's! Ai, Ai! Moi mek dance, moi people mek fo' Voodoo! No mek fo' harm Beke! Pa'donez Moi, Messieu's!"

"Gosh, I can't get it!" exclaimed Tom. "He's asking us to forgive him and wants to be friends, but what he means by 'Beke' and 'Voodoo' and those other words I don't know. But I'm willing to be friends." Then, addressing the still groveling negro, "All right!" he said. "Get up. You're forgiven. We'll be friends. But stop bumping your head on the ground and take off those horns. You give me the shivers."

Whether the devil-dancer understood more than half of Tom's words is doubtful, but he grasped the meaning and with unutterable relief upon his black face he grinned and tearing off his fantastic headdress cast it into the flames and rose slowly to his feet.

As he did so, his watching companions also rose and edged cautiously from their hiding places, but still keeping a respectful distance and eyeing the black radio sets with furtive, frightened glances. Very evidently, to their minds, these white boys were powerful Obeah men, they possessed magic of a sort not to be despised or molested, and with the primitive man's simple reasoning they felt that to propitiate such powerful witch doctors was the only way to insure their own safety. Although, to the boys, they had appeared savages yet, had Tom and Frank happened upon them at any other time, they would have found nothing at all savage about them. Indeed, they would never have had reason to think them other than happy-go-lucky, good-natured colored folk, harmless and as civilized as any of the West Indian peasantry, for they were merely French West Indian negroes, and aside from the fact that they spoke only their native Creole patois were indistinguishable from others of their race. But like the majority of the French negroes they were at heart firm believers in Voodoo and Obeah and when worked into a fanatical frenzy at one of these African serpent-worshiping orgies they became temporarily transformed to fiendish savages, reverting to all the wild customs and ways of their ancestors and drawing the line only at actual cannibalism.

But of all this the boys knew nothing. They did not dream that such people or such customs existed, and they could not fathom the reasons or understand what to them were the mysterious and almost incredible sights they had witnessed.

And of a far more important matter the boys were equally ignorant. Had they but known, they would have thanked their lucky stars that they had stumbled upon

the Voodoo dancers and, had they been able to understand and speak Creole and thus been able to converse with the negroes, they would have made a discovery which, would have amazed them even more than the savage dance and the remarkable results brought about by their radio instruments.

But being unable to carry on any but the most limited conversation, the boys sat there by the fire waiting for the sound of the expected boat and surrounded by the colored folk who now had discarded their paint and fantastic garb and were clothed in calico and dungaree. Even the chief, or rather the Obeah man, was now so altered in appearance that the boys could scarcely believe he was the same being who had pranced and danced with waving horse-tail and rattlebox before them and when, timidly and half apologetically, he brought them a tray loaded with fruit and crisp fried fish with tiny rolls of bread wrapped in banana leaves, they decided that it must all have been some sort of a masquerade and that their imaginations had filled them with unwarranted and ridiculous fears.

They were terribly hungry and never had food been more welcome; both boys ate ravenously.

“He’s a good old skate after all!” declared Tom, nodding towards the big negro who sat near. “I guess they were just trying to scare us.”

“Well, they succeeded all right,” replied Frank. “Say, I thought we were going to be roasted and eaten when they grabbed us.”

“Yes, but our radio scared them a lot worse,” said Tom. “Gosh! that *was* wonderful, the way the old boy grabbed up the coil and those words came in just right. I’ll bet Dad’s worried though. We ought to call them and tell them we’re all right.”

“Golly, that’s so!” agreed Frank. “I’d forgotten we hadn’t.”

Still munching a mouthful of food, Frank rose to pick up the coil, but at that instant several of the negroes jumped up, their voices rose in excited tones and they turned wondering faces toward the waterside. At the same instant the boys distinctly heard the splash of oars.

“They’re here!” yelled Tom, and with one accord the two rushed towards the landing place.

Before they had reached it a boat shot from the shadows, its keel grated on the beach and Mr. Pauling and Rawlins leaped out, each with a rifle in his hands, while behind them, armed and ready for battle, came Sam, Bancroft, the quartermaster and Smernoff.

But as the shouting, laughing boys dashed toward them, free and unharmed, the gun dropped from Mr. Pauling's hand and clattered on the pebbles and the next instant he was clasping the boys in an embrace like a bear's.

Behind the boys, gathered in little knots and chattering excitedly like a flock of parrots, the surprised negroes had gathered at the edge of the forest and as Rawlins stared at them and then at the boys a puzzled expression was on his face.

"Say, what's the big idea?" he demanded, as the boys capered and danced about, talking and laughing. "You said you were the prisoners of savages and here you are free as birds and no sign of a savage. Just a bunch of ordinary niggers. It gets me!"

"But we thought they were savages," Tom tried to explain. "And we *were* prisoners."

Then in hurried, disjointed sentences the two boys related the gist of their story while the others listened in amazement.

"Hello!" cried Rawlins. "Is this the old Bally-hoo coming?"

As Rawlins spoke, the big negro was approaching and with a rather sickly grin on his face he spoke to the new arrivals in his odd jargon of Creole and broken English.

"Yep, I guess so!" grinned Rawlins. "Here you, Sam. You've lived in the French Islands. Can you understand this bird?"

Sam, still suspicious and with the memory of Voodoo and devil dancers' tom-toms in his mind, stepped forward.

"Yas, sir, Chief," he replied, "Ah can talk Creole, Chief."

"Well, get busy and spiel then," Rawlins ordered him. "Ask him what he says first and then we'll give him the third degree for a time."

Rapidly Sam spoke to the other in Martinique patois and at the sounds of his native tongue the other's face brightened.

"He says he's sorry," Sam informed the waiting men and boys. "He says he's a mos' good friend an' tha' young gentlemen were safe from molestation, Chief. He says he an' his people were makin' to have a spree, Chief, an' thought as how the young gentlemen were enemies, at the first, Sir. He mos' humbly arsks yo' pardon an' forgiveness, Chief."

“All right,” said Rawlins. “He’s forgiven. Ask him if we can stop here for the night and if he has anything to eat. I’m famished and I’ll bet the others are. It’s nearly morning.”

In reply to Sam’s queries the negro, who Sam now informed them was named Jules, assured them that everything was at their disposal and with quick orders in patois he sent a number of the women scurrying off to prepare food. Leading the way, he guided the party to a cluster of neat, wattled huts in a small clearing and told them to make themselves at home.

Then, the first excitement of their meeting over, the boys began to give an intelligible and sane account of their adventures.

As they told of the submarine and their spying on the men Mr. Pauling uttered a sharp exclamation and Rawlins made his characteristic comment.

“I’ll say you had nerve!” he cried. “Too bad they saw you though. Now they know we’re here.”

“Not necessarily,” declared Mr. Pauling. “They may have seen that the boat contained merely two boys and they may have thought them natives or from some vessel. They probably know where the destroyer is and they imagine our submarine is lying at the bottom of the Caribbean. In that case they would hardly connect Tom and Frank with members of the Service. Unless they have heard our calls tonight I doubt if the boys’ presence alarmed them.”

“That may be so,” admitted Rawlins, “and by the same token if they heard us tonight it wouldn’t scare ’em. They’d think ’twas some of the boys’ friends searching for ’em, same as ’twas. We didn’t say anything that would give them a hint and radio’s too common nowadays to mean much—as long as it’s not undersea stuff. By glory! Perhaps we can get ’em yet. Can you find that place again, boys?”

“I don’t see how we can,” replied Tom. “We were too scared to notice where we went and we haven’t any idea where we drifted with the tide while we slept.”

“That’s dead rotten luck,” commented Rawlins. “But by the Great Horn Spoon we can find ’em if they’re here! This swamp’s not so everlastingly big and a sub can’t hide in a mud puddle. I’ll bet my hat to a hole in a doughnut we find ’em!”

