

Webster Frank V.

Two Boys of the Battleship: or, For the Honor of Uncle Sam



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CHAPTER I – IN THE STORM

“Say, Frank, it’s certainly getting pretty bad; isn’t it?”

“Well, Ned, it surely isn’t getting any better. I’m positive of that. Look out! Here comes a big comber!”

There was a surge of green, foam-capped water, which looked as if it would engulf and overwhelm the dory motor boat, in which crouched two youths, one about eighteen, and the other slightly older.

“Hold her nose right into it, Frank!” cried the younger lad, who was bending over the laboring motor.

“That’s what I’m doing,” was the answer of his brother, “Whoop! Some water came aboard that time!”

The dory, built for rough work in the open sea, did not actually ship the wave, for her high and peculiarly built bow and stern were intended to meet just such emergencies, but there was a heavy storm brewing, and the wind whipped enough water off

the top of the big wave to make three or four inches in the bottom of the craft.

"Think we can make the inlet, Frank?" inquired Ned Arden rather anxiously, as he straightened up, for now that the one big wave had been successfully coped with, there would be a short period of calm in the turmoil of the sea.

"Sure we'll make it!" asserted Frank, as he shifted the wheel slightly to meet another comber, though not so large as the former one. "Of course we'll make it. But I don't mind admitting that I wish we were in the bay right now. The storm broke sooner than I thought it would."

"But we've got a good boat," Ned remarked, as he made a slight adjustment to the oil cups, to feed a little more of the lubricant to the toiling motor, which was enclosed in a sort of box amidships of the dory. Ned replaced the cover of the motor compartment and braced himself on a locker seat near his brother.

"Yes, a fine boat," agreed Frank. "She'll weather a worse storm than this."

"Not worse than this is going to be," insisted Ned, as he looked up at the gray and leaden sky above them. The strong wind was sweeping along, snipping off patches of salty spray from the tops of the waves, sending it with stinging force into the faces of the two boys. Overhead masses of black clouds scudded across the general gray surface of the sky. As yet there had been no rain, but Frank and Ned Arden were as wet from the spray as though

there were a veritable downpour.

“Well, I’d trust this tub almost anywhere,” Frank said, rising slightly to peer ahead that he might see where to steer, for the atmosphere was thickening as the storm developed more and more. “She’s proved what she can do, Ned, and we don’t need to be afraid as long as she holds together and the motor keeps working.”

“That’s the only trouble,” Ned replied; “the motor. If she goes back on us and we lose headway, we’ll get into the trough of the sea, and then it will be all up with us,” and he laughed grimly.

“Don’t borrow trouble,” advised the elder lad. “The motor isn’t going back on us. She isn’t that kind.”

“One cylinder missed a couple of times, though.”

“Yes, the gasoline isn’t as good as it ought to be. I’m not going to get any more of it from Pierson. Look out, Ned! Here comes another!”

The boys crouched and turned their backs as their boat went slapping her way through another big wave. For a moment they could scarcely see because of the salty spray that filled the air, but they shook their heads to rid their faces of water, and looked eagerly, and somewhat anxiously, first into the interior of their craft to see how much water she had shipped, and then both peered, somewhat apprehensively, toward a long, low-lying body of land toward which they were urging their boat.

“It’s a good bit off yet,” said Ned, as he pointed toward Fire Island.

"Yes, but don't worry. We'll make it," his brother reassured him. "Guess I'll start the bilge pump. No use having all this water sloshing around our feet."

"I'll start the pump. You keep to the wheel," answered Ned. "I don't want to try my hand at steering just at the present time. Say, this is some storm!"

The younger lad threw into gear a small auxiliary pump attached to the motor. This pump was designed to free the boat of water, for Frank and Ned Arden often went some distance out to sea in their craft, and more than once they had shipped enough water to make them not only uncomfortable, but to put them in danger. So, to avoid the heavy and tiring work of baling, they had installed a small but powerful pump.

This the motor was soon operating, sending the water over the side by means of a small hose.

"That's better," observed Frank, when the interior of the dory was almost free from the fluid. "Shut off the pump now, Ned. I want all the power of the motor I can get."

"Why, aren't we holding our own?"

"Yes, but not much more than that. The tide's running strong, and it will be worse when we get to the inlet."

Ned peered through the gloom caused by the lowering storm-clouds, and sought to read his brother's face. Ned was not afraid, nor a coward, but if there was danger ahead he wanted to be prepared for the worst. However, the countenance of Frank showed no unusual anxiety, though his lips were firmly and

grimly closed. Frank would drive on through the storm, and if it were humanly possible he would bring the boat safely through the inlet of Fire Island and into the quiet and protected waters of Great South Bay.

Frank and Ned Arden lived with their uncle, Philip Arden, just outside the town of Ipswich, Long Island. Their home was a large, old-fashioned house, and the grounds extended down to the beach of the Great South Bay, on the waters of which the lads spent much of their time.

They loved the sea, and from the time they were small boys and could barely swim, they fairly reveled in its saltiness, and were out on the bay or ocean in calm and storm.

At first they had been allowed to go only a little way from shore in a safe, but big and clumsy row boat. Then, as they became older and more experienced, they secured a better craft, and even ventured to cross the stretch of water which lay between the mainland of Long Island and Fire Island, that long, narrow strip of land which has been the cause of so many wrecks. On one side of Fire Island pounds the never quiet waves of the ocean, while on the other side, only a few minutes' walk distant, are the calm and shallow waters of the bay. The bay and ocean are connected by several inlets, and the one for which Frank and Ned were heading was the one near Fire Island Light.

Once through that and in the quiet bay, it would be a small matter to make the run to their dock in their speedy motor dory. They had had this boat about six months, purchasing it for

their pleasure, for they were quite well off. It was not the first motor craft they had owned, but it was the one they liked best, for they could venture out on the open sea with it.

“And in quite a storm, too,” said Frank, speaking of the matter. “But we certainly have given it a good test to-day,” he added to his brother. “She’s shown what she can do.”

