

ALLEN WILLIS BOYD

THE NORTH PACIFIC

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Willis Boyd Allen

The North Pacific A Story of the Russo-Japanese War

PREFACE

As in the preparation of *Navy Blue* and *Cleared for Action*, the author has taken great pains to verify the main facts of the present story, so far as they are concerned with the incidents of the great struggle still in progress between the empires of the East and the West. He acknowledges most gratefully the assistance received from the office of the Secretary of the Navy, from ex-Secretary John D. Long, and from Commander W. H. H. Southerland, now commanding the U. S. Cruiser *Cleveland*, Commander Austin M. Knight, President of the Board on Naval Ordnance, and Chief Engineer Edward Farmer, retired.

W. B. A.

Boston, June, 1905.

CHAPTER I. THE TRIAL OF THE "RETVIZAN."

It was a clear, cool afternoon in early September, 1901. In the country the tawny hillsides were warmed to gold by the glow of the autumn sun, while here and there a maple lifted its crimson torch as if the forest were kindling where the rays were the hottest. Brown, golden, and scarlet leaves floated slowly downward to the ground; flocks of dark-winged birds drifted across the sky or flitted silently through the shadows of the deep wood; the call of the harvester to his straining team sounded across the fields for a moment – then all was still again. But for the creak of a waggon, the distant bark of a dog, the fitful whisper and rustle of the wind in the boughs overhead, the whirring chatter of a squirrel, the world seemed lost in a day-dream of peace.

Only a few miles away the air was rent by a clamour of discordant sound. Ponderous hammers beat upon plates of iron and brass; machinery rumbled and shrieked and hissed at its work; a thousand men, labouring as if for their lives, pulled, pushed, lifted, pounded, shouted orders, warnings, replies above the din that beat upon the ear like a blacksmith's blows upon an anvil. From the tall chimneys poured endless volumes of black smoke that were reflected in the blue waters of the river and mimicked by innumerable puffs of steam. The place was like a volcano in the first stages of eruption. A vast upheaval seemed imminent. Yet the countless toilers worked securely and swiftly, fashioning that dread floating citadel of modern warfare, the Battleship.

On this same afternoon, at the outer gate of the Cramp Shipbuilding Works, two strangers applied for admission, presenting to the watchman a properly accredited pass. They were young men, under the average stature, dark-skinned, and almost notably quiet in appearance and manner. Although their dress was that of the American gentleman, a very slight accent in their speech, their jet-black hair, and a trifling obliquity in their eyes, would have at once betrayed their nationality to a careful observer. He would have known that they were of a people famous for their shrewdness, their gentle manners, their bravery, their quick perceptions, and their profound patience and tireless resolution in accomplishing their ends – the "Yankees of the Orient" – the Japanese.

The watchman glanced at them carelessly, rather impressed by the visitors' immaculate attire – both wore silk hats and black coats of correct Broadway cut – and asked if they wanted an attendant to show them about the works. They said, "No, thank you. We shall remain but short time. We can find our ways"; and, bowing, passed into the yard.

Their curiosity seemed very slight, as to the buildings and machinery. With light, quick steps they passed through one or two of the most important shops, then turned to the river-side, and halted beside the huge ship that was on the stocks, almost ready for launching. Here for the first time their whole expression became alert, their eyes keen and flashing. Nobody paid much attention to them as they passed along the walk, scrutinising, it would seem, every individual bolt and plate.

"A couple o' Dagos!" remarked one workman to another, nodding over his shoulder as he carried his end of a heavy steel bar.

At the gangway the visitors met their first obstacle. A man in undress uniform, with a full beard and stern countenance, waved them back. "No admittance to the deck," he said briefly.

The two Japanese bowed blandly, and spoke a few words together in soft undertones and gutturals, as incomprehensible to a Western ear as the language of the Ojibways. Then they bowed again, smiled and said "Thank you, sir," and moved away. The Russian officer watched them sharply until they disappeared around the bows of the vessel, muttering to himself under his bushy moustache.

Once out of sight the languor and mild indifference of the strangers vanished. They spoke swiftly, with excited, but graceful gestures. Then one of them pointed to the snowy curve of the

battleship's prow, above their heads. There, gleaming in the sunset light, shone the word, in gold letters,

РЕТВИЗАНЪ

[Cyrillic: RETVIZAN]

"Retvizan," murmured the other; "Retvizan." Adding in his own language, "She will have her trial trip late in October, sailing from Boston. Then – we shall see!"

"We shall see."

"*Sayonara, Retvizan!*" said the first speaker with just a trace of mockery in his tone, as the two turned toward the gate. As they passed through, on their way out, they bowed and smiled to the gate-keeper. Once more they were suave, languid little gentlemen of fashion, travelling for pleasure.

It was eight o'clock on the morning of October 21st when the last tug-load of "distinguished visitors" scrambled up the steep ladder to the deck of the *Retvizan*, which had lain all night in President's Roads, Boston Harbour, waiting for her trial trip. In five minutes more the battleship was under way, the smoke rolling from her three huge funnels as she forged ahead slowly, on her way to the open sea.

It was an oddly composed crowd that gathered forward of the great turret from which projected two twelve-inch guns. The crew consisted of Russian "Jackies," in man-of-war rig; but the spectators were the invited guests of the builders from whose control the ship had not yet passed. There were lawyers, naval officers, engineers, and politicians, with one or two officials of the city and State government – all bound to have a good time, whether the *Retvizan* should prove slow or fast. They buttoned their overcoats up around their throats – for the day was chilly, and the draught made by the vessel as she gathered speed was sharp – and in little knots, here and there, joked, laughed, and sang like boys on a lark.

One young man was constantly moving about, alert and active, interested apparently in everything and everybody on board. Most of the Boston men seemed to know him, and exchanged jokes with him as he passed.

"Hullo, Larkin, you here?" called out one. "Better go ashore while there's time – you'll be sea-sick when we get outside!"

"I never yet was sick of seeing!" retorted the young man. "The *Bulletin* must have a good story on to-day's trip."

"Why didn't they send a reporter that knew his business?" jested another.

"Don't *you* say anything, Alderman, or I'll fix up an account of you that will make you turn pale when you read it to-morrow morning," said the jolly reporter; and off he went, followed by a chorus of laughter.

Fred Larkin was one of the most valued reporters on the Boston *Daily Bulletin*. He had risen to his present position, from that of mere space writer, by sheer determination, pluck, and hard work, which characteristics, backed by fine character and a sunny good-humour, made him a favourite with both his superiors and his comrades on the staff. Three years before this sea-trip Fred had been sent to Cuba as war correspondent for the *Bulletin*, had performed one or two remarkable feats in journalism, had been captured by the Spaniards, and on the very day when he expected to be executed in Santiago as a spy had been exchanged and set free.

Meanwhile on this same perilous journey inland, he had met a young Spanish girl named Isabella Cueva, who subsequently appealed to him for protection, and whom, a few months later, he married. They now had one bright little dark-haired boy, a year old, named Pedro.

"He's a wonderful child," Larkin would assert. "Talks Spanish like a native, and cries in English!"

Besides the company of invited guests on the *Retvizan*, the officers of the ship-building company, and the Russian crew, there were a number of supernumeraries – butlers, cooks, and stewards, of various nationalities.

About a week before the ship was to sail from Philadelphia, two Japanese boys applied for a position on board as stewards. They were dressed neatly, after the custom of their race, but their spotless clothes were threadbare, and as they seemed needy and brought the best of references from Washington families, they were hired at once. It was true that they seemed unable to speak or to understand more than a few words of English, but their slight knowledge of the language appeared to be sufficient for their duties, and the Japanese are known to be the neatest, quickest, most efficient little waiters that can be procured. Many of them, as their employers knew, were engaged in this humble service on United States war-ships, where they gave complete satisfaction.

As the great vessel swung out upon her course, the two boyish Japs appeared. They had come on board in Philadelphia, and were soon equipped for their work, with white aprons and dark suits. Having with some difficulty made the head steward understand when and for what they had been engaged, they had entered at once upon their duties.

Nobody took much notice of the little fellows, as they glided silently to and fro, giving deft touches to the lunch table, or assisting a stout alderman to don his overcoat. Only once did they seem disconcerted. That was when a Russian under-officer, with bushy beard and moustache, put his head inside the cabin-door. One of the Japanese started so nervously that he nearly upset a water-carafe on the table. As he adjusted it, he spoke a few words in a low tone to his companion, and both remained with their backs to the door, although the Russian summoned them roughly.

"Why didn't you go when he called?" demanded the head steward crossly, a minute later, when he had himself given the officer the glass of water he wanted.

"No speak Russian. No un'erstan'," said the little Jap with a meek gesture.

"Well, you might have known what he asked for," retorted his superior. "Look sharp now, and attend to your business. You ain't here for fun, you!"

The steward addressed shot a quick glance at the other, but neither said a word, as they resumed their tasks.

The *Retvizan* moved proudly northward, throwing out a great wave on each side of her white prow and leaving a wake of tossing foam stretching far astern. The harbour islands were now dim in the distance and the shore of the mainland might have been that of Patagonia, for all the sign of human life it showed. Now, indeed, the vessel drew in, or, rather, the coastline veered eastward as if to intercept her in her swift course. The Magnolia shore came in sight, with its toy cottages and hotels, as deserted as autumn birds'-nests. Norman's Woe was left behind, backed by dark pine forests, and Gloucester, nestling in its snug harbour, peered out at the passing monster. Almost directly in front the lights of Thatcher's Island reared themselves, two priestly fingers raised in blessing over the toilers of the sea.

Now the battleship began to quiver, as the increased throbbing of her engines, the monstrous fore-waves, and the volumes of black smoke rushing from her stacks told the excited passengers that she was settling down to her best pace for the crucial test of speed. A government tug was passed, and for ten miles the *Retvizan* ploughed her way fiercely northward, never deviating a foot to right or left, crushing the waves into a boiling cauldron of seething foam, dashing the spray high into the sunshine, until the second stake-boat, off Cape Porpoise, was passed, and with a long sweep outward she turned, to retrace the ten-mile course more swiftly than ever.

