

Roy Rockwood

**Dave Fearless and the Cave of
Mystery: or, Adrift on the Pacific**



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Dave Fearless and the Cave of Mystery; or, Adrift on the Pacific

CHAPTER I SPLENDID FORTUNE

"It's gone! It's gone!"

"What is gone, Dave?"

"The treasure, Bob."

"But it was on board-in the boxes."

"No-those boxes are filled with old iron and lead. We have been tricked, robbed! After all our trouble, hardship, and peril, I fear that the golden reward we counted on so grandly has slipped from our grasp."

It was on the deck of the *Swallow*, moored in the harbor of a far-away Pacific Ocean tropical island, that Dave Fearless spoke. He had just rushed up from the cabin in a great state of excitement.

Below loud, anxious, and angry voices sounded. As one after another of the officers and sailors appeared on the deck, all of them looked pale and perturbed.

What might be called a terrific, an overwhelming discovery had just been made by Captain Paul Broadbeam and by Dave's father, Amos Fearless, the veteran ocean diver.

For two weeks, after a hard battle with the sea and its monsters, after fighting savages and piratical enemies, the beautiful steamer, the *Swallow*, had plowed through sun-tipped waves, favored by gentle breezes, homeward-bound.

Every heart on board had been light and happy. Labeled and sealed on the sandy floor of the ballast room, lay four boxes believed to contain over half a million dollars in gold coin.

Legally this vast treasure belonged to Amos and Dave Fearless, father and son. To those who had aided and protected them, however, from Doctor Barrell, on board the *Swallow* to make deep-sea soundings and secure specimens of rare marine monsters for the United States Government, down to Bob Vilett, Dave's chosen chum and the ambitious young assistant engineer of the vessel, every soul on board knew that when they reached San Francisco, the generous ocean diver and his son would make a most liberal division of the splendid fortune they had fished up in mid-ocean.

As said, the serenity of these fond hopes was now rudely blasted. Dave, rushing up on deck quite pale and agitated, had made the announcement that brought Bob to his feet with a shock.

They were two sturdy boys. The flavor of the briny deep was manifest in their bronzed faces, their attire, their clear bright eyes, and sinewy muscles. They had known hardship and peril such as make men resolute and brave. Although Dave was deeply distressed, determination rather than despair was indicated in the way in which he took the bad, bad news now being conveyed with lightning speed, mostly with depressing effect, all through the ship.

Bob Vilett steadied himself against a capstan and stared in silence at his chum. Dave's hand grasped the bow rail with an iron grip, as if thereby seeking to relieve his tense feelings. His eyes were directed away from Bob, away from the ship, fixedly, almost sternly, scanning the ocean stretch that spread almost inimitably towards the west. It seemed as if mentally he was going back over the long course they had just pursued, never dreaming that they were carrying a ballast of worthless old junk instead of the royal fortune on which they had fondly counted.

"Well, all I've got to say," observed Bob at length, with a great sigh, "is that it's pretty tough."

"I fancy," responded Dave, in a set, thoughtful way, "it's a case of three times and out. We fished it up-one. We've lost it-two. We must find it again-three. That's all."

"You're dreaming!" vociferated Bob. "Say, Dave Fearless, you're a genius and a worker, but if you mean that there is the least hope in the world in going back over a course of over a thousand miles hunting up men with a two weeks' start of us-desperate men, too-scouring a trackless ocean for fellows who have to hide, and know how to do it, why, it's-bosh!"

"Bob Vilett," said Dave, with set lip and unflinching eye, "we are only boys, but we have tried to act like men, and Captain Broadbeam respects us for it. We have his confidence. He is old, not much of a thinker, but brave as a lion and ready for any honest, logical suggestion. Here's a dilemma, a big one. You and I-young, quick, ardent-we must think for him. We have been robbed. We must catch the thieves. We must recover that treasure. Where's the best and surest, and the quickest way to do it? Put on your thinking-cap, Bob, and try and do some of the hardest brain work of your life."