“That’s what she has, old man. But we’re almost at the inlet now; aren’t we?”

“Yes, a few minutes now. Wow! Here comes the rain!”

The storm, having lashed itself up to a certain point, now added a deluge of rain to the gale of wind, and the darkness increased.

The dory rose and fell, occasionally her propeller being out of the water so that it raced. Frank and Ned braced themselves against the rolling, pitching and tossing motion, Frank now and then raising himself to peer ahead to mark a course for steering.

“Better start the pump again!” he shouted into his brother’s ear. “We’ve more water in her than I like to see.”

“Thought you said we’d need all our power to make the inlet.”

“So we will. But you can run the pump a few minutes before we’ll have to buck the tide. Shut her off when I tell you.”

The two boys gave their attention to managing their craft now. Gradually she was emptied of water again, and, at a nod from Frank, Ned disconnected the pump gears. As he stood up after doing this, he saw, on the open sea back of him and about two miles off shore, a dark mass which seemed shrouded in smoke.

“Look Frank!” he cried. “A ship on fire!”

Frank gave a quick glance.

“No!” he answered, raising his voice to make it heard above the roar of the wind and the swish of the rain, “that’s a battleship – the *Texas*, I think. I read she was to pass down this way. Yes, that’s what it is – one of Uncle Sam’s battleships! Say, I wish we were nearer and could get a better view. Isn’t that great!” and Frank, with shining eyes, looked earnestly in the direction of the big craft which moved along over the tempestuous sea as though no strife nor storm could produce an impression on her.

“It sure is great!” agreed Ned. “Say, Frank, do you know what my one ambition is?”

“Well, you change so often that it’s hard to keep track.”

“I’ve never changed from this one. I’d like to be a sailor on a battleship.”

“So would I, Ned! I’ve never talked much about it, because it didn’t seem of much use. Uncle Phil would never let us. But if I ever get the chance I’m going to have a try at life on a battleship.”

“And I’m with you, Frank!” Ned eagerly cried. “Only I guess there isn’t much chance. We’ve got to finish at college, I suppose, and then buckle down to business. But it’s the sea for mine every time, and every chance I get!”

“Same here. Now look out for things, Ned. We’re going through the inlet. And say, maybe the tide isn’t running strong!”

CHAPTER II – POLITICAL COMPLICATIONS

With one last and lingering look at the battleship, which was now almost lost to sight in the spray and spume of the sea and the mist of driving rain, Ned crouched down in the dory and watched his brother at the wheel, as the older lad turned the craft to make the trip through the inlet.

Ned crouched to keep as much as possible out of the way of the flying spray, and also to bring his weight low-down in the craft and thus make her more seaworthy. For though it was not likely that the dory would capsize, it was not wise to offer too many chances to the sea.

“Can you make it?” shouted Ned.

Frank nodded his head. It was no time for talk now.

The stanch craft rose and fell on the waves. She tumbled and tossed about, but dories are made for rough weather and heavy seas, and the boat of the two boys was no exception.

Once again Ned lifted off the cover of the engine box to see that the oil was being properly fed to the machinery, for the gasoline motor was under a severe strain now, forcing the boat through the inlet against the power of the out-rushing tide.

“All right?” asked Frank, snapping out the words, but never taking his eyes from the course ahead.

“All right,” Ned answered.

On through the storm, through the driving rain and the stinging salt spume, labored the dory, until she was in the more quiet waters of Great South Bay, and then, for the first time since they realized that they were caught in a bad storm, our two heroes breathed with comparative freedom.

“Whew!” exclaimed Frank, with a sigh of relief as he allowed his tired legs to stretch a bit, for he had sat in a braced position to manage the wheel. “Whew! That was *some* storm!”

“It was great!” declared Ned, laughing now. “I love a good blow!”

“So do I, and now that we have tried out the *Ellen* and know what she can do, we’ll not have to worry so much. It sure is some great little boat!” and Frank patted the wheel affectionately, as one might caress a favorite horse or dog. The motor boat really seemed a thing of life to the boys.

Their hard work was not yet over, however, for Great South Bay is very shallow, and it does not take much wind to roughen the water there. But, of course, the waves were nothing like those out on the open sea, and, as Ned remarked, “it was pie”; meaning, in his own way, that it was easy navigating.

“Well, we’re almost in now,” Frank remarked, a little later, as he nodded in the direction of the tall wireless mast at Sayville – the wireless by which messages are sent directly to and from Germany. The mast is a landmark for miles around.

“Yes, we’ll be at the house shortly now,” agreed Ned. “Let me

take the wheel awhile. You must be tired."

"I am," Frank admitted, as he surrendered the spokes to his brother. The latter steered to where their row boat was moored at the anchorage, and having made everything aboard the dory snug for the coming night of storm, and having anchored her, bow and stern, Frank and Ned rowed to shore and started up the walk toward their uncle's house.

The two boys were orphans, their mother having died when they were respectively nine and eight years old. Mr. Arden was an importer of coffee and other tropical and South American products, and had, at one time, been wealthy.

But the death of his wife seemed to deprive Mr. Arden of some of his business ability. Perhaps he lost heart, and had little ambition left. Whatever the cause, he gradually lost money and curtailed his activities until he was in danger of bankruptcy. Of course Frank and Ned were then too small to know about this.

Then Mr. Arden's brother Philip, a shrewd business man, stepped in to the aid of the sorrowing man. Philip Arden knew little or nothing of the importing trade, but he had good natural abilities, and he gave his whole attention to his brother's affairs.

The effect was to save a business on the verge of ruin, and for some years the two Arden brothers were in partnership. For a time the father of Ned and Frank seemed to regain his old-time manner. But he really was a man with a broken heart, and five years after the death of his beloved wife he gave up the fight and died, after a brief illness.