“But who do you suppose that man on the bank was?” asked Tom. “He didn’t look like a ‘red’ or a Russian or a crook. He looked like a real gentleman.”

Mr. Pauling hesitated a moment. “Boys,” he said, lowering his voice, “that was

the man that of all men we want. That was the head, the brains, the power of the whole vast organization. The man who has schemed to overturn nations and carry a rave of fire and blood around the world! He is the arch fiend, the greatest criminal, the most coldly cruel and unscrupulous being alive! He is the incarnation of Satan himself!"

The boys' eyes were round with wonder. "Gosh!" exclaimed Tom. "Gosh!"

"Jehoshaphat!" cried Frank.

CHAPTER XII—SMERNOFF PAYS HIS DEBT

While the boys had been relating the story of their astonishing experience, Sam had been talking with Jules and other members of the village. Now, as some of the women approached bearing trays of food for the strangers, he rose and, accompanied by Jules, walked over to the hut where the boys and the others were seated.

“Ah been havin’ a extended conversationin’ with Mr. Jules,” the Bahaman announced, in his odd stilted manner which invariably amused the boys, “an’ Ah’s fo’med the opinion that th’ info’mation he’s imparted is mos’ highly important an’ wo’thy o’ consideration, Chief.”

“Yes, well, what is it, Sam?” inquired Mr. Pauling as he helped himself to the smoking viands.

But at Sam’s first words Mr. Pauling, and even the famished Rawlins, forgot all about their hunger and the appetizing food before them, for the Bahaman’s story was to the effect that Jules and his fellow French West Indians were just as keen on getting the “reds” as were Mr. Pauling and his party. According to Jules’ tale, a number of their friends and members of their families had settled on Trade Wind Cay and had been living a peaceful happy life, raising goats, fishing and cultivating tiny garden plots, when a party of white men had arrived and without warning or reason had butchered the West Indians and burned their homes, exactly as Smernoff had described when questioned in New York.

It was not this story of cold-blooded massacre which was of such intense interest to the Americans, but the Fact that Jules calmly informed them that he not only knew where the “devil boat” was hidden, but that he could actually lead them to the cave where the murderers lived.

“Phew!” whistled Rawlins. “I’ll say you tumbled into the right camp, boys! So old Frenchy here’s into their hangout! If that isn’t the all-firedest piece of luck! Lead us to ’em, old sport, lead us to ’em!”

“By Jove! if it’s true everything is coming our way,” declared Mr. Pauling, “but

let’s be absolutely sure first. Ask him how he knows his friends were killed, Sam. And why he has not complained to the authorities and demanded justice. Ask him why, if it is true and he knows where these men live, he has not tried to avenge his friends’ death. Ask him what they look like, tell him to describe some of them and the ‘devil boat’ as he calls it.”

Sam turned and began talking to Jules and the others in patois.

“Well, true or not I’m going to have grub,” declared Rawlins. “I don’t eat with my ears, though; I’m almost sorry I can’t, I’m that hungry.”

For several minutes the negroes chattered and gesticulated, their voices often rising excitedly and vehemently. Then, at last, Sam seemed to be satisfied and addressing Mr. Pauling explained that Jules said that two men had escaped from the Cay. They had been fishing and when returning, saw the massacre and realizing resistance was hopeless got away from the place in their boats unseen. He then went on to state that Jules had complained to the Dominican authorities, but had been laughed at; strange negro squatters—in the minds of the Dominicans—were of too little consequence to bother with and had no legal standing; and moreover, Trade Wind Cay did not belong to Santo Domingo. In fact, it was a port of No Man’s Land claimed by Haiti, Santo Domingo, the Dutch and a British corporation and its real ownership had never been settled. Jules and his followers had never avenged their friends merely because they feared to injure any white man knowing that summary arrest, a farcical trial and death would follow and so, as the next best thing, they had worked spells, had placed Obeah and had danced Voodoo in the vain hope of bringing disaster on their enemies. Indeed, Jules declared that their dance of that night had been for this purpose and that when the boys had first arrived the negroes had felt sure that their heathen gods had delivered their enemies into their hands, but that the “devil box” had spoken in English and they knew their enemies used another tongue.

Jules’ description of the submarine was too accurate to leave room for doubt that he had seen it and the boys, at least, were convinced that he had seen the “reds” when Sam repeated Jules’ description of the red-bearded giant, the dark man with the earrings, the thin fellow with the Kaiser-like mustache, and several others.

“I’ll say he’s got a line on ’em, all right!” declared Rawlins, as Sam finished his translation of Jules’ description and statements, “and by glory! I’d hate to be in their shoes if these buckos ever get their hands on ’em. Say, did you notice that

one of the bunch he described would be Smernoff to a ‘T.’ Wonder if any of ’em recognized him?”

“By Jove!” ejaculated Mr. Pauling. “I hope not, I’d forgotten he was one of the murderers. If they see him and recognize him we’ll be looked upon as spies and enemies. Better run down and warn him, Rawlins. He’s in the boat, asleep probably. Tell him to keep his face hidden or to daub it with mud; or anything and tell the quartermaster to see that he does it.”

Rising slowly and stretching himself as if nothing unusual had occurred, Rawlins strolled off towards; the landing place while Mr. Pauling kept Jules and his friends busy with questions and suggesting plans by which they could aid the Americans.

When the negroes discovered that Mr. Pauling and his friends were looking for the murderers and would make them prisoners if found, they were highly delighted, and Jules assented instantly to guiding the Americans to the cave and the submarine and offered to bring a number of his men along to help.

They were still discussing these plans and Rawlins had almost reached the edge of the clearing when a shot rang out, there was a savage yell, and the next moment Smernoff appeared at the edge of the trees, waving a pistol in his hand and backing away as if from an unseen assailant.

The next instant, he leveled his pistol, there was a flash, another report and then, before the wondering onlookers could move, before they could utter a cry, a figure hurled itself from behind a tree. There was a flash of descending steel, a dull thud, and the Russian plunged forward on the ground. Standing over him, whirling his bloodstained machete about his head and yelling in fiendish glee was a huge gaunt negro.

With two bounds Rawlins was upon the man from behind; before another blow could fall he had pinioned his arms in a vise-like grip and as the others raced towards the scene of the tragedy Rawlins struggled and strained to wrest the deadly machete from the negro’s grasp.

Mr. Pauling was the first to reach Smernoff’s side. That the fellow was mortally wounded was evident at a glance. Across neck and shoulder extended a deep, gaping gash that had almost severed the head, but the man was still breathing and Mr. Pauling bent over him.

Suddenly the Russian’s piglike eyes opened and into them flashed a look of such malignant, unspeakable hatred that Mr. Pauling drew back. As he did so, the

gasping, dying man hissed a curse between his blood-covered lips, and with a last superhuman effort drew up his arm, aimed the pistol at Mr. Pauling's head and pulling the trigger dropped back dead. So close to Mr. Pauling's face was the weapon that the blast of blazing powder singed his hair and filled his eyes with acrid, smarting smoke and burnt powder and with a hoarse, choking cry he reeled backward. But before the horror-stricken boys could cry out he was upon his feet, wiping his eyes, coughing, shaken, but unhurt. Death had missed him by the fraction of an inch, by a split second. Smernoff had waited a thousandth of a second too long to wreak his treachery; death had robbed him of his vengeance; life had flown from him at the very instant he had pressed the trigger and he had paid his debt without adding another to his long list of crimes.