Fred Larkin pervaded, so to speak, the ship. Note-book in hand, he interviewed the officers, chaffed the Russian Jackies, darted in and out of the cabins, and ranged boldly through the hidden

passages below. In process of time he reached the engine-room, smearing himself with oil on the way, from every steel rod he touched.

No sooner had he entered the room than he was pounced upon by one of the three or four engineers, naval and civil, who were busily watching the work of the great, pulsing heart of the vessel.

"Larkin! How are you, old fellow?" And his hands were grasped and wrung, over and over, regardless of oil.

"Holmes! Well, I didn't guess *you* were here! Shake again!"

It was Lieutenant-Commander Holmes, Assistant Engineer, who, with several subordinate officers, two of them from the Academy, had been detached by the Navy Department to watch the trip of the *Retvizan* and report upon it. They mingled freely with the Russian engineers, and compared notes with them as the trial progressed.

Norman Holmes explained this to the young reporter, who was an old and tried friend.

"Where is Rexdale stationed?"

"He's doing shore duty in Washington just now. Between you and me, Fred, I think he'll be a lieutenant-commander before long, and may command one of the smaller vessels on this station – a despatch-boat or something of the kind. I only wish I could be assigned to the same ship! You know Dave and I were chums in the Academy."

"I know. And the trifling circumstance of each marrying the other's sister hasn't tended to produce a coldness, I suppose! But isn't that an awfully quick promotion for Rexdale? The last I heard of him he was only a lieutenant."

"Well, we've built so many new ships lately," said Holmes, with his eye on the steam gauge, "that it has been hard work to man them. Two or three classes have been graduated at the Academy two years ahead of time, and promotions have been rapid all along the line. The man that commanded the gunboat *Osprey*, for instance, is now on an armoured cruiser, taking the place of an officer who has been moved up to the battleship *Arizona*, and so on. Why, in the course of ten years or more I may be a commander – who knows?" he added, with a laugh.

"I suppose you hear from 'Sandy' and – what did you fellows call Tickerson?"

"'Girlie'? Oh, yes, I hear from them. Both are in the East somewhere. Sandy's last letter was from Guam. He's a lieutenant now, and so is Tickerson."

"Well, I mustn't stay here, bothering you. There's a queer crowd on board – a mixed lot. Seen those little Japs?"

"No. What are they here for?"

"Oh, just waiters. But it's odd to see Japanese on a Russian man-of-war, considering that – hullo, here's one of them, now!"

Sure enough, a small, white-aproned figure came daintily picking his way down into the jarring, clanging, oily engine-room. He seemed a bit troubled to find two of its occupants regarding him intently, as he stepped upon the iron floor.

"Mist' Johnson no here?" he asked innocently, gazing around him.

"Johnson? No, not that I know of," replied Holmes. "What's his position."

"He – he from Boston," said the Jap, after a slight hesitation.

"Look here," broke in Larkin, in his offhand way, "what's your name, young fellow?"

The steward looked into the reporter's frank, kindly face, then answered, "Oto."

"Oto," repeated Fred. "That's a nice easy name to pronounce, if it *is* Japanese. Well, Oto, how about your chum – what's his name?"

"Oshima. We from Japan."

"So I suspected," laughed Fred. "Been over long?"

The boy looked puzzled.

"When did you leave home?"

Oto shook his head. "Un'erstan' ver' leetle English," he said.

"Well, run along and find Mr. Johnson, of Boston. Norman, good-bye. I'll look in on you again before the end of the trip. Where did Oto go?"

The little Jap had melted away – whether upward or downward, no one could say, he had vanished so quickly.

Larkin shook his head and made a few cabalistic curves and dots in his note-book, then reascended the stairs to the upper deck. Through a winding staircase in a hollow mast he made his way to one of the fighting-tops. Singularly enough the other Japanese waiter, Oshima, was there before him. As Fred emerged on the circular platform, the boy thrust a scrap of paper under the folds of his jacket and hurried down toward the deck. Again the reporter made a note in his book, and then gave a few moments to the magnificent view of the ship and the open sea through which it was cleaving its way.

Directly before and below him lay the forward deck of the *Retvizan*, cleared almost as completely as if for action. Most of the visitors had withdrawn from the keen wind to the shelter of the cabin, where, doubtless, the question of luncheon was already exciting interest. Beneath the fighting-top was the bridge, where the highest officials on the ship were watching her progress. Just beyond was the forward turret, with its projecting guns, their muzzles peacefully closed.

The vessel now reached the first stake-boat once more, and turning, again started over the course at half-speed, for the tedious process of standardising the screw; that is, determining how many revolutions went to a given rate of speed. The engineers were busy with their calculations. Larkin joined the hungry crowd in the cabin, giving a last look at the blue sea, the misty shore line, and the dim bulk of Agamenticus reared against the western sky.

When the *Retvizan* passed Cape Ann, on her homeward trip, the great lamps on Thatcher's Island were alight, and the waves sparkled in the glow. It was nearly nine o'clock that evening when the chains rattled through the hawse-holes, in the lower harbour, as the battleship came to anchor. Many had been the guesses as to her speed. Had she come up to her builders' expectations? Had she passed the test successfully? These were the questions that flew to and fro among the passengers, crowding about the gangway beneath which the tug was soon rising and falling. At the last moment the approximate result of the engineers' calculations was given out. The ship had responded nobly to the demand upon her mighty machinery. Splendidly built throughout, perfectly equipped for manslaughter and for the protection of her crew, obedient to the lightest touch of the master-hand that should guide her over the seas in warfare or in peace, the *Retvizan* had shown herself to be one of the swiftest and most powerful war-ships in the world. For twenty miles, in the open ocean, she had easily made a little over eighteen knots an hour.

In the confusion of going on board the tug and disembarking in the darkness, no one observed the two Japanese waiters, who must have forgotten even to ask for their wages. Certain it is that Oto and Oshima were among the very first to land on the Boston wharf, and to disappear in one of the gloomy cross-streets that branch off from Atlantic Avenue.

CHAPTER II. "MAN OVERBOARD!"

"Well, we're out of the harbour safely, Captain," said Executive Officer Staples with a sigh of relief, as he spread out the chart of the Massachusetts coast and glanced at the "tell-tale" compass. "No more trouble till we get down by the Pollock Rip Shoals."

"Anybody would think you had been taking a battleship out from under the enemy's guns," laughed Lieutenant-Commander David Rexdale. "Don't talk about 'trouble,' Tel., while it's daylight, off a home port, in good weather!"

The two were standing in the chart-room, just behind the bridge of the U. S. gunboat *Osprey*, as the vessel, leaving Boston Outer Light behind, headed slightly to the south of east. Rexdale, as his old chum Holmes had predicted, was now in command of the *Osprey*, and was taking her to Washington for a practice trip, on which the crew would be drilled in various manœuvres, including target-practice. Lieutenant Richard Staples, his executive, had been the captain's classmate at Annapolis. He was lanky and tall, and at the Academy had soon gained the sobriquet of "Telegraph Pole," or "Tel.," for short; a name that had stuck to him thus far in his naval career. He was a Californian, and, while very quiet in his manner, was a dangerous man when aroused – as the upper-class cadets had discovered when they undertook to "run" him. Rexdale was from the rural districts of New Hampshire, and was known to his classmates as "Farmer," a term which was now seldom applied to the dignified lieutenant-commander.

The *Osprey* – to complete our introductions – was a lively little member of Uncle Sam's navy, mounting several six-pounders and a four-inch rifled gun, besides smaller pieces for close quarters. She had taken part in the blockade of Santiago, and while not as modern in her appointments as some of her bigger and younger sister-ships, had given a good account of herself in the stirring days when Cervera's fleet was cooped up behind the Cuban hills, and made their final hopeless dash for freedom. Rexdale was in love with his little vessel, and knew every spar, gun, plate, and bolt as if he had assisted in her building.

On the way down the harbour, they had passed the *Essex* and *Lancaster*, saluting each with a bugle-call. Besides the two officers mentioned, it should be added that there were on board Ensigns Dobson and Liddon, the former a good-natured little fellow, barely tall enough to meet naval requirement as to height; the other a finely educated and elegant young gentleman who had attended a medical college before enlisting, and whose fund of scientific and historical knowledge was supposed to be inexhaustible. He wore glasses, and had at once been dubbed "Doctor," on entering the Naval Academy. These, with Paymaster Ross, Assistant Surgeon Cutler, and Engineer Claflin, made up the officers' mess of the *Osprey*.

It was a fair day in June, 1903. The sunlight sparkled on the summer sea. Officers and men were in the best of spirits as the gunboat, her red, white, and blue "commission pennant" streaming from her masthead, sped southward past the long, ragged "toe" of the Massachusetts boot.

At noon Rexdale dined in solemn and solitary state in his after cabin. The rest of the officers messed together in the ward-room, below decks, and doubtless Dave would have been glad to join them; but discipline required that the commanding officer, however familiarly he might address an old acquaintance in private, should hold aloof at mealtimes. He was waited upon by two small Japanese men, or boys, who had easily obtained the situation when the vessel went into commission at the Charlestown Navy Yard, where she had remained for some months, docked for overhauling and thorough repairs. The two cabin stewards were gentle and pleasant in their manners, conversant with all their duties, and spoke English fluently. Their names were on the ship's papers as Oto and Oshima.

"Oto," said Rexdale, when the dinner was finished, "call the orderly."

"Yes, sir."

The marine was pacing the deck outside the cabin-door. On receiving the summons he entered and saluted stiffly.

"Orderly, ask Mr. Staples to step this way, if he has finished his dinner."

Another salute, and the man turned on his heels and marched out.

"Mr. Staples," said the commander, as the former came in, "at four bells we will have 'man overboard' drill. We shall anchor to-night about ten miles off Nantucket. I shall come on the bridge and con the ship myself when we sight the Shovelful Lightship, and I shall be glad to have you with me, passing the Shoal. The next time we go over this course I shall let you take the ship through the passage yourself."

"Very well, sir." And the executive, being in sight of the waiters and the orderly, as well as the surgeon, who just then passed through the cabin, saluted formally and retired.

On deck, forward and in the waist of the ship, the men were busy at various tasks, burnishing brass-work, making fast the lashings of the guns, overhauling rigging and such naval apparatus as the warrant officers knew would be needed on this short cruise. But few of the crew – over a hundred in all – were below, although only the watch were actually on duty.