Frank and Ned were thus left orphans, but, thanks to the business ability of Philip Arden, the boys were heirs to a considerable fortune. It was natural that they should now make their home with their uncle. The latter had never married, and for the last few years he had taken up his residence with his brother and nephews at Ipswich, where the Ardens had lived for many years in an old homestead on the bay.

Of course Frank and Ned grieved sorely over the death of their father. They did not remember their mother quite so well, though often they would go into the parlor and look at the picture of a woman with a sweet, but rather sad face. It was a picture before which they had often seen their father stand with bowed head and hands clasped behind his back. And often, when he came softly out of the room where the portrait hung, there was a suspicious moisture in Mr. Arden's eyes.

But Frank and Ned were healthy, hearty lads; and at fourteen and thirteen grief does not last very long. Kind Nature did not intend it so. And in a little while Ned and Frank at least partly forgot their sorrow in the activities of life.

Their uncle carried on their father's business, though on a smaller scale, and their money, inherited from their father, was in Philip Arden's hands, as the guardian of the two boys. Frank and Ned never asked how their fortune was invested. They took it for granted that it was safe. They always had, within reason, all the spending money they needed, and they were well supplied with the things that go to make life enjoyable.

Their tastes were simple, however, and the most that they asked for was something connected with boats. They seemed to live on the water, especially in the summer.

Both boys attended Columbia University, in New York City, and were doing well in their studies. They had no special profession in mind, but their uncle rather took it for granted that they would, after their graduation, take up the importing trade with him.

"I suppose we might as well do it as anything else," Frank said.

"Yes, for perhaps we can get a chance to make a trip to South America," Ned agreed. "I've always wanted to see foreign countries."

They spoke of this again as they hurried on through the storm to the shelter of the big white house.

"I tell you what would be better than going to South America on importing business," said Ned.

"What?" Frank inquired.

"Going down there, or for that matter, to any foreign country, on a battleship!"

"Cracky! I should say so!" exclaimed the older lad. "I wonder if we'll ever actually be on one?"

"Well, we were on one once," Ned remarked.

"The *Nebraska*, yes. But only on a tour of inspection with a lot of fellows of our class. I want to actually belong to the battleship myself – I don't want to be just a visitor."

"How about firing the big guns?" asked Ned.

“Yes, I’d want that, too! Oh, say, but what’s the use of talking about it?”

“None, I guess.”

But had Frank and Ned only known it, they were nearer to their hearts’ desire than ever before.

“Oh, how wet you are!” exclaimed Mrs. Brun, the housekeeper, as the two brothers entered the house. “Why, you’re soaked!”

“Yes, we are a bit damp,” admitted Frank. He was putting it mildly, for the water was dripping from him and his brother in streams as they stood in the middle of the kitchen, having entered through the rear door with due consideration for the front hall rugs.

“Get your wet things off at once,” said Mrs. Brun, “and I’ll make you some hot tea.”

“Oh, we’re not cold,” Ned answered. He and Frank took off their coats and shoes, and the housekeeper took charge of their garments while they hurried to their room to change to dry things.

“Your uncle has been asking for you,” Mrs. Brun called to them as they went upstairs.

“We’ll see him in a few minutes,” Frank called back.

A little later, dry and comfortable, they went to the library. They found their uncle pacing up and down the room, evidently in a highly nervous and excited state. He glanced up as they entered, and exclaimed:

“Boys, I am quite worried!”

“Worried about us?” asked Frank. “Why, we were out in the dory. It was a bad storm, but – ”

“No, I wasn’t worried about you. I felt you could take care of yourselves. But, at the same time, I am glad you have returned safely. No, I am worried about other matters. Boys, I have a confession to make to you.”

“A confession, Uncle Philip?” repeated Frank.

“Yes. I had rather you heard the truth from me, than to get a garbled account from some one else, as you are sure to do sooner or later. Boys, I am likely to be taken away at any moment by the authorities!”

“Uncle Philip!”

“Oh, don’t look so alarmed,” and he smiled at their blank faces. “It isn’t for anything disgraceful, nor on a criminal charge.”

“But what other charge can they arrest you on?” Frank demanded.

“On a political charge.”

“They don’t do such things in this country!” cried Ned.

“The charge doesn’t come from this country, boys. Sit down and I’ll tell you as much of it as you need to know.”

CHAPTER III – UNDER ARREST

Mr. Arden ceased his pacing up and down the library, and taking up a bundle of papers from a table – papers that seemed fairly to bristle with red seals – he sat down in an easy chair. But he was anything but at ease himself.

“Boys,” he began, while Ned and Frank wondered what was in store for them, “there is no need of going into too many details, or in saying I am sorry for what has happened. I am more sorry than I can ever tell you, for it looks as though I had betrayed the trust my dead brother left to me – the trust of bringing up you boys as he would have done himself had he lived.” As he spoke tears came into Mr. Arden’s eyes.

“Don’t worry,” said Ned, warmly. “Whatever you have done, Uncle Phil, we know it was done with the best intentions.”

“That’s right!” chimed in Frank.

“Well, it’s good to hear you say that, for others might judge me more harshly,” went on the importer. “And I really acted from the best motives and for your interests. I may have made a mistake – I don’t claim to be infallible – but I intended no wrong.

“And now, boys, for the worst of it. It may happen that at any moment your fortunes, as well as mine, will be wiped out – lost.”

“Lost!” echoed Frank.

“All our money?” added Ned.

“Yes. There is no use concealing anything,” their uncle said.

“All our fortunes are in jeopardy and may be swept away if the political situation in Uridio does not clear up.”

“Uridio! Where is that?” asked Frank.

“It is a small South American republic,” was the answer. “There was trouble some years ago in one of the many states that go to make up Brazil. Some of the inhabitants set up a sort of independent government under a new political leader. Then another man had ambitions to become president of the same little republic, and he organized an army and took control.

“The republic is really too small for Brazil to worry about, and that is why the affair never created much of a stir, at least up in this part of the world.”

“But how are you – or we – interested in Uridio?” asked Frank.