It had all happened in the twinkling of an eye. From the moment when Smernoff's first shot had startled them until he had breathed his last, not half a minute had elapsed and now all was over. The negro who had settled his score with the murderer of his family no longer resisted Rawlins, but stood regarding the mutilated body of the Russian with much the same expression that a hunter might wear when he has brought down a tiger or a lion. Sam was trying to convince Jules that Smernoff was a prisoner who had escaped; Bancroft and the boys were hovering about Mr. Pauling striving to make sure that he was not even scratched; and Rawlins was explaining matters to the quartermaster who had come from the boat on the run at sound of the shots.

"I'll say he was a dirty skunk!" declared Rawlins, "And I thought he was straight and reformed. Guess once a 'red' always a 'red.' Blamed if I ain't sorry I didn't let him drift. By glory! for all we know he's been tipping his friends off by radio or something. Well, that's that for him."

Then, turning towards the negro executioner, he gave that individual the surprise of his life by slapping him heartily on the back.

"Guess you saved us the trouble!" he cried to the amazed man who had expected nothing short of being summarily killed for taking a white man's life. "Here, shake!"

Although the negro understood not a single word, yet Rawlins' tones and gestures were unmistakable and with a surprised grin he seized the diver's outstretched hand and pressed it firmly.

“I guess he’ll be a good boy to have along with us,” Rawlins commented, as he picked up Smernoff’s pistol and pocketed it.

“Rum lot, them Russians,” remarked the quartermaster as he spat contemptuously into the bushes and regarded Smernoff’s body impartially. “I never trusted of him, Sir, and I kept me weather eye on him. I’m thinkin’ he no more than got his reward, Sir.”

The boys, now that they were convinced that Mr. Pauling was unharmed, glanced at the dead Russian and turned away with a shudder.

“Just the same I’m rather sorry for him,” declared Frank. “Of course he was a beast and tried to kill you, Mr. Pauling, but somehow it seems terrible to see a man cut down that way!”

“Death’s a terrible thing in any form,” said Mr. Pauling as he led the boys away. “But don’t waste pity on him, Frank. He was a murderer many times over and would have ended on the gallows or in the electric chair if he had not met death here. He richly deserved his fate and you cannot blame the negro for killing him. I thank God that his dying effort to murder me was frustrated by his own violence.”

Sleep was out of the question after the exciting events and the final tragedy of the night, and now the first faint light of dawn was showing in the east.

“We’ll start as soon as it’s light enough,” announced Mr. Pauling. “Jules and a few of his men will go along. He’d like to send a crowd, but they’re of no use. They have no arms and I have no intention of taking any chances or undue risks. I wish to locate the submarine and the hiding place of these men. There is a remote possibility that we may take them unawares or find but a few there, but I trust mainly to locating them, then sending for Disbrow and his bluejackets and attacking the rascals’ lair with an overwhelming force.”

“Well, of course you know best,” assented Rawlins. “But personally, I’d like to take along this bunch of wild men and sail into those ‘reds.’ I’d back these bush niggers with machetes against any sneaking, bomb-throwing Bolsheviks that ever grew whiskers.”

“Undoubtedly,” smiled Mr. Pauling, “but I’m not leading any party into peril with the boys along.”

“Yes, you’re dead right there,” agreed Rawlins earnestly. “Some one would most likely get hurt and we can’t risk the boys. Well, any time you say the word, I’m

ready.”

Half an hour later, the party set forth. Jules with four men—among them the powerful negro who had cut down Smernoff—led the way in a narrow dugout and Rawlins chuckled as he noticed that every man carried a naked, razor-edged machete beside him and that two were armed with old muzzle-loading guns. Unknown to Mr. Pauling, he had slipped Jules the Russian’s pistol and he felt confident that, should occasion arise, the Martinicans would, as he put it, “give the ‘reds’ some jolt.”

Silently as ghosts, the West Indians paddled through the waterways of the vast swamp, following, with unerring instinct, the channels and leads they knew, but leaving the white men hopelessly confused as to the direction in which they were traveling.

They had proceeded steadily for more than two hours, the sun was high in the heavens and the boys were wondering how on earth they could have drifted so far while they slept, when Jules’ canoe swung sharply to the left, his men ceased paddling and an instant later it grated upon a low clay bank with the boat close behind it.

With a signal for silence and caution, Jules stepped ashore, gave a few whispered orders to his men, and led the way up a narrow, almost invisible trail.

Close at his heels followed Rawlins, Mr. Pauling, the two boys and Sam, while the quartermaster and Bancroft remained in the boat beside the canoe in which Jules had left two of his men.

“Guess there won’t be any fighting just yet,” Rawlins remarked to himself. “Just a bit of scouting likely.”

Noiselessly as shadows the negroes slipped along the trail with the leather-shod white men striving to make as little sound as possible and ever climbing higher and higher up the steep hillside. Finally, after ten minutes’ steady walking, Jules halted, crouched down and crawled forward on all fours, signaling for the others to do the same.

As they reached his side they found themselves at the summit of a high hill with a precipitous side facing the swamp and thus leaving an unobstructed view of all below and before them, while they were effectually hidden among the dense growth of ferns and broad-leaved plants.

Jules pointed and in a low whisper muttered “devil boat!” Hemmed in by the labyrinth of mangroves and winding channels, and apparently completely

surrounded by the swamps, was a large lagoon and towards the side nearest them a large dark object loomed above the placid water.

All this they took in at a single glance. Before them, there upon this hidden lagoon within the fastnesses of the mangrove swamps, was the long-sought submarine.

“Well, I’ll be jiggered!” exclaimed Rawlins under his breath. “Blamed if the darned sub isn’t sunk!”

“Sunk?” repeated Mr. Pauling inquiringly. “What do you mean?”

“Don’t you see?” muttered the diver. “She’s wrecked, sunk, on the bottom. Look how she’s keeled over. Must be full of water! Look at that smashed conning tower; the hatch is open and the water’s half over it. Say, I’ll bet that shot of mine bumped ’em more than I thought. Must have ripped things loose. How the dickens they got in’s a puzzle to me. Must have had emergency hatches or bulkheads or something. Whatever ’twas the old sub’s done for now. Say, they’re trapped! They can’t get away! I’ll say that’s luck! By glory, we’ve got ’em right by the neck!”

“You’re right,” affirmed Mr. Pauling, after carefully scrutinizing the submarine. “She’s evidently deserted and useless. Yes, they’re certainly trapped—that is, unless they clear out overland. As soon as we locate them we can summon Disbrow and make the raid. They certainly cannot escape by water.”

Elated at the thought that luck was with them, that the “reds” were marooned, and that within a short time they would be on their way home with their prisoners, the party followed Jules down the hill to the boats.

“Now for the big secret!” remarked Rawlins as they embarked. “If old Uncle Tom here’s got the right dope we’ll be there in time to look in on ’em at breakfast. Hope they’ll be at home.”

Jules grinned, chuckled, and significantly patted his keen-edged machete. Only now and then could he grasp the meaning of an English word, but he knew, with the African’s primitive instinct, what the diver was talking about. He had proved the accuracy of his statements by showing them the “devil boat” and he rejoiced to think that he would soon see the murderers of his friends led away as captives to meet their just punishment.

“You bet!” nodded Rawlins as he noted Jules’ gesture, “I’ll say you’d like to use that pig-sticker, old boy; but hold your horses. Don’t go losing your head and rushing in where angels fear to tread and spilling the beans before they’re ready

to serve. Just make him savvy that, Sam!"

"He say he understand, Chief," replied the Bahaman when he had, after some difficulty, translated Rawlins' speech into the limited vocabulary of Martinique Creole. "He say he mos' careful an' circum-spec', Chief. He quite assimilate the importance of carry in' out yo' comman's mos' precisely, Chief. Ah've impressed it upon he an' he nex' fr'ens. Yaas, Sir, Ah'ni sure he quite comprehen's, Chief." Tom chuckled. "You *are* funny, Sam!" he exclaimed. "If you use as big words in patois as you do in English I'll bet he didn't comprehen' a bit."