In passing one of the seamen, who was polishing the rail, Oshima, on his way to the galley, accidentally hit the man with his elbow.

"Clear out, will you?" said the seaman with an oath. At the same time he gave the little Jap a shove that sent him reeling.

"Oh, take a fellow of your size, Sam!" cried one of the watch standing near.

"He ran into me! I'll take him and you, too, if you say much," retorted the first speaker morosely.

Two or three of the men paused on hearing the angry words. The little stewards were favourites on board, although the enlisted men looked down on their calling.

Oshima's dark eyes had flashed at the rough push and the sneering reply of the sailor. He brushed his neat jacket where the former's hand had touched it. Then he said quietly, "You can strike, Sam Bolles, as an ass can kick. But you could not throw me to the deck."

"Couldn't I?" snarled Sam, dropping his handful of oily waste and springing to his feet. "We'll see about that, you – !" and he called him an ugly name.

Glancing about to see that no officer was watching, Oshima crouched low, and awaited the burly seaman's onset. Sam rushed at him with outstretched hands and tried to seize him around the waist, to dash his slight antagonist to the deck. Had he succeeded, Oshima's usefulness to the United States Navy would have ended then and there. A dozen men gathered about the pair, and more than one uttered a warning cry to the Japanese. They need not have been alarmed, however, for the safety of their small comrade.

Just as Sam's burly paws closed on his shoulders, Oshima's dark, thin little hands shot out. He caught the seaman's right arm, gave a lightning-like twist, and with a cry of pain and rage the big fellow went down in a heap on the deck. As the men applauded wildly and swung their caps, the Jap looked a moment at his fallen foe with a smile of contempt, then turned away, for the master-at-arms, hearing the noise of the scuffle, was approaching. Sam, however, was wild with rage. Scrambling to his feet, he darted upon his late antagonist, caught up the small figure in his powerful arms, and before anybody could interfere, tossed him over the rail into the sea.

Lieut. Commander Rexdale, pacing the quarter-deck and congratulating himself on the fine run the *Osprey* was making, was suddenly aroused from his professional meditations by the sound of cries from the forward part of the ship. Annoyed by this breach of discipline, he called sharply to one of the ensigns, who was standing near, watching a distant steamer through his glass, "Mr. Dobson, step forward, please, and find out what that disturbance is among the men – "

But before Dobson could reach the head of the ladder another confusion of shouts arose, followed immediately by a rush of footsteps. At the same time the commander felt the tremor of the screw's motion die away, under his feet.

"Man overboard?" exclaimed Rexdale, with a vexed frown. "I gave orders for the drill at four bells, and three bells were struck only a few minutes ago. Where is Mr. Staples?"

The executive officer was at that moment seen hurrying aft, but the Jackies were before him. They tumbled up the steps like mad, and flung themselves into the starboard quarter-boat, which had been left swinging outside from the davits for the purposes of drill. Already the man on watch at the taffrail had cut away the lashings of a patent life-preserver and sent it into the sea, where it floated with signals erect, far astern. The propeller was lashing the water into foam with its reversed motion. The *Osprey* shook as she tried to overcome her momentum; then, as the screw was stopped, forged slowly ahead.

"Lively, now, men! Let go! Fend off!" shouted Dobson, whose station was in that boat at the "man overboard" signal. "Oars! Let fall! Give way!" And off went the boat, plunging and foaming over the waves in the direction of the life-preserver, which was now a quarter of a mile astern.

"Very well done, Mr. Staples," said Rexdale approvingly. "But why," he added in a lower tone, "did you have the drill at this hour, instead of at four bells, as I ordered?"

"Drill? This is no drill, sir!"

"No drill?"

"There *is* a man overboard, sir. One of the Japanese waiters fell over the rail somehow. I gave no orders for the drill, but that bugler is a quick fellow and knows his business. The men like the little Jap, and it put a heart into their work."

When Oshima struck the water his early training (which will be referred to before long) stood him in good stead. He rose to the surface and gave a few quick strokes to ensure safety from the propeller; then he turned on his back and tried to float. There was too much ripple on the water for this, and he was obliged to turn back upon his chest and maintain his position with as little exertion as possible, not struggling to reach the ship, which was drawing rapidly away. He had seen the "man overboard" drill many times, and was on the lookout for the life-preserver, which was thrown just as he turned for the second time. His clothes dragged downward heavily, but in three minutes he reached the buoy and clung to it, knowing that by this time the men were in the boat and casting off.

It was perhaps ten minutes from the moment of his falling into the sea when the white boat drew up alongside and pulled both him and the life-preserver out of the water. Five minutes later – the ship having reversed her screw again, and backed toward the boat – he was scrambling over on to the deck and making for the little cabin he shared with Oto.

On the ship's log it was simply recorded that the boy had "fallen overboard." Oshima was sharply questioned by the officers, but he could not be induced to tell how the accident happened. Sam knew there were no talebearers among his mates and felt safe. He made a surly apology to the little chap, saying he was mad at having been thrown, and that he had not meant to drown him. Oshima thereupon bowed in a dignified way and went about his work, serving the commander in his cabin that night as usual.

Passing the Handkerchief Lightship, the *Osprey* dropped anchor with the lights of Nantucket twinkling far on her beam to the south and west. The next morning preparations were made for target-practice.

The target, towed out and anchored by a whaleboat, consisted of a triangular raft of boards supported at each corner by an empty barrel. On this was stepped a mast twelve feet high, with a small red flag at the top. Three leg-of-mutton sails, or "wings," gave the craft the appearance, at a distance, of a small catboat under sail. The *Osprey* now took her position – the distance and course being plotted by officers in two boats – and steamed at half-speed past the target at a distance of about sixteen hundred yards.

The gun-crews were summoned to quarters, and the firing begun with a six-pounder on the forecastle, followed by two three-pounders on the same deck.

The big four-inch gun was then loaded, the officers putting cotton in their ears to avoid injury. The first shot, weighing between thirty and forty pounds, was dropped a little to the right of the target; the second fell just beyond it and to the left.

"Fire on the top of the roll," cautioned the captain of the gun-crew, which comprised four of the best gunners on the ship.

The third shot fell short, and was duly so recorded, in a memorandum to be included in a report to the Department.

As the disappointed gunner stepped back he saw Oto, who, being a sort of privileged character, was lingering close by, shake his head slightly.

"Perhaps you think you could do better, Jap!" said the man sharply.

Oto nodded, but remained modestly silent.

"What, did you ever fire a heavy piece of ordnance?" asked Liddon, standing near to watch the practice.

Oto nodded again. "I could hit that target," he added simply, touching his cap and turning away.

"Stop," said the officer. He stepped toward the bridge, and, saluting, said: "The Japanese yonder says he is used to firing and could hit the target, sir. Shall I let him try?"

Rexdale, who was closely noting the practice, hesitated, it being the strict rule that no one outside the gun-crew should fire. He spoke in a low tone to Staples, who laughed and said: "All right, sir. It's only one shot wasted, in any case."

"Let the boy sight the piece, and fire," ordered the commander.

Oto touched his cap and adjusted the sighting apparatus to his shoulder. His small hands fluttered a moment around the delicate machinery; then he swung the great muzzle slightly upward and to the right. The ship rose on a long swell, and just as it hung on the crest came the roar of the great gun.

An instant's pause was followed by a cheer from the men; for as the smoke drifted away, behold, there was no target to be seen!

"He must have struck the base of the mast, true as a hair!" exclaimed Rexdale, scanning the wreck of the target through his glass. "Well done, Oto!"

The men crowded around the little fellow, clapping him on the back.

"Just his luck!" growled Sam, who was one of the gun-crew.

"Oh, let up, Sam! The boy has made a first-class shot," said a grizzled old gunner. "Wait till you have such luck yourself!"

"You will send a boat out to pick up what is left of the target," ordered Rexdale, returning his glasses to their case. "We've no more time for practice to-day. Get all your boats in and proceed, if you please, Mr. Staples."

That night he sent for the executive and had a long talk with him. There was something queer about those two Japanese boys, Rexdale said. Did Staples or any of the officers know anything about them? Inquiries were made, and the waiters themselves were closely questioned, but no information of importance could be gained. It was learned, indeed, that one of the ordinary seamen, Dick Scupp by name, was more "chummy" with Oto and Oshima than any one else on board. He was a simple, long-legged, awkward young fellow from northern Maine, who had enlisted at the outbreak of the Spanish War, and had served before Santiago, in the blockading squadron. He had taken a fancy to Oshima, particularly, and it was he who had rebuked Sam's rough treatment of his Japanese friend, just before the wrestling-match. He knew nothing, however, of the previous lives of the two little foreigners.

Rexdale would hardly have been surprised at Oto's skill in gunnery had he known that this meek and gentle Japanese lad had passed through the whole course at the Naval Academy at Annapolis,

graduating – under his full name, Makoto Owari – in the first third of his class, just seven years before Dave received his own commission!

CHAPTER III. SEALED ORDERS

The rest of the cruise of the *Osprey* was without special incident. Various drills were performed until every movement was executed to the officers' satisfaction. One of the most interesting was the "fire drill." A succession of loud, hurried strokes on the ship's bell brought the men hurrying up from below. Some ran to the hose, uncoiled it and coupled it to the pipes, others closed ports and ventilators, boat crews repaired to their stations, and in an almost incredibly short time water was gushing from the nozzle of the hose into the sea. Then there was "Boats and away!" the life-raft drill, signalling, and other manœuvres. Attention was paid to the slightest details, which were executed with the wonderful precision that characterises every naval movement. If the emergency should really arise, in the midst of a storm or under the enemy's fire, every man would know his station and the exact duties he was to perform. "Collision drill" and "setting up" finished the work in that line for the day.

During the afternoon land was near on both sides of the vessel, as she pursued her course to the north-west between Martha's Vineyard and the mainland. Nobska Head and, three hours later, Gay Head, were sighted and passed. Then the *Osprey* stood directly for Cape Charles. Just at sunset a heavy fog shut down.

"Three-quarters speed!" ordered Ensign Liddon, who was on the bridge.