“Because your money and mine is tied up there in certain concessions,” said Mr. Arden.

“But I thought our fortunes were invested in father’s importing business,” said Frank.

“They were. But the importing business has changed greatly of late years. There is not so much money in it as there used to be. I saw that situation arising, and gradually I curtailed the business. Then I became interested in this South American republic of Uridio. It has great natural resources and varied products, and, best of all, it touches the sea coast, so we can ship direct, though the harbor is a miserable one, and unsafe in stormy weather. But still it was profitable to do business there. At least until recently.”

“And what happened recently?” asked Ned.

“Well, it seems there was another change of government down there. Another man wanted to be king, or president, or whatever they call themselves, so he started a revolt, and there was a small revolution.”

“Say, that sounds like a story from a book!” exclaimed Ned, his eyes sparkling. He did not seem to think of his lost fortune.

“I wish it were just a story in a book,” went on his uncle ruefully. “The trouble is it is all too true. Now to resume: When this revolution came my interests happened to be partly with the losing side. I had many concessions and rights to trade and do business from the man who lost out.

“Mind you!” said Mr. Arden, earnestly, “I have nothing to do with the politics down there. I’d never risk your money or my own in a political game. It was straight business with me, buying and selling. But the trouble was I had to do business with one side or the other, and luck has turned against me. I am with the losing party.”

“But maybe fortune will turn,” said Frank. “And if you do lose our money – and yours – why it might have happened in the importing trade.”

“Yes,” admitted his uncle, smiling a little at the lad’s optimism. At nineteen several fortunes may be won and lost, at least so a strong, healthy lad may think. “Yes,” went on Mr. Arden, “I might have lost all our money in some other venture, but I didn’t. I chose to take chances in this South American republic, and I suppose I should not have done so.”

“But where does the arrest come in?” asked Ned. “I can’t see that losing your money, or ours for that matter, is any reason why you should be arrested. It’s our own affair. Of course, it isn’t going to be any fun to lose money. I don’t think that for a minute. But we have our health.”

“And our motor boat,” added Frank. “They wouldn’t take that, I suppose?” he added, a bit apprehensively.

“No, I don’t suppose they’d take that,” his uncle replied, “though you may not have money enough to buy gasoline.”

“We can take out fishing and excursion parties, and make money that way,” laughed Ned. Really it did not seem so bad as it had at first.

“I guess you won’t have to do that right away,” said Mr. Arden. “Though if the money goes, all will be wiped out and we’ll lose everything – including this house.”

The boys rather gasped at that. It was the only home they had ever known.

“But you haven’t yet told us why they can take you away,” insisted Frank.

“I’ll tell you directly. It seems that the political party in power in Uridio has accused me of having furnished arms and munitions of war to their enemies, the revolutionists. It is a political trick, but I am not, at present, able to prove my innocence.”

“Did you help take part in a real revolution?” asked Ned. “If you did – say – cracky! Why didn’t you tell us?” His eyes sparkled.

“No, I had no part in the revolution, either actually or in furnishing money or arms,” said his uncle. “I was simply doing business with the revolutionary party – buying and selling goods and trying to make an honest living. But for some reasons of their own, the political tricksters down there are making trouble for me.

“It seems that the property of some United States citizens was damaged in some recent fighting, and they have demanded money satisfaction. Our government has taken up their claims, and they look to me to settle the loss.”

“Why to you?” asked Frank.

“Because it is falsely asserted that I financed the revolution. It is all pretty complicated, and I don’t expect you boys to understand it all. But the pith of the matter is right here. The United States citizens who have suffered losses in Uridio are trying to make me pay. To do so would take all your money and mine that is invested down in the South American republic, and we would be ruined.”

“And if you fight the claim?” asked Ned.

“I have fought the claim, but witnesses were suborned and I cannot prove that I was in no way responsible.”

Frank whistled.

“It looks serious,” he said.

“It is serious!” declared his uncle. “I have been served with legal notices, and the time limit is almost up. I must either settle or go to jail.”

“Jail?” cried Frank, stung by the word.

“Well, that’s what many persons would call it,” said his uncle, with a grim smile. “Really, it will be a federal prison, for it is the United States federal authorities who are acting against me. I won’t actually be locked up in a cell, I suppose, nor set to breaking stone, and I may not have to wear stripes. You see it is a sort of political business accusation against me.”

“But why do you have to go to jail, or to a federal prison, at all?” asked Ned. “Can’t you be bailed?”

“Too late for that after conviction. What I need now is money to continue the fight.”

“Use your own money – or ours!” cried Frank, eagerly. Both lads loved their uncle almost as a father.

“The trouble is that your money and mine will be attached – held in escrow, I believe they call it – to settle for these damages in case I can not prove my innocence of having financed a revolution,” Mr. Arden declared. “So with our money tied up that way, none will be available, and I’ll have to be – well, let us call it detained – for years,” and once more he smiled grimly.

Ned and Frank did not know what to think. They asked their uncle many questions, and he answered them as best he could; but they did not understand all the details.

“As near as I can figure out,” said Frank, when he and his brother went up to their rooms just before supper, “Uncle Phil is accused of starting a revolution, which he didn’t. And in the revolution some damage was done that must be paid for, and

they're looking to him to put up the money. If he doesn't they'll lock him up, and put his money in their own strong boxes, where he can't use it to fight the case further."

"That's about the way it sizes up," agreed Ned.

"Well, what's the next move?" asked his brother.

"Hanged if I know," said Ned. "I can't think of anything. And I haven't got any too much cash on hand," he added, as he went over to a box on his bureau, where he kept his money.

"It sure is a queer situation," conceded Frank. "If we were only on a battleship now, we could go down to that little measly one-horse South American republic, unlimber our big guns and tell 'em to fork over our money, and dig up evidence to clear Uncle Phil, or we'd shoot!"

"Yes," sighed Ned, "we might do that. But the chances of our getting on a battleship are about a thousand to one."

If he had only known what was coming!