But whether or not Jules understood the importance of being cool-headed and obeying orders, it was certain that he had assimilated the necessity of proceeding with caution and in silence and his upraised hand and low "Psst!" warned the boys that even whispers must cease. Very slowly and carefully, avoiding the least splashing of paddles, bending low as they passed beneath overhanging branches, the negroes crept along the narrow channel—a slender ribbon of water scarcely wide enough to accommodate the boats—until, when it seemed as if they could go no farther, the canoe slipped into a mass of lily pads and reeds and Jules, stepping into the shallow water, drew it silently upon a shelving bank. When all had disembarked, he turned, crouched low, squirmed through the fringe of underbrush and with the others at his heels came out into fairly open forest. Once more he led them along a game trail, but this time the way led up a gently sloping ridge and in a few moments he came to a halt.

Creeping forward, he beckoned to the Americans, while his negro companions melted into the shadows. Before them was a narrow valley with a small stream flowing through the center and directly across from where they lay among the bushes was a conical hill, its farther side lapped by the waters of a small semicircular bay or estuary that cut deeply into the land. Along the banks of the stream were cultivated lands; plots of banner-leaved plantains and bananas, small gardens of cassava, beans, yams and corn; numerous fruit trees and the dark foliage of coffee; while upon the sides of the hill were groves of coppery-tinted cacao trees with here and there lofty coconut palms towering over all. Half-hidden in the greenery, the roofs fallen in and evidently deserted, were the remains of once large buildings; a stone bridge spanned the stream, and at the edge of the bay were the tumble-down remnants of a dock.

Evidently, at some former time, the place had been a well-kept and prosperous plantation, but now everything appeared abandoned and deserted, although the gardens were carefully cultivated and attended to.

“Humph!” muttered Rawlins. “Don’t look as if our friends lived there.”

Jules whispered a few words to Sam.

“He says as how tha’ men mek they abidin’ place in the hill yonder, Chief,” interpreted the Bahaman.

“In the hill?” murmured Mr. Pauling. “Ah, of course, in a cave! But where *is* the cave?”

Sam put the question to Jules.

“Tha’s the entrance, Chief, tha’ dark spot beyon’ tha’ clump of cabbage pa’m, Chief,” announced Sam in whispers.

“Well, I’d like to have a closer squint at it,” declared Rawlins. “I vote we go over and say ‘howdy’ to ’em.”

“Odd that there’s no sign of life or smoke,” commented Mr. Pauling. “I don’t see a soul. Surely they must have a boat.”

“He says as how tha’ boat goes out an’ in tha’ cave by water, Chief,” explained Sam. “Tha’s a’ openin’ on tha’ water side also, Sir.”

“Foxy old guys, eh?” muttered the diver. “Don’t intend to be caught in there like rats in a trap. Well, I won’t rest easy till I know they’re there. I’ve a hunch our birds have flown.”

“You’ll never get there without being seen—that is, if there are any men about,” declared Mr. Pauling.

“Not down this way, I admit,” replied Rawlins. “But we can sneak down around the head of the valley, keep back of those thick rose-apple trees that make that hedge above the yam field and work around the base of the hill until—— Thunderation! What’s that?”

From just beyond the brow of the hill, cutting through the clear water, leaving a tiny trail of bubbles behind it, a small object was moving swiftly from the land across the bay. The next instant it was gone.

“Shark!” declared Mr. Pauling.

“Shark nothing!” cried Rawlins leaping up. “It’s another sub! I’ll be jiggered if they haven’t cleared out! Given us the slip! Come on, who’s afraid! Atta boy! I’m going to that cave!”

Before any one could stop him, the diver had burst through the foliage and was

tearing down the hillside and so contagious is excitement that, without stopping to think, Mr. Pauling dashed after him with the boys close behind, while Jules and his men, thinking apparently that the signal for an attack had been given, sprang from their hiding places, and with waving, flashing machetes and blood-curdling shouts bounded down the slope with the quartermaster, blowing like a porpoise and crashing through the brush like a herd of elephants, bringing up the rear.

The sudden appearance of the company, the flashing blades, the savage yells, the glint of sun on rifle and pistol would have proved most disconcerting to any one lurking in the valley or the caves, while the noise made by the two-hundred-pound sailor lumbering through the dense undergrowth must have sounded like the onslaught of a score of men. In fact, it was the sudden rush, the surprise, the reckless charge which Rawlins had counted on to win the day, for he had seen the value of such tactics on the Flanders battle front and on one occasion, with but two companions, had captured a German machine gun and crew without a scratch, by just such methods.

To reach the bottom of the hill, dash across the valley, cross the bridge and rush up the short slope to the mouth of the cave took less time than to tell of it, but before the bridge was gained Jules and his men were beside Rawlins, Mr. Pauling was at his heels, and the boys were but a few paces in the rear. Heedless of shots that might come from the cave at any instant, Rawlins and the half-crazed negroes tore up the slope, dodged back of the palms, and with a yell leaped into the cavern with upraised blades and cocked weapons. But not a shot echoed through the rocky chamber, not a blow was struck, not a voice answered Rawlins' demand for surrender. The cave was empty, deserted, silent as the tomb!

For an instant Rawlins stood gaping about, while the negroes lowered their weapons, drew back a step as though afraid, and jabbered excitedly among themselves. Then the diver grabbed off his hat, hurled it on the floor of the cave and swore volubly and vehemently.

"Of all the rotten luck!" he cried as Mr. Pauling and the others reached the cave panting and out of breath. "They've gone! Vamoosed! Cleared out! Given us the slip! That *was* a sub we saw. Another one. They were wise to us."

As he spoke, he strode into the cave and the next instant gave a shout. "Look here!" he yelled. "Regular hang-out! Electric lights, beds, billiard tables, and by Jiminy! even a phonograph and a piano!"

It was perfectly true. Just within the entrance of the cavern, a heavy curtain was hung across and beyond this the great, vaulted, subterranean chamber was furnished with every luxury and convenience. There were no partitions—merely draperies and curtains of rich tapestry, satin and plush, but no palace on earth could boast such a ceiling with its vast arches, its thousands of gleaming, snow-white and cream-tinted stalactites and no millionaire's mansion ever had such walls of scintillating, multicolored dripstone that gleamed and sparkled like myriads of jewels in the light of the clusters of incandescent lamps.

The floor, covered with upjutting stalagmites, had been chiseled and chipped smooth, leaving the shorter columns as supports for tables, stands for rare vases and beautiful statuary, while the great columns where stalactites and stalagmites joined were surrounded by luxurious cushioned seats and hung with pictures. At one side was a grand piano, in a corner was a Victrola, and in two smaller chambers were brass beds and luxurious bedroom furnishings. At every step the boys and their elders exclaimed in wonder and admiration at the luxury and richness of the furnishings of the great cavern. Beyond the first hall was a smaller, narrower chamber, equipped with a huge range and the latest cooking and kitchen devices; beyond this was a small connecting cave where a dynamo and gasoline motor were installed, while far overhead, in the most remote corner, was a tiny aperture in the roof. Presently Rawlins, who had been nervously and hurriedly searching everywhere in the hopes of routing out at least one member of the gang, gave a ringing cry which instantly brought the others to his side.

"There's the secret to the place!" he announced triumphantly, pointing down from a ledge of rock whereon he stood. "There's their get-away. I'll say, they're clever!"