"Three-quarters speed, sir," responded the quartermaster, throwing the indicators, which connected with the engine-room, around to that point. At about twelve knots an hour, or fifty-five revolutions of the screw to a minute, the ship crept steadily southward, with her whistle going twice a minute. At ten o'clock full speed was resumed, for the stars were out again.

The next day was fair, and the sun shone brightly on the broad ocean, on the white ship, and on the great steel gun which bore the inscription "Bethlehem" – the place where it was cast. "After all, it's a good peacemaker," said Lieutenant Staples, as he made his inspection tour, accompanied by Dr. Cutler. "There's thirty-six hundred pounds of peace," he added, patting the breech of the gun. On the deck, near by, a kitten was tumbling about in the sunshine. The men were engaged in mending, writing letters, and smoking idly.

At about noon the lightship off Cape May was left behind, and the *Osprey* started up Chesapeake Bay. When she had proceeded to a point sixteen miles below the mouth of the Potomac, she brought up for the night, a light fog rendering navigation difficult in those crowded waters. Early the next morning the gunboat weighed anchor and got under way. Just as she was turning into the Potomac she sighted the battleship *Indiana* outward bound with midshipmen on board in large numbers.

Staples immediately gave an order, and a string of gay flags fluttered at the yard-arm above the *Osprey's* decks. The signal was answered by the battleship, and the executive reported to Rexdale, "Permission to proceed, sir." When two ships of the navy meet, this permission must always be obtained from the one commanding officer who ranks the other.

Up the broad, placid river the *Osprey* moved, seeming to gain in size as the stream diminished; past wooded banks where cabins nestled in the greenery, or stately homes lifted their white pillars; past the little cove where Booth, the assassin of President Lincoln, landed after crossing the Potomac in his mad flight; on toward Washington. At the Proving Ground a boat was sent ashore with a telephone message to Alexandria, ordering a tug-boat to meet the war-ship for two or three miles' tow to her dock.

When the *Osprey* was opposite Mount Vernon, a mournful strain from the bugle floated over the water from the ship's forward deck. The ensign was half-masted, every man on board faced the shore and stood at salute, while the bell tolled slowly until the sacred spot, the home of the great American, was passed.

Not long afterward the tug appeared, made fast to the gunboat, and towed her to the navy-yard wharf, where she was to await orders for further movements.

During the week that followed, two events took place which were destined to exert an important influence upon the subsequent history of the *Osprey*.

The first was the appearance of a new member of the mess, Midshipman Robert Starr. He was a cheery, good-natured young fellow, finishing his Academy course; full of fun, and a great joker. While the original ward-room mess were at first disposed to regret, if not to resent, this addition to their family, they soon liked him thoroughly, and, indeed, he became popular from one end of the ship to the other.

The other event of importance was a dinner given by Lieut. Commander Rexdale on board his ship. Among those who received invitations were the Commandant of the Yard, with his wife and daughter; one or two officers from a torpedo-destroyer then docked and out of commission; Fred Larkin, who happened to be in Washington; and two young girls, nieces of a Government official of high standing, Ethelwyn and Edith Black, aged respectively sixteen and nineteen. These fair young Anglo-Saxons were the guests of the commandant, and on finding that they were included in the invitation expressed their delight by seizing upon his daughter Mary and executing a sort of triple waltz around the room for fully five minutes.

"You see, dear," panted the younger Miss Black, adjusting an amber pin which had fallen from her sunny hair to the floor, "we've never been on a war-ship and haven't the least idea what it's like. Isn't that Captain Rexdale a dear!"

"There, there, Wynnie, do sit down and keep still for two minutes," laughed her quieter hostess. "You've just about shaken me to bits. Yes, Lieut. Commander Rexdale is nice, and so are the rest of the officers of the *Osprey*. You'll like Mr. Liddon, I know."

"And will your mother go?"

"Of course she will. How could we accept, if she were not to take care of us?"

"I don't need anybody to take care of *me*," remarked Wynnie demurely. "You'll see how nicely I'll behave – like the kittens in the poem —

"Spoons in right paw, cups in left,
It was a pretty sight!"

"You witch!" said Mary, giving her a squeeze. "I've seen you 'behave nicely' before now! Mother will have her hands full, for once."

"Who are the other officers?" asked Edith, from the sofa.

"Oh, there's Ensign Dobson – he isn't very lively, but he's nice; Dr. Cutler, who *will* talk with papa all the time about quarantine regulations and the Red Cross; and Mr. Ross, the paymaster, I suppose. Oh, and I believe there's a little midshipman from the Naval Academy – I don't know his name, for he has just been assigned to the ship."

Wynnie's eyes danced. "He'll be dreadfully bashful, I know. I shall consider it my duty to entertain him, poor little thing!"

The dinner proved a great success. Larkin, of course, kept his end of the table in a shout, while young Starr was by no means too bashful to appreciate Ethelwyn's fun. "Doc." Liddon talked politics with the civilian reporter, navy-yard gossip with Mrs. Commandant, international complications with her husband, and nonsense, flavoured with dry wit, with Edith. Dobson told the story of his rescue from the hazing party at the Academy, and brought down the house as he described his position when Norman Holmes and Dave Rexdale came on the scene – standing on his head, with his tormentors pouring cold water down his trousers-leg.

Then Dave himself was called on for the tale of his boat-wreck on the lonely Desertas, near Madeira, when he and "Sandy" barely escaped with their lives.

The cabin of the *Osprey* was prettily decorated with ferns and flowers, and there was little to suggest warfare, the roar of cannon, the cries of the fierce combatants, in its dainty appointments. It fell about, however, that, as was natural, the conversation at length turned to the navies of the great nations, and, in comparison, that of the United States.

"Where do we stand, among the other Powers – in point of naval strength, I mean?" asked some one.

The commandant had excused himself on the plea of important duty, and had returned to his office on the Yard. Oddly enough, it was the civilian that answered the question, before any one else could recall the figures.

"We are fifth in rank," said Larkin, helping himself to a banana. "If we carry out our present rather indefinite plans we shall be, by 1908, the third in strength, possibly the second, with only England ahead of us."

"Do you happen to remember the approximate number of large ships in the English navy?" asked Dobson.

"I'm sorry to say I do not," replied the reporter.

"I do," put in Ensign Liddon, who had had time to collect his thoughts and statistics. "England has two hundred and one, not counting gunboats, torpedo-boats, and other small craft – "

"Small! Do you call this ship small?" cried Ethelwyn indignantly.

"She'd look like a kitten beside her mother if a first-class battleship ranged alongside," laughed Liddon. "Well, I was about to add that France has ninety-six big ships, Russia fifty-nine, and Germany seventy-three. The United States has only sixty-five."

"How many has Japan?" inquired Rexdale significantly. Just behind his shoulder a pair of dark, obliquely-set eyes flashed at the question.

"Forty-four, I believe. She would have a poor show at sea against Russia's fifty-nine."

"Oshima, there, doesn't seem to agree with you," said Dr. Cutler lightly, nodding in the direction of the steward.

All eyes were turned to the little Japanese, who drew back modestly.

"Well, boy, speak your mind for once," said Rexdale. "What do you think about the chances of Nippon against the Russian Bear?"

"I was t'inking," said Oshima, whose English was not quite as perfect as his comrade's, "of man behind gun."

The phrase was already a favourite in the navy, and a round of hearty applause followed the diminutive waiter as he retired in some confusion.

"Let's go on deck," suggested Starr. "It's getting pretty hot down here."

The commander set the example by rising, and the whole party adjourned to the quarter-deck, where chairs had been placed for them. The gentlemen lit their cigars, "not (Starr gravely remarked) because they wanted to, but purely to keep the mosquitoes away from the ladies."

Overhead the June stars were shining, lights flashed across the river, and distant shouts came softly over the water. The young people sprang to their feet and declared they must walk a bit. What they talked about as they paced to and fro – Bob Starr with Wynnie, Liddon with Edith, and Dobson with Mary – is of no consequence. It is probable that the two sisters explained to their respective escorts that in the early fall they expected to travel to India, China, and Japan, going via San Francisco, and returning through Europe. Whereupon it is more than likely that the young gentlemen in white duck expressed themselves as plunged in despair at the prospect of having to remain on the North Atlantic Station, with even a vague and disgusting possibility of "shore duty" for one or both!

Meanwhile the older members of the party renewed the conversation which had been broken off when the girls rose from table.

"If we are to keep up with foreign Powers," said Dr. Cutler, striking his hand upon his knee, "much more if we are to pass any of them in naval rank, we must hurry up our ship-builders. Germany

expects her battleship in commission in three years and a half from the day when the keel is down. We have one under construction now that was begun over five years ago."

"What does a modern battleship cost?" asked the older lady, who was one of the quarter-deck group.

"About eight million dollars," replied Rexdale. "And a right lively war costs the country a million dollars a day, in round numbers."

"And all of it absolutely consumed, burnt up, eaten, thrown away," added the doctor. "It is not like expenses for construction; it is all for destruction."

"My idea of a good-sized navy's mission is to keep the peace, so that there'll be no war," put in Staples, who had been rather silent thus far.

"Staples was the only man in our Plebe class who actually fought a battle with a second-year man," laughed Dave. "I like to hear him preach peace!"

"Perhaps you remember," said the other grimly, "that no more fights were necessary. One good upper-cut on that fellow's jaw won peace for the whole crowd. If Dewey hadn't sunk the Spanish fleet at Manila we might have been fighting the Dons to this day."

"Will the Japs fight Russia, do you think?" asked Larkin. "If they do, that may mean a job for 'yours truly.'"

"Certainly it looks like trouble over there," said Rexdale soberly. "The Russians are steadily advancing to the Pacific – already they have one hand on Vladivostock and the other on Port Arthur. Japan, crowded in its little group of islands just out of sight of Korea, feels the danger and the menace. Both nations have been preparing for a big war for years, I am told."

"But Russia enormously outnumbers the Japanese," said Dr. Cutler. "She has an army, they say, of four and a half million men, against Japan's six hundred thousand –"

"Aye, but where are those four millions?" put in Rexdale warmly. "Separated from the fighting line, which we can call Korea and the coast of Manchuria, by six thousand miles, with only a single-track railroad between Moscow and Port Arthur. The Japs could handle them one at a time like the Spartans at – at – where was it?"