After supper the boys had another talk with their uncle, and he showed them some of the legal papers that had been served on him that day just before they came in out of the rain.

"How long before you may be confined?" asked Frank.

"Three days," was the answer. "But I'm going to try and stave it off."

It was a vain attempt, however. Three days later, when the storm had cleared, the boys came in from a fishing trip and found Mrs. Brun weeping, and the servants very much upset.

"What has happened?" demanded Frank of the housekeeper.

“Your dear – uncle – they came and took him away,” she sobbed.

“Took him away! Who?”

“I don’t know. But he told me to tell you he was under arrest, and that you would understand.”

“Under arrest!” exclaimed Frank, and as Ned echoed the words the brothers looked apprehensively at each other.

CHAPTER IV – SHIFTING FOR THEMSELVES

Gradually, from the very much upset housekeeper and from the servants, Ned and Frank obtained an account of what had happened. Their uncle, who had been busily engaged in the intervening days in trying to straighten matters out, had arrived from New York in the early afternoon.

He had been busy in the library over papers and documents, when two strangers called and spent some time with him. There were loud words, the housekeeper said, and then Mr. Arden had come out, accompanied by the two men.

“He told me to tell you,” Mrs. Brun said, “that they were taking him to Atlanta.”

“Atlanta!” exclaimed Ned.

“There is a federal prison there,” said Frank. “Well, what happened next?” he asked the housekeeper.

“Your uncle begged and pleaded for time, saying he wanted to see you, and tell you of certain matters. But the men – they must have been detectives I guess – ”

“Probably secret service men,” interrupted Frank. “But go on, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Brun.”

“They took him away,” said the housekeeper. “That’s all there was to it. They said there was a train they could get from New

York to-night, and they hurried off. Your uncle only had time to pack a suit case of clothes, and they took him away. And what's to become of all of us, or who's to look after things, I don't know!" she sobbed.

"Well, there's no use worrying," said Frank. "I'll go to see Mr. Thursby. He's a lawyer, and Uncle Phil has consulted him on some matters. He can tell us what to do. If worst comes to worst we'll let this house, get rent for it, and shift for ourselves. You can easily get a place," he said to the housekeeper, "and so can the other servants, probably."

"Oh, yes. It isn't about that I'm worrying," she announced, drying her eyes; "it's you poor boys! What will you do without a home?"

"Without a home?" exclaimed Ned. "Why, won't we have this place?"

"Oh, no, Ned, dear!" cried Mrs. Brun, who was very like a mother to the boys. "Your uncle said this house was attached also, and that you couldn't stay here. I don't know what you are going to do. You can't rent it and use the money, either."

"Well, we'll just have to shift for ourselves, that's all," said Frank, with assumed cheerfulness. "It might be worse! We'll make out somehow, eh, Ned?"

"Oh, I guess. But say, this is sudden, all right!"

"Sudden isn't any name for it," commented Frank. "I wonder what we had really better do? I'll have a talk with the lawyer."

"Do you imagine we can stay here to-night?" asked Ned.

"I don't see why not," his brother answered. "At least I don't see any one around to put us out."

"It won't be as sudden as that," Mrs. Brun informed them. "Your uncle said it would be a week before you would have to leave here, and perhaps not then, if he could get matters straightened out."

"Well, then let's have supper," proposed Ned. "The secret service men didn't take away all the victuals, did they?"

"Oh, no; there's plenty to eat," the housekeeper said. "That is, if any one has the heart to eat."

"Well, I feel bad enough about uncle's trouble, as far as that goes," observed Frank, "but there's no use in starving. Besides, we must keep up our strength. There'll be plenty to do from now on."

"I'm with you!" agreed his brother. "I don't know just what we can do, but we'll do our best, anyhow."

The household was upset, naturally, but Mrs. Brun managed to put a meal on the table. In the evening the two boys went to see the local lawyer.

He could give them little satisfaction, however, as he knew hardly anything about Mr. Ardens affairs. He said, though, that he would do what he could to aid the boys in case further legal proceedings were taken against them or their uncle.

And there was need of his help, for the next day formal notice was served of the attachment of the Arden property for the benefit of the persons in the South American republic.

“But what does it mean?” asked Frank, when a copy of the papers had been left at the house and a surly man put in charge.

“It means that I’m in possession,” was the answer. “The property has been seized, and will be held for the benefit of the damaged parties.”

“Can’t we stay here?” asked Ned.

“Don’t see how you can very well,” was the answer. “I don’t want to be mean, boys, but orders is orders. If you’ve got any way of living I don’t object to your staying in the house. It won’t hurt it any, I guess. But how are you going to live?”

“That’s so,” conceded Frank. “There’ll not be any money coming in with our uncle away. Our money is tied up, as is his. Have you got much, Ned?”

“A few dollars.”

“That’s the way with me. We’d better go to see that lawyer. Maybe he can fix things up.”

But the legal representative was unable to do anything. The attachment was perfectly legal he said, and the boys were practically ousted. The servants took alarm at the first warning, and left to look for other situations. Mr. Arden had anticipated something like this though, and had paid them up to the end of the month, as he had the housekeeper.

“I don’t like to leave you boys,” said Mrs. Brun, tearfully, “but what can I do? There will be nothing for me to do with that sheriff’s officer in charge. Soon there will be nothing left to cook, and if you have no money – ”

"It is better that you should go," agreed Frank. "And we'll go too, Ned."

"Go! Where can we go?"

"That's what we've got to figure out. I don't see any sense in staying here, though. We can't make a living here."

"What about taking out parties in our motor boat?"

"I don't believe that would work. I think we'd better sell her and use the money."

"What! Sell that dory?"

"Well, if our fortune is gone we can't run her, and if our fortune isn't lost, we can buy another later. I say, let's get together all the cash we can and shift for ourselves."

"Where shall we go?"

"New York!" exclaimed Frank. "That's the place of opportunities. And say, Ned, I've got a scheme!" and his eyes twinkled.