At this spot, the floor of the cabin came to an abrupt end, dropping in a sheer precipice some fifty feet to a huge pool of dark blue water. But from the verge of the wall a slender ladder led down, its foot resting on a narrow ledge of rock in which several large ringbolts were set. Scattered upon the ledge were coils of rope, tackle blocks, a broken oar, some wire cables and other boat-gear, while beyond, and so perfectly reflected in the glass-like pool that it appeared like a complete circle, was an arched opening with a sunlit strip of water visible through it.

"Get the idea?" asked Rawlins, as the others gazed about. "There's their dock and there's where they came in and went out with their sub. But not with that big one that's knocked galley west out in the lagoon. No, this old boy lived in some style I'll say—didn't practice all the socialist Bolshevist stuff he preached, I

guess—and had his own private sub, instead of a limousine, tied up handy at his back door. Hello! There's a paper down there! By crickey! perhaps they dropped something!"

Hurrying nimbly down the ladder, Rawlins stooped, picked up the bit of paper which had caught his eyes and a mystified, puzzled look spread over his face. Slowly and with an odd expression he climbed the ladder.

"Hanged if that don't beat all!" he declared, as he gained the top and extended the paper towards Mr. Pauling. "It's a letter, and I'll be swizzled if it isn't addressed to you!"

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Pauling as he took the envelope. "By Jove! This *is* amazing!"

Ripping open the envelope Mr. Pauling drew forth a single sheet of paper. One glance sufficed to read all that was upon it, for there was but a single line.

> "Good luck in your search. Sorry not home to receive you. Remember Mercedes."

There was no signature, but none was needed. The words were typewritten and the machine which had printed them was the one which had typed the inflammatory, revolutionary Bolshevist propaganda which had flooded the States.

Once more the arch criminal had slipped through their fingers. But it had been a close shave.

CHAPTER XIII—THE TRAMP

“Looks as if the game’s up,” commented Rawlins, when he too had read the brief message. “Guess they held the last trump. Well, I suppose we might as well be getting back to our folks—they’ll begin to think we’re lost as well as the boys.”

“Yes,” agreed Mr. Pauling. “There’s nothing more we can do until we get some hint or clue to where they’ve flown. But we’ll have to destroy this lair before we leave. It seems a terrible waste and a shame to do it, but I don’t intend having them come back after we go. We can bring some explosives from the submarine and blow the place up.”

“No need to do that,” declared Rawlins. “Just tell Jules and his gang here to help themselves and there won’t be much left for the Bolsheviks, if they do come back. When they get through looting they can build a rattling big fire in here and that’ll finish it. It’s limestone and after it’s heated it’ll crumble to bits.”

“Good idea!” replied the other. “Sam, tell Jules that he and his men are welcome to anything they want in the cave. But make him promise to build a huge fire inside after they’ve taken what they want.”

As Sam interpreted this to Jules, the latter’s eyes fairly bulged with wonder and a wide grin spread across his countenance as it gradually dawned upon him that the white man had made him a present of all these treasures. Already, in his mind’s eye, he could picture the dusky belles of his village strutting about in gowns of silk and satin brocades, he could see their earthen jars and battered iron pots giving way to those shiny cooking utensils, he could imagine how dressed up his huts would be with those deeply cushioned chairs, the pictures and the statues.

“I’ll say he’ll’ be heap big chief now,” chuckled Rawlins, as he saw Jules’ eyes roaming greedily over the furnishings as if at a loss what to seize first. “And say, won’t it be a scream when some chap comes along and finds a bunch of French West Indian niggers all dolled out with billiard tables, grand pianos and marble Venuses!”

Then, a sudden whimsical idea seized him, and grasping Jules' arm, he exclaimed, "Here, old sport, come along and see what you think about this for a devil box."

As he spoke, he led the negro towards the Victrola, but at the words "devil box" the black's eyes took on a frightened look and he drew back.

"Oh, it's all right!" Rawlins assured him, "it won't bite."

Still hesitating, but somewhat reassured by the diver's tones, and putting on a brave front, Jules accompanied Rawlins and stood silently watching as the latter wound up the machine, placed a record under the needle and set it in motion. But as the first sounds of a singer's voice burst from the horn, Jules uttered a frightened yell and leaped away.

Every one burst into a hearty roar of laughter and the negro, with a hasty terrified glance about, halted in his precipitate retreat, ashamed to exhibit his fear before the white men. Then, with the odd, quizzical, half-puzzled, half-frightened and wholly wondering expression of an ape, he leaned forward, turning his head first to one side and then the other as he listened to the song, peering at the mahogany cabinet as if expecting to see the hidden singer step out at any moment. But finding that nothing happened and that the others seemed in no dread of the affair, he drew nearer and nearer, absolutely fascinated by this new form of witchcraft. Never in his life had he beheld a phonograph, and while he realized that the "Bekes," as he called the whites, were capable of performing almost any miracle or of making most marvelous and incomprehensible things, yet this, he was sure, was something quite beyond their power and must be some most powerful form of Obeah. But evidently the "devil" or whatever it contained was most securely imprisoned and compelled to serve the white men, and when he saw that Sam was not in the least afraid, and even picked up and examined the flat, round objects that Rawlins drew from the cabinet, he decided that this particular devil was even harmless to men of his own color. Here indeed was a treasure. With this he would be truly a king and he could imagine what a sensation he would create when, in the light of the Voodoo fire, he ordered the devil in the box to sing and talk and produce music.

His fears had now completely vanished and, drawing close to the instrument, he stood absolutely fascinated as Rawlins placed record after record in the machine.

"Tell him to try it himself, Sam," said Rawlins, and very reluctantly and gingerly Jules obeyed Sam's instructions, wound the crank, placed a record, and uttered a yell of mingled triumph and delight as he found the imprisoned devil obeyed

him as readily as it did the American.

“Well, he’s all set up for life,” laughed Rawlins. “All the rest of the whole shooting match can go to blazes as far as he’s concerned. He’ll wear the blamed thing out making it work overtime. But let’s be going. Sam, tell Jules he and his bunch’ll have to show us the way out of here. I’m all twisted and couldn’t find the bay in a month of Sundays.”

But Jules absolutely refused to leave. He had no intention of giving his new acquisition any opportunity of getting away and, as the Americans departed, following the other negroes whom Jules had ordered to guide them to the bay, the old fellow was squatting on his haunches at the mouth of the cavern, a broad grin on his wrinkled black face while, from within, came the strains of the overture from Faust.

“Pretty good ringer for old Mephisto himself!” chuckled Rawlins, as they scrambled down the hill towards the boats.

Pushing through the water plants and into the narrow channel, the canoe, followed by the boat, moved rapidly among the mangroves. Soon a wider waterway was reached, and for a time this was followed, then they slipped into a small lagoon completely encircled by an apparently impenetrable barrier of trees, but, without hesitation, the negroes headed their craft across the little lake. With swinging strokes of their paddles they urged their craft forwards with redoubled speed and then, with a sharp cry of warning to the white men behind them, they crouched low in their dug-out. Straight for the dense foliage shot the canoe, there was a swaying of low-growing branches, the negroes’ craft disappeared from sight and the next instant the boat had slipped through the screen of leaves and was floating on open water in a dark, tunnel-like passage through the trees. Just ahead was the canoe, with the negroes again paddling forward.

“Well I’ll be hanged!” cried Rawlins, “so this is their front gate, eh? Wonder how the dickens they ever found it!”

Straight as a canal, the channel led and five minutes later a second wall of foliage blocked the way. But, as before, the canoe was urged ahead and crashed through the barrier followed by the boat. As the last branches swayed back into place behind them, the boys and their companions glanced about in surprise. They were floating upon the broad waters of the bay; an unbroken line of close-growing trees without a trace of opening stretched in their rear and far ahead they could see the row of palms upon the bar which marked the hiding place of

their submarine.