"Thermopylæ, sir," remarked Doc. Liddon, who had paused a moment in his walk, attracted by the commander's earnestness.

"Thanks – Greek history never was my strong point at school!" said Dave with a good-humoured laugh. Then, resuming: "As to the Russian navy, matters would be just as bad. Half her ships at least must be in the Baltic to protect her home ports –"

Before he could proceed further, an interruption occurred. An orderly mounted the steps to the quarter-deck and with the usual stiff salute handed Rexdale a letter, marked "Important and Immediate."

The commander broke open the envelope. He had no sooner read the few lines it contained than he sprang to his feet.

"Madam," he said abruptly but courteously, "and gentlemen, I am sorry to bring our pleasant party to an end, but my orders leave me no choice. Mr. Staples, I must see you and the rest of the officers at once in my cabin. Orderly, attend the ladies through the Yard. Good-night, all!"

Hurriedly the girls ran below for their wraps, wondering what the mysterious orders could be that compelled them to retire so early and brought that new ring to the commander's tones. They bade good-night to the young officers, who would fain have escorted them to their home, but Rexdale was obliged to refuse his permission.

"Good-night! good-night! We shall see you again soon!" called the girlish voices from the wharf, while their late companions swung their hats gallantly on the deck of the *Osprey*.

"Gentlemen," said Rexdale in grave, earnest tones, when they were all gathered once more in the cabin, "I have important news for you. We are ordered to coal and take on stores and ammunition for

sea without delay, sailing one week from to-day, if possible. You will see that this is done promptly, and that every man reports for duty to-morrow, all shore leave being withdrawn."

Not a man there but longed to ask, "What is our port of destination?" but discipline prevailed. Their lips remained closed. They were no longer a party of young fellows chatting and laughing gaily as they performed their pleasant social duties and joked with their merry guests; they were officers in the United States Navy, ready for the duty at hand; willing to go to the ends of the earth, to encounter danger in its most appalling forms, to give their lives, if need be, for their country. Silence settled for a moment over the group.

"If I could I would tell you, without reserve, where we are bound; but I do not know myself," added Rexdale. "There are new complications in the far East – that is all I know. We sail under sealed orders, to be opened at sea, twenty-four hours out."

He rose from his chair, to signify that the interview was ended. As the officers filed out to their respective quarters, the pantry door, which, though no one noticed it, had been slightly ajar, closed noiselessly. Behind it were two Japanese, grasping each other's hands and looking into each other's eyes. Their breath came quickly; their eyes glowed.

"*Banzai!*" they whispered. "*Teikoku banzai!* Long live the Empire!"

CHAPTER IV. UNCLE SAM'S PACKING

When the family of a citizen in private life makes up its mind to a long journey to foreign shores, great is the confusion, and multitudinous the errands and minor purchases for the trip; trunks, half-packed, block the sitting-room and hall-ways; Polly flies up-stairs and down distractedly, Molly spends hours uncounted (but not uncharged-for) at the dressmaker's, Dick burns midnight oil over guide-books and itineraries, and even paterfamilias feels the restlessness and turmoil of the times, and declaims against extravagance as the final packing discloses the calls that are to be made upon his bank account.

If a vacation trip for a single family is productive of such a month of busy preparation, what must be the commotion on a war-ship starting for the Far East, with a crew of one or two hundred men and only a week allowed for packing!

The officers and enlisted men of the *Osprey* had their hands full in the days that followed the banquet.

In ordinary times it takes one hundred skilled men a full week to stow away provisions, supplies, ammunition, coal, and the thousand and one minor articles that are needed on board one of the larger war-ships. The ship's crew lend a hand, but they operate only under the direction of the staff of trained stevedores which is kept on duty at the Navy Yard.

Everything must be put away "snug and shipshape"; and goods are "stowed snug" where they occupy the least possible space, for every inch counts in the narrow limits of a ship. Then, too, they must be so stevedored that they will keep their original positions during the rolling and pitching of the vessel in a seaway.

More than this is required. There must be perfect order with the greatest degree of safety attainable. Inflammable or explosive substances must not be stowed together, and the arrangement must be such that any article needed can be reached on the instant. Emergencies often arise in which the safety of the ship itself is dependent on having needed appliances or material in the hands of certain officers without a moment's delay. It may be nothing more than a case of oil, or it may be the duplicate of some broken rod, bolt, or plate of the delicate mechanism of the great propelling engine or of the dynamo, which is the very life centre of the modern war-ship.

Paterfamilias, grumbling at the shopping memorandum of his wife and daughters on the eve of their Mediterranean vacation trip, would gasp at the list which Uncle Sam must fill, for a long cruise of one of his naval vessels. Here is a single order sent to one wholesale house on the *Osprey's* account, that week in June: Loaf sugar, brown sugar, powdered sugar, fair molasses, Ceylon tea, Hyson tea, Java coffee, Rio coffee, smoked ham, American rice, breakfast bacon, lambs' tongues, pigs' feet, corned beef, corned pork, leaf lard, dried peas, dried beans, coffee extract, chiccory, chocolate, Swiss cheese, English cheese, New York dairy cheese, canned tomatoes, canned peaches, canned onions, canned asparagus, canned peas, canned corn, canned beets, olives and olive oil, sauces and catsups, oatmeal and flour, limes and lemons, fruit jellies, condensed meats, beef extracts, Jamaica ginger, mustard and spices, cigars and tobacco, corn-meal and hominy, sago and tapioca, crackers and biscuits, lime juice, fresh and limed eggs, baking powder, canned cherries, canned plums, canned pears, canned rhubarb, dried apples, canned salmon, canned oysters, canned clams, sardines, canned lobster, canned mackerel, canned codfish, kippered herring, Yarmouth bloaters, canned ox tongues, canned tripe, canned mutton, canned chicken, canned turkey, canned soups, condensed milk, canned pickles, vinegar, salt, pepper, canned mushrooms, macaroni, vermicelli, laundry soap, toilet soap, sapolio, starch and blue, insect powder, candles, safety matches, stationery, rope and twine, smoking

pipes, tubs and washboards, chloride of lime, ammonia, alcohol and paints, shoe blacking, sewing machines.

From this partial list an idea may be formed of the extent and variety of the supplies that go to a modern war-ship. The clothing, medical and mechanical departments of the *Osprey's* outfit are not included, and each in itself would make a long roll. Of course the delicacies mentioned above are for the officers' use alone. When in port or on a short cruise the sailors get fresh meat, bread, fruit, vegetables and milk. On a long voyage their staple is "salt horse, hard tack, and boot-leg," which, being translated, is corned beef or pork, with crackers and black coffee. They receive frequently, too, oatmeal and rice, hot rolls and tea.

It will be noted that the important items of ice and fresh water do not appear in the list of supplies. Neither is taken aboard from the outside. The ship condenses fresh water pumped in from the sea by ingenious machinery contrived for the purpose, and the supply is limitless. From this fresh water ice is manufactured in any quantity desired, and no properly appointed modern war-ship is now without its ice-plant. It is for the manufacture of ice that ammonia is so largely shipped.

In the general disposition of the stores and supplies the articles likely to be needed for immediate use are usually stored forward under the berth deck. Such stores as cloth and made-up wearing apparel go in the lower hold, and there are also nearly all the magazines, guncotton, and torpedo-heads, if the ship carries them.

The coal bunkers on the *Osprey* were located between the engines and boilers and the hull of the vessel, at a point a little abaft of midship. Thus the coal afforded protection to the machinery from projectiles aimed at the most vital part of the ship. Such inflammable liquids as oil and alcohol are never stowed below.

Allusion has been made to the "life centre" of the vessel. This has been well described as the throbbing heart of every war-ship in the navy; the wires radiating from it like veins and arteries through which flow the life and intelligence which direct the movements of ship and crew.

Innumerable electric lamps light the cabins, engine-rooms, magazines, conning towers and decks, while a finger's pressure on a knob, or the turn of a tiny handle, throws a flood of radiance streaming out into the black night, disclosing the enemy and rendering futile his attack or escape as the case may be. Other wires operate telegraph, telephone, and signal from the bridge, or move compartment doors, massive guns, and, on a battle-ship the huge turrets themselves.

With a ship elaborately wired one chance shot of the enemy may thus prove fatal. If a shell should happen to force its terrible way into the dynamo room and explode there, the guns would cease firing, every light would be extinguished, every officer cut off from rapid communication with his men; and the delay consequent on this derangement would give the enemy, quivering with light and life, time to pour her tons of steel projectiles into the helpless, groping victim until she foundered.

At the end of the sixth day, the *Osprey* was ready for sea. Her men, her stores, supplies, coal and ammunition were on board, well stowed. Rexdale drew a long breath of relief, and Paymaster Ross another, as the last account was filed that night. The commander wrote a long letter to his wife, Hallie, before retiring. She was visiting friends in the West, and he had no opportunity to see her before starting on what was doubtless to be a cruise to the other side of the world. This is a part of a naval officer's life. "Detached," from this place to that, from one ship, or one duty, to another, says the brief naval report. The officer receives his written orders, and if his heart aches a little, under his blue uniform, no one knows it but the one who receives the good-bye letter, hurriedly sent by the despatch-boat or the orderly; and he is ready for the new post.

Paymaster Ross, meanwhile, is busy with half a hundred lists and receipts and accounts. He it is who knows accurately the pay of every man on board. Look over his shoulder and read in his "Register" of current date the salaries that our National Uncle pays to his nephews for naval services:

RANK.	ON SEA DUTY.	ON SHORE.
Admiral (George Dewey)	\$13,500	\$13,500
Rear Admirals:		
First Nine	7,500	6,375
Second Nine	5,500	4,675
Chiefs of Bureaus	...	5,500
Captains	3,500	2,975
Commanders	3,000	2,550
Lieutenant-Commanders	2,500	2,125
Lieutenants	1,800	1,530
Lieutenants, Junior Grade	1,500	1,500
Ensigns	1,400	1,190

It is to be remembered that, in addition to the amounts given in this table, all the officers mentioned (below the grade of rear-admiral) are entitled by the present laws to "ten per cent. upon the full yearly pay of their grades for each and every period of five years' service, as increase for length of service, or 'longevity pay.'" Still, thirty-five hundred dollars, even with that additional "longevity pay," does not seem a very large salary for the commander of a battle-ship at sea and perhaps under fire from day to day!