"What is it?" asked the younger brother.

"Tell you later," was the answer. "If it works we may be able to see Uncle Phil again soon."

"I'm with you on anything like that!" Ned cried.

There being nothing else for them to do under the peculiar and strange circumstances, the two boys prepared to shift for themselves.

CHAPTER V – IN NEW YORK

Events now began to move rapidly for our two heroes, thus left to their own resources, and at an age when they were not very well fitted to battle with the world. And they were all the more unfitted on account of the life they had previously led.

They had always been well supplied with money, and they had never had to worry about where the next meal was coming from, nor to consider what they should wear. They gave orders to their tailor for suits, and their uncle, as a generous father might have done, footed the bills. It was the same way with their college expenses.

“But I guess this is the end of college,” remarked Frank, as he and his brother were each packing a small valise.

“It looks like it,” Ned agreed. “Yet, maybe it will do us good to shift for ourselves.”

“I’m not worrying about it,” was the response of the other. “We have the best part of the summer before us and something will surely turn up before then. Besides, we’ll get work in New York, I’m sure of that.”

“I guess so,” asserted Ned, with the easy assurance of happy, healthy youth.

The boys had carried out the plan so hastily decided on. They had consulted with their friend, the lawyer, and he had advised it. They had also written to their uncle and received a reply. He

advised them not to lose all hope of some day getting back their fortunes, but he admitted that the outlook was not at all bright.

“Matters down in that South American republic are more and more complicated,” he wrote. “They are accusing me of all sorts of things, such as stirring up revolutions, and supplying arms to the enemies of the government. I tell you this so you will be able to discount any stories you may read of me.

“I think your plan of going to New York, and trying for work is a good one. Certainly there will be more opportunities than in Ipswich. But take good care of yourselves. I can do nothing for you, and I can only say, over and over again, how much I regret investing your money as I did, with my own. But at the time, it seemed perfectly safe, and it would have been but for treachery. I was betrayed, and if I could get the evidence I could prove it, and regain our money. But that is too much to hope.”

“Yes, I suppose so,” sighed Frank.

Following the receipt of this letter the two boys sold their motor boat, and with the money thus received, and with a small supply they had on hand, they laid their plans.

The dear old house was closed, save for one room where the legal officer in possession remained, “camping out,” as he expressed it. He was to stay until the property was sold for the benefit of those who claimed damages from Mr. Arden. But the sale could not take place for some time, as there were law technicalities to be observed.

The servants left, bidding good-bye to the lads. And there were tears in the eyes of good Mrs. Brun, as well as in the eyes of Ned and Frank, as she said farewell.

Their best possessions, which could not legally be included in the seizure, the boys stored with friends in town. Then they selected the most useful of their clothes, and packed them in valises for the trip to New York.

"We've got enough to live on for a few weeks, while looking for work," said Frank, as he looked at the roll of bills which meant so much to them now.

"That is if we don't try to live very high," agreed Ned, with a smile. "No expensive hotels or taxicab rides for us."

"Not much!"

So one warm June morning Frank and Ned set out for the station of the Long Island Railroad, and took a train for the metropolis.

"Some change in our prospects from what we looked forward to a couple of weeks ago," remarked Ned, as he settled in his seat.

"That's right. I'm going to miss that motor boat a whole lot; aren't you?" Frank asked.

"Don't speak of it," and Ned's voice was a trifle husky. "Remember how we were out in that storm?"

"I should say so! That's the day uncle got the bad news."

"Yes. And that's the day we saw the battleship plowing along the big waves, and had an idea we might get on one. Well, I guess that idea has gone overboard and is in Davy Jones' locker by this

time.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Frank, with a somewhat mysterious air.

“What do you mean?” asked Ned, quickly, as the train gathered speed.

“Tell you later,” his brother responded. “I’ve got an idea in my head, that isn’t altogether worked out.”

“Well, don’t crowd yourself too hard,” and Ned laughed.

Really, they were in better spirits than they ever hoped to be after they had heard the bad news. But youthful spirits are very elastic, and easily bound back after being depressed. Which is a very good thing.

Ned and Frank were familiar with New York, as they spent a great part of their time there when college was in session. So it was no novelty to them to enter the metropolis. Their thoughts were busy with various matters as the train speeded along over the flat and not very interesting Long Island plains.

At Jamaica an electric locomotive replaced the steam one, and they were soon shooting along through the East River tunnel, swallowing rapidly to overcome the pressure on the ear drums caused by the low level and the air compression in the big tube.

“Well, I’m glad that’s over,” Frank said, as they ran into the big Pennsylvania Station at Seventh Avenue and Thirty-third Street.

“In little old New York once more!” remarked Ned. “What’s the first thing on the programme, captain? I’m going to let you lead this expedition as long as you behave yourself.”

“Oh, I’ll do that,” promised Frank. “I should say the first thing was to look for a stopping place, and then get some dinner. It will soon be noon.”

“I’m with you. Oh, say, while we’re at it, let’s pay a visit to the aquarium at Battery Park. I was reading about some new big fish from Bermuda they’ve just put in the tanks, and I want to see them.”

“We’ll have plenty of time to see the sights of New York; don’t fret yourself about that,” said his brother, with a laugh. “We aren’t going to get jobs right away, unless this turns out more of a fairy story than any I’ve read.”

“I’m not worrying,” was the answer. “But come on, let’s take in the aquarium.”

“All right. But first let’s check our grips in the station. No use carting them around with us,” said Frank.

This done, they took an elevated train for lower New York, and soon were at the entrance to the aquarium, which is located in old Castle Garden, once the landing place of immigrants, before the Ellis Island station was established.

CHAPTER VI – ROBBED

“Now for that big fish of yours – where is it?” asked Frank of his brother, as they prepared to enter the circular building which forms one of the finest educational features of New York.

“We’ll find it when we get inside,” was the answer. “It’s a porpoise, and the accounts of it in the papers said it cut up all manner of tricks. Porpoises are very playful, you know.”