“Well, I’ll be shot!” cried Rawlins, as he swept his eyes about. “We’ve passed this place a dozen times and never knew it. No wonder we couldn’t find their hang-out. Why, I thought that was all solid land!”

A moment later they were pulling, across the open bay. The Martinicans had vanished as if by magic in the dark green foliage and two miles away were their waiting friends.

Half an hour afterwards they were clambering aboard their sub-sea craft and regaling the amazed and wondering Henderson with the story of their adventures, their discoveries and the escape of the men, while below, the quartermaster, surrounded by his mates, was relating a yarn which put the Arabian Nights to shame.

“All gold an’ jools b’ cripes!” he declared. “With a gran’ pianner an’ a funnygraf an’ electric lights. Aw, I ain’t yarnin’, ye can ask Mr. Rawlins—an’ statooary like them youse sees up to the art muse’ms, an’ velvet curtains. Soak me if 'twan’t a reg’lar joint! Fit fer a king that’s what ’twas, an’ I’ll be blowed if Mr. Pauling didn’t up an’ give the whole bloomin’ outfit to a bunch o’ wild Frenchy niggers! Struck me fair 'tween wind and water to hear him a-doin’ of it! Blow me if it didn’t, an’ then up an’ tol’ ’em to burn the blessed place after they was done lootin’ of it! But say! You’d ’a’ bust your-sel’s laffin to a-seen that old gazooks of a nigger a-squattin’ on his black hams in his ragged dungarees a-grinnin’ like a bloomin gorilla an’ a-listenin’ to gran’ opery!”

“Aw, stow it, Bill!” yawned one of the engineers. “Tell that gaff to the marines. Why didn’t ye cop some o’ them things if they was there?”

The quartermaster snorted. “I aint no bloody thief o’ a greasy wiper!” he replied contemptuously. “Think I’d a-got myself in Dutch by a-swipin’ stuff under Mr. Pauling’s nose? But jes’ the same I did bring along a bit o’ a sooveeneer. Look a-here, you sons o’ sea cooks!” Fumbling in his blouse, the quartermaster drew forth a glittering object and placed it on the mess table triumphantly.

“Holy mackerel! Stow me if 'taint a ring!” exclaimed one of the men. “An’ a reg’lar shiner in it! What youse goin’ to do with it, mate? Give it to your best girl?”

“None o’ your business,” retorted the quartermaster pocketing the ring. “An’ mind youse don’ go blowin’ the gaff neither. I picked her up ’longside o’ one o’ the beds an’ none the wiser. Might as well be a havin’ it as one o’ them black

monkeys."

While Bill was thus entertaining the crew, the boys and their friends on deck were still talking, retelling their stories, putting and answering innumerable questions and gradually imparting a coherent account of all that had transpired to Mr. Henderson.

Presently Rawlins grasped Tom's arm and pointed towards the hills across the bay.

"Look there!" he exclaimed. "There goes the last of the Panjandrum's palace!"

The others turned at the diver's words and saw a thick column of smoke rising in curling blue clouds against the green jungle.

"Guess old Jules made quick work of looting it." continued Rawlins. "Say, I can just see the old boy and his mates dancing and prancing around to the music of that phonograph and watching the place go up in smoke. Must do their hearts good! Wonder if they'll learn to play billiards or hammer jazz music out of that piano!"

"Well, let's get down to business," suggested Mr. Pauling, when the laughter over Rawlins' quaint conceit had subsided. "I suppose we'd better notify Disbrow and leave here. No use of delaying longer. The trail is blind now."

"I vote we all turn in early and light out to-morrow morning," suggested the diver. "I'm dead tired myself and the boys must be all in. They haven't slept since night before last, you know, and it's pretty near sundown now. How about grub, too?"

This seemed the wisest plan, and as Bancroft sat at his instruments rapidly sending a cipher message to the destroyer the steward served a belated but hearty meal.

"He's received the message, Sir," announced the operator as he joined the others. "Here's his reply."

"H-m-m!" said Mr. Pauling, as he glanced over the apparently meaningless figures and letters. "He'll stand in and wait for us in the morning. Hasn't seen any signs of a sub, or anything suspicious."

Now that their appetites were satisfied and the excitement was over all realized how tired, exhausted and sleepy they were and gladly sought their bunks at an early hour.

It seemed to Rawlins that he had scarcely closed his eyes when he awoke with a start, the sound of a shout still ringing in his ears. For a brief instant he thought he had been dreaming and then, as the cry again echoed through the night, he realized it was no dream, that something was amiss, and wide awake leaped to the floor.

The next instant he uttered a yell of shock and surprise. Instead of landing on the rubber mat his feet had plunged into cold water!

“Get up! Wake! Hustle!” he screamed at Bancroft who occupied the other bunk. “The boat’s full of water!”

Without waiting, he dashed from the room, shouting and yelling, switching on lights and starting the alarm gong as he plunged, splashing, through the water that covered the steel plates of the floors.

Instantly all was in an uproar. Hoarse shouts and cries came from the crews’ quarters. The boys, with frightened faces and still rubbing dazed and sleep-filled eyes, rushed from their cabin with Mr. Pauling and Mr. Henderson at their heels and through the din of the clanging gong, the excited questions and warning shouts, Rawlins, with the quartermaster by his side, hustled the men and boys up the ladder to the deck, checking them off one by one as they passed.

“All up?” demanded Rawlins as a drowsy oiler stumbled through the fast-rising water to the foot of the ladder.

“Aye, aye, Sir!” responded the old sailor. “Better be gettin’ aloft, Sir.”

The water was now up to the men’s hips and as they reached the outer air Rawlins and the quartermaster found the waves lapping the edges of the deck. But perfect order prevailed. The two boats were manned and ready and as Rawlins and the sailor sprang into them the men bent to the oars and a few moments later the boats’ keels grated on the sand beach under the ghostly palms.

“I’ll say we’re lucky!” were Rawlins first words. “Wonder what in blazes burst loose!”

But no one could offer an explanation. The man who had been on watch and whose cry had roused Rawlins declared that the first thing he had noticed had been that the submarine was settling. The engineers insisted that no sea-cock or valve had been left open. There had been no blow, shock or explosion and, huddled together on the beach, shivering and shaken, the men and the boys waited for the dawn. Presently a fire was started and the survivors, glad of its warmth in the chill night air, gathered close about it, discussing the disaster,

surmising as to its cause and thanking their stars that they had all escaped and that help was not far away.

“If we don’t turn up, Disbrow will suspect something is wrong and send a boat in,” declared Mr. Pauling. “We won’t have to wait here many hours.”

“Perhaps we could call him,” suggested Mr. Henderson. “Are those radio instruments still in the boats?”

“One is.” replied Rawlins. “I noticed it as we came ashore.”

“But we haven’t any aerial,” said Tom. “The resonance coil was on board the submarine.”

“I don’t think it matters,” his father assured him. “Disbrow’s sure to investigate.”

“For that matter, we can row out and meet them,” suggested Rawlins. “We’ve got perfectly good boats.”

“Of course,” agreed Mr. Henderson, “although it would be more risky than waiting here. Disbrow might not sight us and then we’d be worse off.”

“Yes, we’ll wait here a reasonable time at any rate,” declared Mr. Pauling, “Ah, I believe it’s getting lighter.”

Very soon the eastern sky grew bright and presently there was enough light to distinguish surrounding objects clearly.

“There she is!” exclaimed Rawlins, pointing towards the spot where their submarine had been moored. “Didn’t go clear under. Too shallow for her.”

Above the water, the top of the submarine’s conning tower was visible with the slender aerial wires faintly discernible in the soft morning light.

“We’re all right!” declared the diver. “We can get that aerial off the sub, rig it up between a couple of these palms and get the destroyer here in double quick time. But I *would* like to know what sunk the old tub.”