Warrant officers, namely boatswains, gunners, carpenters, sailmakers, pharmacists and warrant machinists are paid (for sea duty) from \$1200 a year for the first three years after date of appointment, to \$1800 after twelve years' service.

Chief petty officers, including Chief Master-at-arms, Chief Boatswain's Mate, Chief Gunner's Mate, Chief Yeoman, Hospital Steward, Bandmaster, and a few others, draw pay ranging from \$50 to \$70 a month. The pay of first-class petty officers, of whom there are about twenty varieties, is from \$36 to \$65 a month; that of second-class petty officers a trifle less; and that of third-class petty officers \$30 a month.

First-class seamen receive \$24, seamen gunners \$26, and firemen \$35. Second-class or "ordinary" seamen draw \$19 a month, and third-class seamen, including apprentices and landsmen, have to be content with \$16.

Oto and Oshima, as regular cabin stewards, were paid \$50 a month; and the wages for this sort of service on a war-ship run from that sum down to the pay of the mess attendants, which is the same as that of apprentice seamen.

Just as Dave Rexdale finished his letter to Hallie the orderly entered and announced Fred Larkin, who had been unexpectedly detained in Washington.

"I've been making inquiries, Dave," said the reporter, when the marine had retired, "and I can't see any reason for your sudden orders. A number of our ships are to rendezvous at Kiel next week, to take part in a naval review. It may be that you are bound to German waters. If so, give my respects to the Kaiser!"

Rexdale shook his head. "I don't believe Kiel is our port of destination, Fred," he said. "There'd hardly be time for us to get over there before the end of the review, even if we made a regular '*Oregon*' voyage of it. I'm afraid it's a longer cruise than that. Who knows what is going on at St. Petersburg or in Tokio?"

"Right you are," acquiesced Larkin. "I shouldn't be surprised to receive orders myself, any day, to start for Japan or Korea. Of course I should go by way of San Francisco. If there's to be any lively unpleasantness over there, the *Bulletin* wants a front seat, sure!"

"Well, I hope we shall meet there, old fellow," laughed the commander, "though the United States will of course have nothing to do with the scrap. Still, it's as well to have a few of Uncle Sam's war-ships on that station or near by – say at Cavite."

"If war breaks out between Russia and Japan," said Larkin, rising, after a little more conversation of this sort, "the big European Powers may be involved any day, with China as an uncertain force just behind the scenes. You know France is bound to take a hand if two nations attack Russia, and England has the same agreement with Japan. China will do lots of mischief, if she doesn't play in her own back yard."

At daylight the *Osprey* cast off her moorings, and dropping down the quiet Potomac, started on her long voyage.

CHAPTER V. OTO'S STRANGE VISIT

In N. Latitude 36° Longitude 72° W. from Greenwich, the commander of the *Osprey* opened his sealed instructions, and, having glanced over the lines, read them aloud to his subordinate officers, as follows:

"Washington, D. C.

"Sir:

"Having your coal-bunkers full, and being in all respects ready for sea, in accordance with previous directions, you will proceed with vessel under your command to the port of Hongkong, China, where you will report to the commander of the North Pacific Squadron. If his flagship should be at Manila, Shanghai, or any other port at the time of your arrival, you will follow him to that port without delay, and report as above. In view of the present critical state of affairs in the East, and the attitude of Russia and Japan, the *Osprey* should proceed with all possible dispatch. The crew is to be constantly drilled, the passage of the ship not to be delayed thereby. You will follow the usual route by way of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal, and will call at Malta (Valetta) for further instructions.

"Very respectfully,

" – , Secretary.

*"Lieutenant-Commander David Rexdale,
"Commanding U. S. S. Osprey.*

"(Through Commandant, Navy Yard, Washington)."

A half-suppressed cheer broke from the circle of blue-coated officers around the cabin table, as Rexdale concluded his reading.

"There's nothing said about ammunition," observed Stapleton, significantly.

"The Department knows that our magazines are well provided," said Rexdale. "I reported on all classes of ammunition just before we sailed from Boston."

"Shall we have a chance to use it? – that's the question," put in the young midshipman. "Oh, I do hope there'll be a scrimmage!"

"We're at peace with every nation on the globe," remarked Paymaster Ross with emphasis. "How can there be a fight? We've nothing to do with the quarrel between Japan and Russia."

"I hope the little fellows will win out, if there's war coming," exclaimed Dr. Cutter heartily. "I'm always in favour of the under dog."

"Who is the under dog? The Japs have the enormous advantage of a home base," said Stapleton. "I don't know enough of the situation to be sure which to sympathise with, big, sturdy Russia with all Asia between him and St. Petersburg, or snappy, shrewd little Nippon. Perhaps there won't be any war, after all."

"I don't see that we are in it, anyway," said Rexdale, rising. "Probably all our ship will have to do will be to hang round on guard, and protect American interests – "

"And be ready for squalls!" finished the irrepressible Starr, as the group filed out of the cabin, while the commander repaired to his stateroom to plot the course for Gibraltar.

The fact that the *Osprey* was bound for Pacific waters soon spread through the ship. Most of the jackies were delighted, and were enthusiastic over the prospect of a "scrap" with somebody, they did not much care whom. A heated discussion arose, forward, as to the merits of the two nations which

were supposed to be preparing for war. In the midst of the excited talk a black-and-white kitten made her way into the group and gave a careless little lap with her rough tongue at a hand which was braced against the deck. The hand, a rough and knotty one, taking no notice of her attentions, she drew her sharp little claws playfully across it.

This time the owner of the hand, who was no other than Sam Bolles, started so suddenly that he almost rolled over; then, vexed at the laughter which greeted him, he caught the kitten up savagely and swung his arm as if about to throw it overboard.

Now Sneezer, the kitten, was a special pet of Dick Scupp. Dick gave a roar at seeing the danger of the animal, and flung himself bodily upon Sam, who went over backward in a heap, relinquishing the kitten (fortunately for her) as he did so.

"Well, I never seed sech kids fer quarrelin'," said old Martin, the gunner, philosophically watching the two men as they rolled about the deck, scattering kits and boxes and bringing up against the shins of more than one of their comrades. "Come off, Sam, and let the youngster alone! Let go, will you (for Sam was pulling Dick's stringy locks with vigour)? Here comes Jimmy Legs. Let him up, Dick!"

"Jimmy Legs," whose real name was Hiram Deering, was chief master-at-arms. The duties of his office, on a war-ship, are perhaps more multifarious than that of any man on board. He is an enlisted man, rated a chief petty officer, and wears the eagle rating-badge. Forward of the mainmast his word is law at any hour of the day or night. Aft, his word is taken by the commander, the executive, and by all other officers.

The mettle in a chief master-at-arms, or "Jimmy Legs," as he is universally known among the men, is always thoroughly known aft before he is rated. He need not be a bully, but he must be a natural "master of the situation," and of men, in an emergency as well as in the routine of navy life. The Legs is privileged to take matters into his own hands, up forward, when occasion demands. If necessity arises for him to knock a man down, it is the business of Legs to know how to do it with science and despatch.

The master-at-arms of an American war-ship is always a man who has seen many years of service in the navy, and passed through most of the inferior ratings of the enlisted men. He is a man whose blue-jacket experience has taught him every trick of the naval sailor, every phase of fore-castle life. Hiram could neither be cajoled nor outwitted. He was stern with evil-doers, but was the most popular man forward, in the *Osprey*.

At dawn Jimmy Legs's duties begin, when the men turn out to clean ship. The chief boatswain's mate is nominally the "boss" of the job, but it is Legs who sees that the men do not growl or quarrel at their work, as sleepy men will at such an hour and task.

Mess gear for breakfast is piped. The men rush to the tables. A bluejacket with shoes on steps on the foot of the bluejacket who is shoeless. Biff-bang! The Legs may be 'way aft on the poop watching the after-guard sweepers at their work; but he is a man of instinct. In a dozen bounds he is at the scene of the scrap.

"Chuck it! The Legs!" is the word there. The scrappers break away, and when the Legs shows up they are seated side by side at their mess table, quietly taking morning coffee.

It is the business of Jimmy Legs to make a tour of inspection through the ship just before "morning quarters." The ship is then supposed to be in shape for the commanding officer's approval, and the men's wearing-gear all stowed away in ditty bags. It never is. There is always to be found a shirt hastily thrown here, a shoe lying loose there, a neckerchief and lanyard hanging over a ditty-box. This gear the Legs gathers in impartially, no matter to whom it belongs, and thrusts into the "Lucky Bag" (which is generally known by a far more opprobrious epithet), which he keeps for that purpose.

The only way the owner of the gear may get it back is by reporting himself at the mast, that is, to the commanding officer, for remissness in stowing gear, which means, generally, a lopping off

of liberty privileges. Every month the contents of the bag of gear thus accumulated are sold aboard at auction to the highest bidder among the jackies.

Finally, there is hardly a day in port that the Legs is not sent ashore along toward noon to hunt up derelicts. These are liberty-breakers carousing in town regardless of the fact that their services aboard are needed, and that punishment awaits them when they return for overstaying their leaves. Jimmy Legs is called for by the commander and gets a list of the men to be returned.

Into the steam-cutter hops Legs, and away he goes after the derelicts. He generally returns with them. He may be gone for some hours, or for a day, but when he comes off to the ship, in shore boat or cutter, he has the men he went after along with him.

So much for Jimmy Legs, whose never-ending and varied duties Hiram Deering, a grizzled old man-o'-warsman, performed most admirably on the *Osprey*.

The two men were pulled apart and the others had hardly gathered up their scattered ditty-bags and personal belongings when a commotion was observed among the officers on the bridge. They were gazing through their glasses at a puff of smoke on the north-western horizon. In the course of fifteen minutes it had grown to a small-sized cloud.

"She must have legs, to overhaul us in this way," observed Ensign Dobson, with his binocular at his eyes. "How much were we making at the last log, quartermaster?"