“I thought it was a dolphin,” Frank remarked.

“Well, maybe dolphins are playful, too, but this is a porpoise I want to see.”

“A ham sandwich and a cup of coffee would be more in my line,” was the other’s comment. “Don’t be too long at this fishing game, Ned.”

“I won’t. Then we can come out and get a bite. There are plenty of restaurants around here.”

Together they entered the aquarium, and were soon gazing with interested eyes at the porpoise, which was kept in one of the large central tanks. Around the walls of the place were other tanks, with the light coming in from the top in such a way that the fish were plainly visible. There was a new exhibit of fishes from Bermudian waters, and looking at them after having watched the porpoise for some time, Ned remarked:

“Well, Frank, if we are ever lucky enough to get on a battleship that’s sent to Bermuda, I suppose we’ll see such fish as these in

their native waters.”

“Yes, it would be great!” agreed Frank, and as he spoke he noticed that a man standing near him and his brother looked at them in a peculiar and sharp manner. Frank did not like the looks of the fellow, and he was even less pleased when the man moved a little nearer and addressed them.

“Are you lads from some ship?” he asked. “If you are, shake! I’m from the *Kentucky* myself, on shore leave, and it does my heart good to meet a couple of the boys in blue. What’s your berth?”

“We haven’t any,” Frank said, hoping to pass the matter off lightly and leave the man, for he did not like his face or manner.

“Excuse me,” the fellow went on, “but I thought I heard youse say something about a battleship – ”

“Oh, that was just talk,” broke in Ned, more open and ingenuous than his brother. “We’ve been talking of getting on a battleship for some time, but I don’t suppose we ever shall.”

“Well, it’s a great life, believe me!” exclaimed the man. “I’ve put in eight years of it. Hard work, but lots of fun, too. I’ve seen these fish swimming around so thick that you’d think there wasn’t enough water for ’em,” and he waved his hand – not a very clean hand, Frank thought – toward a tank of angel fish.

“Have you been in Bermuda?” asked Ned, eagerly.

“Lots of times,” boasted the other. “Two or three times the ships I was on were sent there on cruises. It’s a great life. Are you boys stopping in New York?”

“For a while, yes,” assented Frank, not wishing to give too much information about themselves to a stranger. He well knew the wiles of some of the unprincipled men of New York.

“I took you for strangers,” the fellow went on, and there came a queer gleam in his eyes.

“We’re Columbia students,” put in Ned, who was very proud of the fact. And then, like a pang, it came to him, that he and his brother would have to give up their places at the university. No longer would they be able to keep on with their studies there. Well, there was no use in vain regrets.

“I thought youse looked like college boys,” went on the man who claimed to be a sailor. “But what’s the trouble? Flunked in your studies that you want to get on a battleship? You can’t be officers first crack after you enlist, you know.”

“Oh, that talk of battleships didn’t amount to anything,” Frank said, wishing the fellow would take himself off. “And we don’t expect to be officers. Ned, come along,” he said, “it’s time we were going.”

They started for the exit, but their new acquaintance persisted in following them. And when Ned, who was an ardent fisherman, stopped at another tank, the stranger halted also.

“I wouldn’t like one of those chaps to get after me,” the man said, indicating two big green morays. The eel-like fish were swimming about and tearing to shreds a smaller fish that had been put into their tank for food.

“They are fierce,” agreed Ned, pressing close to the tank.

“And they’ll attack a man, too,” went on the sailor. “I knowed a feller once – he was on the same ship with me – he went swimming overboard when we was in the tropics, though he was told not to on account of sharks and these morays; but he did, and he got his all right.”

“How?” asked Frank, interested in spite of himself.

“He was all chawed up. We just managed to get him out of the water alive. If youse go on a battleship, look out about swimming over the side when you’re in tropical waters.”

“I guess there isn’t much chance for us,” remarked Frank. “Come, Ned,” he went on, “we really must be going!”

At that moment another man came up, evidently in something of a hurry, and he pressed eagerly forward to look at the morays. He shoved against Frank with some force, and Frank, in turn, collided with the stranger who claimed to be from one of the United States battleships.

“Here, look where you’re shovin’ to!” the sailor called to the newcomer. “What do youse mean by bunkin’ inter my friend here in that way?”

The other did not answer for a moment, but looked the speaker over from head to foot, and an angry look came over his face.

“What’s gittin’ inter youse?” the second man demanded. “I didn’t step on your corns, did I?”

“No, but you shoved my friend here,” and the sailor indicated Frank, “and I won’t stand for anythin’ like that. Not for a minute, no sir!”

“Aw, ain’t your friend got a tongue of his own?” roughly demanded the newcomer. “I didn’t hear him kickin’ none!”

There was contempt in his tone, and anger also.

“It really doesn’t matter,” Frank said. “I have no doubt it was an accident.”

“Of course it was,” insisted the man who had offended. “Youse is a gentleman, youse is, an’ I apologizes.”

“Does that mean I ain’t no gentleman?” asked the sailor, in fierce tones.

“Youse kin take any meanin’ from it youse likes,” was the cool answer. The newcomer was about to walk away, when the sailor stepped up to him quickly, fairly crowding Ned and Frank together to do so, and he grasped the shoulder of the fellow who had apologized to Frank.

“I’ll show youse who’s a gentleman!” cried the sailor. “You can’t insult me, nor bunk inter friends of mine!”

The two stood close together glaring at one another, with Ned and Frank between them. A crowd gathered in front of the moray tank.

“Come on, Ned, let’s get out of here!” whispered Frank into his brother’s ear. “There’ll be a fight in a minute, and we don’t want to be mixed up in it.”

The two belligerents separated for a moment, and the lads slipped out of the throng. As they did so an officer sauntered up.

“Here, youse! Cut out that rough stuff and beat it!” he said to the two quarrelsome men. The latter never so much as replied,

but quickly disappeared in the crowd. There was some laughter.