Acting on Rawlins’ suggestion, the boats rowed over to the wreck and the men busied themselves stripping the aerial from the submarine. By the time this was accomplished it was broad daylight and the warm sun was shining brightly upon the water and beach.

“Sam,” said Rawlins, turning to the Bahaman who, up to his waist in water on the submarine’s deck, was unfastening a wire. “What do you think of diving down and having a look around. I’m blamed anxious to know how the old sub got full of water.”

“All right, Chief,” grinned the negro, dropping the wire and stripping off his scanty garments. “Ah’ll mos’ surely ascertain, Chief.”

The next instant he had plunged off the deck and all waited expectantly for his reappearance. After what seemed a tremendously long interval his wooly head bobbed up close to the stern and shaking the water from his eyes he swam easily to the submerged deck and pulled himself up.

“Tha’s nothin’ wrong this side, Chief,” he announced as he recovered his breath. “Ah’ll go down tha’ other side an’ have a look.”

Presently he rose, felt his way along the deck with the water to his armpits and reaching a point near the bow again dove.

Again he reappeared near the stern and the satisfied grin upon his face assured Rawlins that he had news.

“Yaas, Sir!” he announced as he drew himself onto the boat. “Ah foun’ it, Chief. Tha’ a big hole aft, Chief. Looks like it been bored in tha’ plates, Chief.”

“Well, what in thunder!” cried Rawlins. “Come on, Sam, I’m going to have a look. Show me where ’tis. I’m no fish like you, but I can stay down long enough for that.”

Poising himself on the boat’s thwart with Sam beside him, Rawlins waited for the word and together the two figures, one white, one black, plunged into the sea.

Presently the two heads bobbed up side by side and breathing hard Rawlins scrambled into the boat.

“I’ll say it’s bored!” he exclaimed. “Burned! Cut clean through with an acetylene torch!”

The others fairly gasped with amazement.

“But how *could* any one burn a hole through steel,—under water?” cried Tom.

“Easy!” retorted Rawlins. “A good torch’ll burn as well under water as in air. Used right along by divers. It’s those blasted, dumbfoozled ‘reds’! I can see it all now. They sneaked down here in that little sub of theirs, laid on the bottom, sent a diver out with a torch and burned the hole. Thought they’d drown us like rats in a trap—blame their dirty hides!”

“By jove! it doesn’t seem possible,” declared Mr. Pauling. “I’m surprised, they ____”

His words were cut short by a shout from Rawlins. “Look there!” he fairly screamed, leaping up, and pointing towards the bay. “Look at ’em! The low down, sneaking swine!”

All turned instantly towards the bay and at the sight which greeted them jaws gaped, eyes grew round with wonder and hoarse exclamations of anger, amazement and chagrin arose from a dozen throats.

Traveling swiftly seaward through the calm water was a small submarine, her deck just awash, and standing upon her superstructure and waving their hands in derisive farewell were two men. One was heavily built with a huge red beard, the other slender, immaculate in white flannels and with a stiffly upturned, iron-gray mustache.

The next moment they disappeared in the hatch. An instant later only the conning tower showed above the water and ere the amazed onlookers could recover from their astonishment the placid bay stretched unbroken even by a ripple to the distant shores.

Mr. Pauling and Mr. Henderson exchanged rapid glances.

“It was!” muttered Mr. Pauling in a low voice.

The other nodded. “Absolutely!” he rejoined.

Rawlins, who for once had been rendered absolutely speechless with surprise, anger and chagrin now found his voice.

“Lively, men!” he shouted. “Get that aerial up quick! We’ll nab those devils yet! Get a message to Disbrow to go for ’em! Drop depth bombs or anything else! He can’t be far off.”

At his bidding, thoroughly aroused to the necessity for action, the men fell to work. Hastily the antennae from the submarine was rushed ashore. Up the palms scrambled Sam and a sailor and in an incredibly short space of time the slender wires were stretched between the lopped-off tops of the lofty trees and the boys adjusted their instruments. Excitedly they called the destroyer and presently sharp, and clear, came back the answering call.

“Tell him to watch for a sub,” ordered Mr. Pauling. “Don’t bother over cipher. Give it to them in English. Tell him she’s just slipped out. If he sights her sink her, disable her, anything! Drop depth bombs if necessary!”

Then, as the boys hurriedly and excitedly flashed these orders to the destroyer and the “dee dee dee dah dee” (“we understand”) came back, Mr. Pauling

continued. “Now tell him our sub has sunk. Have him send a cutter for us and tell him to hustle.”

Slowly the minutes slipped by. Breathlessly, filled with excitement, those upon the beach beneath the palms listened, expecting each moment to hear the distant boom of a gun, the low rumbling roar of an exploding depth bomb. But no sound broke the low swish of the palm fronds and the soft lapping of the waves upon the sand.

An hour went by and then, from the direction of the bay, came the faint staccato beat of a motor’s exhaust and a moment later a trim navy cutter came into view. Shouting and waving their hands, those upon the beach attracted the cutter’s attention, it spun around, came swiftly towards them and ten minutes later was headed seaward leaving the sunken submarine deserted and alone.

A mile or two offshore, steaming in great circles, was the lean, gray destroyer and as those in the cutter ran up the gangway and gained the decks Disbrow met them.

“Seen anything of that sub!” demanded Mr. Pauling, ignoring the officer’s cheery greeting.

“Not a sign,” declared the commander. “Had men aloft and been swinging in circles ever since we got your message. Haven’t sighted a craft of any sort since daylight. Only thing we’ve seen was an old Dutch tramp over by Trade Wind Cay.”

Rawlins, who had just reached the deck, sprang forward.

“Dutch tramp!” he cried. “What did she look like? Did you board her?”

“Of course not!” replied Disbrow icily. “Why should we? Ordinary tramp painted pea-soup color with bands two blue and one yellow, on her funnel.”

“I’ll say she’s not an ordinary tramp!” exclaimed the diver. “If she is, what the blazes is she hangin’ around there for? She was there a week ago—we saw her—and Dutch tramps or any other tramps don’t hang around Trade Wind Cay for a week! Rotten luck you didn’t board her!”

“Humph!” snorted Disbrow. “I’d get myself in a pretty mess if I boarded every steamer I saw. It’s none of my business if a Dutchman wants to kill time cruising about here. The sea’s free.”

“Yes, and I’m beginning to think some naval men are blamed idiots!” cried Rawlins, overcome with excitement. “I know one that boarded a square-head

fishing smack and didn't think 'twas any of his business because she was a Bahaman schooner. Darned near finished us on account of it, too!"

The commander flushed scarlet. "If you're going to insult me!" he began; but Mr. Pauling interposed.

"Here, here, boys!" he exclaimed. "Don't get excited. We all make mistakes and we're dealing with most elusive and resourceful scoundrels. Rawlins has a hunch of some sort, Disbrow, and his hunches are usually, right. Now what it is, Rawlins? The sooner we get to an understanding the quicker we can act."

"Sorry, old man!" apologized the diver, extending his hand to Disbrow who instantly grasped it. "Was a bit jumpy, I guess. But that tramp's got to be overhauled. I've an all-fired hunch she's part of the game. They deserted a sub once and took to a schooner and I'll bet my last dollar to a plugged cent that that tramp's just waiting for 'em now."

Disbrow wheeled and gave a crisp order and the next moment the destroyer, throbbing and shaking like a leaf, a huge wave rising high above her sharp bows, was tearing like an express train towards Trade Wind Cay.

As they neared the little islet and rounded its jutting point, Rawlins gave a cheer. Wallowing slowly along, her rust-streaked sides rising and falling to the ocean swell, was the tramp, with the flag of the Netherlands fluttering at her stern and the blue and yellow stripes plainly visible on her funnels.