"Fifteen strong, sir."

"Then that fellow's doing a good twenty," added the officer. "Can you make him out, Mr. Liddon?"

"It looks to me like a 'destroyer,'" replied the other, readjusting the lenses of his glass. "It's a rather small, black craft, walking up on us hand over fist."

"Bo'sun!" called Dobson to a man who stood near on the lower deck.

"Yes, sir!"

"Set the ensign."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"There goes his flag!" said Dobson, excitedly.

"I can't make out what it is, but we'll soon know. Shall I slow down a bit, sir?" he asked the lieutenant-commander, who had joined the other officers on the bridge.

"Not yet," said Rexdale. "We can't afford to tie up for every fellow that wants to speak us. Let him come up. He'll signal his business soon, if he's really after us."

The stranger approached rapidly, and could now be seen with the naked eye, as was attested by the watch on deck lining the bulwarks. There was no apprehension, as the United States had no enemies afloat; still the appearance, so far out at sea, of an unknown vessel bearing down swiftly on the *Osprey*, was enough to attract the lively attention of fore-castle as well as cabin.

The kitten episode was quite forgotten, as the men thronged to the rail.

"Ah," exclaimed a brawny Irishman, waving his bare arm in the direction of the stranger, "w'ot a pity it ain't war-toimes now! Sure it's a lovely bit av a foight we'd be lookin' for, wid that smoker!"

"War nothin'!" retorted the old gunner. "I'm willin' to keep me arms and legs on fur a while longer. What's the use o' bein' shot to pieces, anyway!"

"Why don't he h'ist his ens'n?" growled another of the crew. "Manners is manners, I say."

"It is h'isted," said Scupp, "only ye can't see it, 'cos it blows straight out forrard on this west wind he's comin' afore. The officers up there'll soon be makin' it out, I reckon."

But the uniformed group on the bridge had no such easy task. They scrutinised the flag again and again, without success.

"I can't make the thing out," said Dobson, lowering the glasses, "can you, Mr. Liddon?"

"Can't say I can. It blew out once, and looked like nothing I ever saw before – a sort of twenty-legged spider in the centre. It's like nothing I ever saw in these waters. If we were on the Asiatic coast – "

"Who has the sharpest eyes among the men, quartermaster?" enquired the commander.

"I rather think, sir, them Japs can see the farthest."

"Orderly," ordered Rexdale, beckoning to a marine on duty, "find one of the cabin stewards and send him to the bridge at once."

Hardly a minute elapsed before Oto glided gracefully up the ladder and saluted.

"Take these glasses and see if you can make out that fellow's ensign," said Rexdale.

Oto lifted the binocular to his slanting eyes and picking up the approaching steamer gave it a swift glance. A moment sufficed. Then he returned the glasses to the commander, his face alight.

"Japanese, sir," he said simply. "That the flag of Japanese navy."

Dobson so far forgot his dignity as to slap his thigh.

"That's so!" he exclaimed. "I remember it well enough now. What on earth can a Jap torpedo destroyer want in these waters?"

"We shall soon find out – where's that boy? Gone already? Of course it excites him to see a part of his own navy so near. Stand by for signals, Mr. Dobson. Have your man ready, and get out your book." Dave's eyes were again scrutinising the approaching vessel as he gave the orders.

When the stranger was within about half a mile she rounded to a course parallel with that of the *Osprey*, showing her long, vicious hull, black and low in the water; and slowed down to keep from running away from the American ship. Presently a line of small flags fluttered up to her masthead.

Dobson examined them closely through the glass, then turned to his signal-book. "One – three – seven – five – here she is – the *Kiku* – that's Jap for Chrysanthemum, isn't it? Run up the answering pennant, signalman. Then haul it down and set our number."

The introduction having thus been politely performed, the *Kiku*, first answering the *Osprey*'s number, hoisted another line of flags.

"H'm, they have our signals pat," muttered Dobson, turning the leaves of his book. "Here it is, Captain. 'Wish to communicate. Have message for – ' for whom I wonder? Answer, signalman. There goes the second half of the signal: 'man on board your ship.' Well, that's cool! What shall we reply, sir?"

"Answer: 'Send boat with message – hurry,'" said Dave, frowning. "I don't like to stop, but the message may be important. I suppose it's for me, only the Japanese don't know enough to say so. Slow down, quartermaster."

"Slow, sir." And the indicator swung to that mark.

"Half speed."

"Half speed, sir."

"Now, full stop."

"Full stop, sir," and the engines of the *Osprey* were still.

The *Kiku* had taken similar measures, and changing her course, approached to within a hundred rods.

Down came her starboard quarter-boat, with beautiful precision. The oars fell together as the boat left the ship's side, and started toward the *Osprey*.

A ladder was thrown over, but the Japanese stopped abruptly, backing water when two or three boats' lengths distant, and turning, rowed a slow stroke to keep abreast the gangway of the gunboat, which had not lost her way. The officer in charge rose to his feet and raised his cap courteously.

"You have Japanese on board, sir, name Oto?" he called out.

"Yes, sir. What of it?"

"My captain wish to see him."

Rexdale gave a little start of irritation. "Leave your message for the boy," he shouted. "He's my cabin steward. I can't hold my ship for him to visit you."

While this conversation was in progress, a slight, diminutive figure had glided into the crowd of men overhanging the rail on the deck below. On hearing Rexdale's answer he called out a few

rapid words in his own language to the officer in the boat. The latter answered, and the boat lay up alongside. Before any one realized what Oto was about, he had climbed the rail like a monkey and dropped into the strange boat, which immediately headed for the *Kiku*.

"Here!" shouted Rexdale, angrily, "What are you about? Bring back that boy! He belongs to my ship!"

The Japanese officer half turned in his seat, waved his hat most courteously, and spoke to his men; with the result that they pulled harder than ever.

"Start her!" cried out Rexdale, furious with rage.

"Start her, sir," repeated the phlegmatic quartermaster, throwing over the electric indicator.

"Full speed ahead!"

"Full speed ahead, sir."

"Now port your helm! Look sharp!"

"Port, sir."

But by the time the *Osprey* had fair steerage-way the stranger, veering in to shorten the distance, had picked up her boat and was pouring volumes of black smoke from her funnels as she too forged ahead. Her bows slowly swung to the northward.

The captain on her bridge waved his hat.

Dave set his teeth hard. "I'd like to send a shot across her bows!" he muttered, glaring at the audacious destroyer which was plainly running away from them. The jackies looked up eagerly at him, with their hands on the breach of the four-inch rifle; not a few fists were shaken at the departing stranger. It was a temptation, but the commander overcame it.

"It won't do to open fire, just for a steward," he said to his subordinates, who were standing at his side with scowling faces. "On her course, quartermaster!"

"On her course, sir. East by south, quarter south."

"It's a regular insult," stormed Liddon, for once shaken out of his regularly calm demeanour. "It's abduction on the high seas! It's piracy, that's what it is!"

"More like the press-gang," said Dobson, laconically.

"Well," said Rexdale, after a pause, "Japan will have to apologise for that little performance when we've reached a cable port."

"Is Oto an American citizen?" enquired Liddon.

"I'm afraid not. I never heard him speak of naturalisation."

"Then I suppose it's hardly an international episode," said the other, recovering his usual dignity of speech. "Perhaps the boy is an escaped criminal. At worst, I'm afraid the captain of the *Kiku* has only been guilty of bad manners."

"I shall report the incident to the Department at the first opportunity," said the commander decisively. "They can do what they like about it."

But Rexdale did not make the report. The next morning he was waited upon, to his utter bewilderment, by Oto himself, obsequious, deft, and silent as of old!

CHAPTER VI. A SCRAP IN MALTA

The lieutenant-commander rubbed his eyes and stared at the little brown man in utter amazement.

"Oto!" he exclaimed at length. "You here?"

"Yes, sir," replied Oto, placing a steaming cup of hot coffee at the right hand of the officer.

"Come round here where I can see you. When did you come on board?"

"This morning, sir, at about three bells."

"Who brought you? Did you swim back?" demanded Rexdale, still mystified.

"No, sir. I came in the *Kiku's* boat," said Oto, showing his white teeth in a genial smile. "There was fog. The *Osprey* was going at less than half speed, and the lookouts did not see me. We came very quiet."

"Well, what have you got to say for yourself, any way?" asked Dave, irritated at the boy's self-possession. "Do you know I can put you in irons for deserting the ship?"

The little Jap spread his arms, in deprecation. "Very sorry," said he humbly. "It was all mistake. Captain Osara wanted to give me message. He did not wish me to leave ship. All mistake. So I come back. Captain Osara say he apologise. Here his letter," and he handed a sealed missive to the commander, who impatiently tore open the daintily folded sheet. It was covered with Japanese characters.

"Read it to me," said Dave, handing the letter to Oto, who translated as follows:

"Ship 'Kiku,'

"Royal Navy of Japan.

"To the Honourable

"David Rexdale,

"Commanding U. S. Ship *Osprey*."

"Am desirous to tender most humble apologies to your august presence for having taken to my ship the man Oto, whom I restore tremblingly to you. Augustly condescend to grant your forgiveness, and accept my joyful congratulation on your august health and the beauty and majesty of your ship.

"Respectful veneration,

"Osara."

"Well," said Rexdale, smiling, in spite of his vexation, at the language of the apology, "what was the message?"

But neither threats nor persuasion could induce Oto to divulge the nature of the communication which had been of sufficient importance to take a naval vessel out of her way and to lead her commander to play such a daring trick – for such it evidently was, in spite of his polite phrases – on a United States war-ship. Oshima in his turn was closely questioned, but professed entire ignorance of the matter.

"I've not a particle of doubt," said Rexdale, talking it over with Staples, "that it has some connexion with the strained relations between Russia and Japan. He's a dangerous fellow to have on board, this Oto, with his skill at gunnery, his high-bred manners, and his mysterious disappearances and appearances. When we reach Hongkong I shall dismiss both Japs. They might get us into a heap of trouble."

Staples quite agreed with Dave, and, with a careful record of the episode in the ship's log, the affair was closed.