“One was afraid, and the other didn’t dare,” commented a man.

“Come on, now, don’t crowd,” advised the officer, and the throng thinned out, while Ned and Frank, glad they had escaped any unpleasantness, emerged into Battery Park again.

“Did you see enough?” asked Frank.

“Sure. Now I’m ready for the next thing on the programme. Say, that sailor was a friendly chap all right, wasn’t he?”

“Too friendly,” Frank said. “I didn’t want him to get into a fight on our account.”

“I should say not. But maybe he meant all right.”

“Well, I’m not so sure of that. What time have you? It must be nearly one o’clock.”

Ned reached toward his vest, where he carried his father’s gold watch. He had chosen that as a memento of his dead parent, Frank taking a peculiar old ring that he valued highly. But instead of pulling out the watch it was the empty chain that dangled from Ned’s hand.

“Why – why – ” he began, a blank look coming over his face. “Why, where’s dad’s watch? I never left it anywhere! I had it not an hour ago, when we went in there! Now it’s gone!”

Frank uttered an exclamation.

“You’ve been robbed, Ned!” he cried. “Those two fellows – I see it now! That was only a game! They – ”

He paused, and hurriedly reached into his inside coat pocket.

“They robbed me, too!” he exclaimed. “They’ve taken the pocketbook and all our money! Ned, we’ve been robbed!”

CHAPTER VII – “LETS ENLIST”

For a moment Ned stood staring at his brother as if he could not believe the words he heard. He remained holding the dangling chain, to which, only a short time before, his dead father's valuable gold watch had been attached.

“Robbed! Robbed!” murmured Ned, blankly.

“Exactly,” answered Frank. “Why, see, they twisted the end right off your chain! That's a regular pickpocket's trick. And as for my wallet – well, I ought to be kicked for letting them get away with it!”

“But who took it?” asked Ned.

“Those two men, of course. They were working together!”

“But they didn't know each other, Frank. Why, they were going to fight!”

“That was only their trick, Ned, to take our attention off what they were doing to us. It is an old trick. I ought to have known it. But they were good actors, and they got away with it. Oh, hang it all! How stupid I've been!”

“Not any more than I was, Frank. But it doesn't seem possible that those men were friends, after the way they talked to one another. They were so – ”

“Look!” suddenly exclaimed Frank. “Doesn't that look as if they were friends?”

He pointed across Battery Park, where, walking rapidly

toward the station of the elevated, were the same two men who had so nearly, apparently, come to blows in the aquarium. The men were walking along close together.

“They don’t seem very unfriendly now,” said Frank, bitterly.

Ned set off on the run toward them.

“Where are you going?” asked Frank.

“After those fellows! They shan’t get away with my watch and your money without a fight.”

“I’m with you!” cried Frank. “It’s as much your money as mine, though. I had it all together. Come on, we’ll see if we can catch ’em, but they’ve got the start of us.”

The two clever pickpockets had indeed an advantage. But Frank and Ned set off on the run, the younger lad crying loudly:

“Stop those fellows! Stop those men! They robbed us!”

His cry attracted considerable attention, and a crowd was soon following our heroes, for it does not take even such an exciting cry as “Stop thief!” to collect a throng in busy New York.

“Stop those fellows! Stop ’em!” yelled Ned.

“They’ve got our money!” added Frank.

By this time the thieves were aware of the commotion behind them. They had evidently anticipated pursuit, for at the sound of their victims’ cries, and at the sight of the crowd that had gathered to help in the chase, the two men separated.

Where one went Frank and Ned could not see, as a pillar of the elevated structure hid him from sight. But the other ran up the stairway, and Frank noticed, with despair, that a train was

just pulling into the station.

“He’ll get away on that,” thought Frank, “and the other will be lost in the crowd.”

And that was exactly what happened. When Frank and Ned, somewhat out of breath, reached the elevated structure neither of the men was in sight. But a policeman, attracted by the throng and the sight of the two excited boys, ran over from where he was standing in front of a steam-ship ticket office.

“What’s up?” he demanded, sharply.

“Pickpockets,” explained Frank briefly. “Two of ’em – they robbed my brother of his watch, and took my pocketbook – ”

“Any money in it?” snapped out the policeman, while the crowd pressed around to hear what was going on.

“Sure – all we had,” and Frank spoke a little bitterly.

“Where did it happen?”

“In the aquarium. The men ran over here. One went up to take the train. Maybe we can catch him.”

“Maybe,” agreed the officer. “We’ll have a try. Come on – sprint!”

He himself led the way up the elevated stairs, followed by Frank, Ned and some curious ones.

But the train had pulled out, and save for the ticket-chopper there was no one on the platform.

“Do you see him?” demanded the officer, rather needlessly.

“No,” answered Frank. “He’s gone all right. And I guess there’s no use chasing after the other one.”

"Give me a description of them," suggested the policeman, "and I'll report it. The detectives will do what they can, but I guess I needn't tell you there isn't much chance," went on the officer. He evidently regarded Frank and Ned as New York lads, and indeed they had the smart appearance of those who are familiar with the metropolis.

"No, I guess we can score that up to profit and loss," said Frank, gloomily.

"At any rate, give me your names and addresses," suggested the policeman. "I'll have to make a report of it to the station," and he took out notebook and pencil.

Most of the crowd had left the elevated station now, seeing no further chance for excitement, and standing on the platform, Frank gave an account of the affair, telling how, by the clever ruse of a pretended quarrel, the men had so engaged the attention of his brother and himself that they never noticed the trained and nimble fingers of the pickpockets taking the watch and money.

"Yes, it is an old trick," the policeman said. "It's often been worked before. I'll go back to the aquarium with you and see if any of the attendants noticed the two men, so I can get a description of them."

"One of the officers inside ordered them out when they seemed likely to fight," proffered Ned.

"I'll have a talk with him," decided the policeman. But he could get nothing more than a general description of the two thieves, and from that he did not recognize them as any well-

known criminals.

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