Up to the destroyer's mast fluttered a string of bunting, but the Dutchman paid not the slightest heed, continuing placidly on his course.

"Confound him!" exploded Rawlins. "Doesn't mean to stop, eh?"

"Run alongside and hail him," quietly ordered Mr. Pauling. "I'll take all responsibility if there's any trouble. But we'll board that chap if we have to fire on him."

There was no need of any such drastic measures, however. As the destroyer came near and Disbrow's hail through the megaphone reached those upon the tramp, a huge, burly figure appeared upon the bridge, waved an arm in assent and a moment later the ill-kept vessel lay motionless, as the cutter from the destroyer bobbed alongside. Over the tramp's wall-like sides dangled a rope ladder and followed by Rawlins and Mr. Pauling a white clad ensign ran nimbly up and leaped over the battered iron rails.

At the break of the bridge-deck the ponderous man lounged upon the rail

awaiting them, a big pipe projecting from an enormous yellow mustache, a weather-beaten cap upon his tow-colored hair and greasy, faded blue garments hanging loosely on his immensely fat figure. Placidly, with pale, expressionless blue eyes, he watched the officer and the civilians approach and as they drew near slowly withdrew the pipe from his mouth.

“Vat you vellers vant?” he demanded in thick greasy tones. “Vat vor you sthob mine shib?”

The boyish ensign touched his cap. “Compliments of Commander Disbrow, Sir,” he announced. “His orders are to have a look at your papers and search the ship if we think necessary. Are you the captain?”

The Dutchman drew himself up in what was a ludicrous attempt at dignity. “Yah, me der gapdain!” he rumbled. “But vat de deffil you vellers link? Dondt you know dot der var vas over? Vat vor you vant to see mine babers, eh?”

“Just as a matter of form, Captain,” replied the ensign crisply. “Won’t take a minute.”

For a space, the fat skipper eyed the other suspiciously. “Ach! All right,” he exclaimed at last. “Gum on! Dis vay an’ pe tarn qvick apout id!”

Rolling like a barge in a gale, the Dutchman led the way across the deck and into his disorderly cabin under the bridge. Then, rummaging among papers and letters, he drew out a package snapped together with rubber bands and handed it to the ensign.

“Seem to be all right,” commented Mr. Pauling, as he glanced over the officer’s shoulder with Rawlins beside him. “‘Steamship *Van Doerck*, 11,345 tons, general cargo, Rotterdam for St. Thomas, Hirschfelt, master and owner.’ Don’t see anything suspicious there, Rawlins. Last cleared from Curacao. Health and port papers O. K. Guess your hunch was wrong this time.”

Rawlins scratched his head and looked sheepish, but there was still a questioning, puzzled expression in his eyes. “Maybe,” he admitted, “but I’d like to have a look at his crew. Just ask him to line ’em up on deck, Ensign.”

At first, the Dutchman vehemently objected, but finally, with a muttered curse in his native tongue at the pigheadedness of the Yankees, he ordered his second officer to summon all hands on deck.

Carefully Rawlins, Mr. Pauling and the ensign went along the line of dirty faces, checking them off by name in accordance with the ship’s papers, but they were

all there, no more, no less.

“No use looking under hatches,” declared the ensign who began to feel that he had made a fool of himself. “They haven’t been up for a week, I’ll swear.” Then, as an afterthought, he added sarcastically, “Don’t suppose you’d care to search the engine room and bunkers?”

“I’ll say I will!” exclaimed Rawlins, and without another word hurried aft.

A few minutes later he reappeared, grimy, perspiring and greasy.

“Nothing doing there!” he announced. “Say, ask the old boy what he’s been hanging around here a week for.”

Reluctantly the ensign put the question.

“None of your tamt pizness!” replied the skipper. “Put id’s no segret. Ve drobt a sbar offerboard in der night an ve been hunding vor id. Ve vasn’t here vor a veek —id vas night before ladst ve gum pack.”

Rawlins raised his eyebrows. “All right, Ensign,” he said. “Guess it’s a false alarm. Might as well be going.”

“Sorry to have troubled you, Captain,” said the ensign, touching his cap. “Expect you’re not the ship we were looking for.”

The skipper’s only reply was a low, rumbling bellow from his chest and stumping up the ladder to the bridge he jerked the bell for “stand by.”

No sooner were the boarding party again on the destroyer than Rawlins beckoned Mr. Pauling aside.

“You may think I’m an ass, Mr. Pauling,” remarked the diver. “But there’s something crooked about that Dutchman. He’s a blamed liar in the first place, because you know as well as I do he was here six days ago. In the second place, can you imagine wasting even two days steaming along and hunting for a lost spar, and how the blazes could he lose a spar? The sea’s been like glass.”

Mr. Pauling smiled. “You’re unduly suspicious, Rawlins,” he declared. “I admit the tramp was here a week ago and we saw her, but he may have gone on and then come back two days ago searching for a spar or he may have lied just because he wouldn’t give us the satisfaction of telling us his business. No, I don’t think there’s anything wrong with him. If you suspect every ship we see we’ll have our hands full and every nation in the world will be after our scalps.”

“Well, Mr. Pauling,” replied Rawlins, “I hope you won’t be insulted if I say so

and I don’t mean it that way; but you’re no seaman and you may be a mighty good detective on land, but you’re not when aboard ship. That old whale of a Dutchy has been anchored there and hasn’t been hunting for a blamed thing! And what’s more, he hasn’t been in Curacao for a year!”

“What?” exclaimed Mr. Pauling. “How do you know? Explain yourself, Rawlins.”

“If that cockey little ensign hadn’t been so stuck on himself, he’d have noticed it,” declared the diver. “Why, the anchor chains were thick with wet mud, the steam winch was still hot, there was mud and water on deck and some of the crew had fresh mud on their jumpers. What’s more, the fires in her furnaces hadn’t been going an hour. They’d been banked and the ashes were still on the plates where they’d been raked out. That old hooker hadn’t been under way half an hour when we came up. And now how do I know she hadn’t been at Curacao? I’ll tell you. The papers looked all right, I’ll admit—Curacao stamps and signatures and everything O. K. But they were dead crooked, I’ll say! They were a whole year old!”

“Jove!” ejaculated Mr. Pauling, beginning to be convinced that Rawlins had grounds for his suspicions. “How do you know? I saw nothing wrong.”

Rawlins chuckled. “No, and the old guy didn’t expect you would. He or his friends are darned clever birds, but they slipped up on those papers. They’d changed the date under the signatures, but they forgot about the stamps—they were canceled with a rubber stamp and the date was ’21 not ’22!”

“Rawlins!” cried Mr. Pauling. “I’ll take it all back! You’re a wonder—told you you should be in the Service. What’s your idea?”

“Well, I don’t know just where the Dutchy comes in with those reds,” admitted Rawlins, “but I’ll bet they’re cahoots somehow. I think we’d better follow the boys’ motto—hear everything, see everything and say nothing and keep the other fellow guessing—I’d suggest we trail the old porpoise and see if he *does* go to St. Thomas. If he does, we’ll bob up there too. I’m ready to follow along his wake if he wallows round the world, but St. Thomas is an American port and we can do pretty near anything we like there. If we hang around we may get a line on something. We’ve had pretty good luck all together and I’ve got a hunch we’re ‘hot’, as they used to say when we played hunt the thimble.”

A few moments later Mr. Pauling was speaking to the commander in the privacy of the latter’s cabin.

“You’ll make for St. Thomas, Disbrow,” he said. “Keep that tramp within sight, but don’t let her think we’re following her. No, don’t ask questions, I don’t really know myself. Rawlins has a hunch, and so far his hunches have come mighty near being right. I’m backing them to the limit.”

THE END

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