Two weeks later the *Osprey* dropped her anchor off the quay in the inner harbour of Valetta, the principal seaport of Malta. Rexdale's first care was to cable his arrival to the Department; next, to mail his report of the voyage; third, to send a long letter to Hallie, his wife, who would be waiting, even more anxiously than the Secretary of the Navy, to hear from him. At the telegraph office he found a dispatch from Washington, ordering him to hold the *Osprey* at Valetta until further instructions from the Department. He knew that he would need time for coaling, and informed the other officers of the ship that they would probably spend at least a week at their present anchorage, which had been designated by the harbour-master.

The next two days were busy ones. All hands worked hard and became grimy from head to foot with coal dust. At length the jackies forward heard the welcome order: "Shift into clean blue, the liberty party!" Working in the intense heat of a Mediterranean July, the men had been stripped to their waists. Now they sluiced one another down with the hose, and gladly slipped on their spruce shore-going togs. With strict injunctions to be on board before dark, thirty of the crew were permitted to land.

Midshipman Starr went ashore with Ensigns Liddon and Dobson.

"There's only one thing I want to see," announced Starr, "and that's a real, genuine Maltese cat, proudly standing on her native soil. I suppose the streets are full of 'em." He and Dobson had never before visited the city of Valetta, but "Doc." Liddon was well informed as to its history and attractions, having spent several weeks there before he joined the Naval Academy.

The moment the three young officers set foot on the quay, they were beset by vendors of all sorts of trinkets, especially those of silver filigree-work.

"What sort of money do they use here?" asked Dobson.

"English, of course," replied Liddon. "The island is one of the choicest jewels in the British crown, and –"

"Lend me a dollar's worth of shillings, will you?" interrupted the other, "and tell me about the jewels later, Doc. I want to buy that bracelet for 'the girl I left behind me,' if the price isn't too high."

The seller parted with the pretty ornament for one shilling, and the trio, waving aside the rest of the merchants, moved on.

"Where shall we go first?" asked Liddon.

"Just show me one good cat –" began Bob, earnestly, "and I'll –"

"Oh drop your cats, Bob! Take us to the best view, to begin with, Liddon."

"Well, let's go up to Fort St. Elmo. That overlooks both harbour basins."

"Whew! Hot's the word!" exclaimed Bob Starr, wiping his brow as they gained the ramparts of the old fortress. "Now, while we are cooling off, tell us about this aged ruin which the *Osprey* could make over into cracked stone for a macadamised road in about five minutes."

"It isn't a ruin yet, young man," said the ensign, taking off his cap to enjoy the breeze, "and the *Osprey's* rifled four-inch would have to toss a good many shot up here to produce road material, I can tell you. But three hundred-and-odd years ago – in 1565, to be exact – this old fort held off a big fleet and land force for four months. The Knights of St. John defended it in great style. Sultan Solyman, who had driven the Knights from Rhodes thirty-four years before, made up his mind that Malta was too good for them. He brought about a hundred and forty vessels and an army of thirty-odd thousand men, to give them a thorough-going house-warming.

"Were there any cats –" began Starr; but the lecturer proceeded without noticing the interruption.

"These forces were reinforced, if I remember rightly" – (Cries of "Oh, you do! you *do!*" from the audience) – "were afterwards increased by a lot of corsairs from Algiers and pirates from Tripoli. When the fort seemed on the point of breaking up, after four months' battering, the few Knights that were left entered that little chapel over there, received the rites of the Church – the *viaticum* – and went out to start on their last journey. They were cut to pieces by the Turks; but two outworks still

resisted and fought off the besiegers until help arrived from Sicily. Out of eight or nine thousand defenders, only six hundred were left to join in the *Te Deum* (you know the Knights were a religious order) as the Turks sailed off."

"O my, look at this!" Starr suddenly broke in. "Isn't she a dear!"

The officers looked up and saw an extremely pretty girl approaching, attended by a maid.

"What on earth is that thing on her head?" queried Dobson under his breath. "It looks like a stu'n'sail!"

"It's a *faldetta*," said Liddon. "Most of the ladies, the natives, I mean, wear them."

The young men rose from their seats on the bastion, and raised their hats as the girl passed. She flushed and bowed, then looked down demurely, and hurried on.

"What language do they speak?" demanded Bob, hastily. "If I only knew, I could ask her about Maltese –"

"Don't get agitated, my son," said Liddon, calmly, "and don't address any young ladies without an introduction. As for their language, it's a mixture of Portuguese and Arabic –"

"That'll do," groaned Bob, with a heavy sigh. "There's no danger of my breaking out in her native tongue. What's next on the programme?"

"Well, we'll take a stroll through the principal street and visit the Church of St. John, which was built by the Knights a few years after the siege."

The street itself was full of interest to the young Americans. Sauntering along – themselves attracting no little favourable attention in their natty white uniforms – they met cabmen driving their little horses at full speed, English ladies elegantly dressed side by side with the natives in their huge black one-sided hoods, flocks of goats, to be milked at the doors of customers, smart British officers, swarthy-faced Hindoos, and beggars without end.

"This is the Church of St. John," said Liddon, as the naval party entered an imposing portal, flanked by two huge towers. "Here the Knights used to worship, when they were not otherwise engaged –"

"To wit, in fighting!" interpolated Starr. "Well, I must say those old fellows did well whatever they undertook. Look at those marbles and paintings!"

With hushed voices the three young men passed down the long aisle, to one of the chapels where they were shown various relics which, Liddon said, had been held in the deepest veneration by the builders of the church in those strange old days. There were some of the bones of St. Thomas of Canterbury, one of the stones cast at St. Stephen, the right foot of Lazarus, and a thorn from the sacred crown. However sceptical the Americans might have been as to the genuineness of these relics, they showed in their faces and demeanour only their respect for the belief of those who treasured them. A party of tourists came up at the same time, and two or three pretty girls giggled effusively over the objects displayed.

"Come on!" muttered Dobson in disgust. "Let's get out of this. There are times when I'm ashamed of my race!" and turning on their heels the young men left the church.

The gay scenes in the sunny street restored their good humour, and they visited successively a catacomb chapel – where the vaults were ornamented with fantastically arranged bones of departed monks and knights – an old city gate, and some interesting rock-hewn depositories of grain.

"Not a cat yet, except a yellow one that don't count!" murmured Bob sadly, as they turned their steps toward the final great attraction of Valetta, the Governor's Palace, in St. George's Square.

"It was formerly," explained their omniscient guide, "the palace of the Grand Master of the Knights of St. John, and contains some of the principal treasures of the Order. Here is the Armory," he added, as they entered a large hall, containing rows of figures clad in antique armour, and a wealth of weapons and armour of ancient times. Here, too, was the sword, battle-axe, and coat-of-mail of the leader of the corsairs who assisted the Turks in the famous siege of Fort St. Elmo; the trumpet

which sounded the retreat of the Knights from Rhodes, in 1523; and a cannon made of a copper tube and wound with tarred rope, used by the Turks, Liddon said, during their siege of that island.

"Compare it with one of the twelve-inch turret rifles on our modern battle-ships!" exclaimed Dobson. "Why, I'd rather have a good navy revolver to fight with than this ropy thing!"

For two or three hours more (a rest being taken at a small restaurant) the officers wandered about the streets of Valetta. Liddon regaled his companions with details of its history, including its capture by Napoleon in 1798, the subsequent two-years siege when the Maltese had risen in revolt against their captors, and its formal cession to the English in 1814.

"It's no use, boys, I'm used up," said Dobson at length. "I'm off for the ship; you can come or stay, as you like."

"Oh, we'll go along, too," said Starr. "I should have left an hour ago, but I wanted to see how long Liddon *could* keep it up, before the pumps sucked. He'd make his fortune as a filibusterer against an unpopular bill in the Senate!"

They passed along the Strada Reale – "Royal Street" – for the last time, and were just turning down toward the harbour when a slight commotion on the sidewalk ahead attracted their attention. A knot of people had gathered around a group in which some sort of altercation was going on.

"Hold on a minute," cried the midshipman, "let's see what's up."

The three inseparables pushed their way into the crowd, the outer portion of which was composed of good-natured Maltese and a variety of street-loungers. Within this circle were a dozen sailors from a small Russian cruiser in port. They, in their turn, had corralled a couple of small brown men whom their tormentors were hustling rudely as if to provoke a resistance which would afford an excuse for rougher treatment.

The officers from the *Osprey* simultaneously recognised the victims of this assault, and with a howl of indignation from Bob, and a stern "Stand aside, men!" from Liddon, they pulled off the Russian blue-jackets and took their stand beside the Japanese, who were no other than Oto and Oshima.

"*Amerikanski!*" snarled the sailors as they noted the uniforms of the intruders and closed in again, while the throng of idlers increased.

"What's the matter, my lads?" said Dobson to the stewards, who seemed in no wise discomposed, but stood quietly awaiting a favourable moment for withdrawal.

"We do no harm," said Oshima, when both had given the naval salute. "These men, these Russians" – (it is impossible to describe the tone of lofty contempt with which he pronounced the word, looking around at the burly tars, each a full head taller than himself) – "they stop us here in the street and call us bad names and dare us to fight – the big men – cowards!"

Perhaps it was fortunate for the little Jap that the Russian sailors could not understand a word of English; but the general tenor of his remarks was only too plain from his tones and gestures. The assailants closed in again with a volley of incomprehensible expletives and unmistakably threatening gestures. Liddon was violently shoved aside. This was more than he could stand.

"Take that, you bully!" he cried, planting a quick, nervous blow straight between the eyes of the fellow who had jostled him.

The man fell over against his comrades – the street was too crowded to allow him to drop outright – and the inner circle enlarged; but only for a moment. The sailors, half of whom were intoxicated, rushed forward with a roar of rage. Before they reached the officers, whose prospects of gaining their ship in safety seemed decidedly poor, Oto spoke a swift word to his chum, and each darted upon a Russian. It was like a terrier charging a bloodhound; but with a lightning-like grasp and twist of the arm the diminutive assailants brought to the ground their bulky adversaries, screaming with pain. Then the Japanese ducked under the arms of the nearest bystanders and disappeared as if by magic.

Another momentary diversion had been effected by this quick and unexpected display of *jiu-jitsu*

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