"Hold on-where are you going?" demanded Bob, as his chum went away over into a remote corner of the bow and sat down on an isolated water barrel.

But Dave only waved his hand peremptorily, almost irritably, at Bob. His chum knew that it would be useless to renew the conversation just now. He had seen Dave in just such a mood on other occasions-it was when affairs were going wrong and needed straightening out.

"All right," murmured Bob resignedly, moving over to where some glum-faced sailors were discussing the disappointment of the hour in a group. "It won't hurt any of us to have Dave Fearless do some of that tall thinking of his. Oh, dear! All that money gone. And after all we went through to get it!"

Meanwhile Dave Fearless sat posed like a statue. His gaze was fixed beyond the little inlet where the *Swallow* was moored, straight across the unbroken ocean stretch. His thoughts just then, however, were not fixed on the west, but rather on the east. A vivid panorama of his stirring adventures of the past few months seemed spread out to his mental eye. They went back to the start of what the present moment seemed to be the finish.

Dave's home was at Quanaack, along the coast of Long Island Sound. There for many years his father had been an expert master diver, and Dave himself, reared beside the sea and loving it, had done service as a lighthouse assistant.

In the first volume of the present series, entitled "The Rival Ocean Divers," it was told how they one day learned that they were direct heirs of the Washington family, who twenty years previous had acquired a fortune of nearly a million dollars in China. This, all in gold coin, had been shipped in the *Happy Hour* for San Francisco. A storm overtook the vessel, which sunk in two miles of water in mid-ocean with the treasure aboard.

Amos Fearless secured a chart showing the exact location of the wreck. Unfortunately two distant relatives, a miserly trickster named Lem Hankers and his worthless son, Bart, learned of the sunken treasure, too. They proceeded to San Francisco and were joined by a rascally partner named Pete Rackley. The trio chartered from a wrecking company the *Raven*, Captain Nesik in command, and engaged a professional diver named Cal Vixen.

The Fearlesses, learning of this, hastened their plans. An old friend of the diver, Captain Broadbeam, was just then starting out with the *Swallow*, to convey a well-known scientist from Washington to mid-ocean. The *Swallow* was equipped with the finest diving bells and apparatus for capturing and preserving rare monsters of the deep. Broadbeam agreed to incidentally assist Amos Fearless in the search for the sunken treasure.

The rival divers located this at about the same time. Thrilling experiences followed, terrific battles with submarine monsters, hair-breadth perils on the ocean bed. The Hankers and their diver after several efforts gave up the quest. Dave and his father stuck at it until one day they located the hull of the *Happy Hour*. Bag after bag of gold they stored in their Costell diving bell, until all the treasure was conveyed safely to the hold of the *Swallow*. Then they set sail for home.

Pete Rackley had managed to secrete himself aboard. He disabled the machinery of the *Swallow*. This was the starting-point of a new series of adventures as related in our second volume, "The Cruise of the Treasure Ship."

It now became plot and warfare on the part of the disgruntled Hankers and their friends. The result was that one dark and foggy night the schemers succeeded in stealing aboard of the *Swallow*. Captain Broadbeam, Bob Vilett, Doctor Barrell, and the Fearlesses were put ashore on a lonely island, and the *Raven* steamed away with the captured convoy.

A sixth person was also marooned. This was one Pat Stoodles, a whimsical Irishman, who had been previously rescued by the *Swallow* from this same island, where for several years he had been the king of its savage inhabitants.

"The Cruise of the Treasure Ship" has told graphically of the many adventures of the marooned. Stoodles reassumed his kingship temporarily and helped his friends out of many a sore dilemma. A cyclone and an earthquake drove all hands to a neighboring island. Finally Dave and Bob discovered the *Swallow*, somewhat dismantled, lying off the coast of the island. They boarded her to find Mr. Drake, the boatswain, Mike Connors, the cook, and Ben Adams, the engineer, handcuffed in the cabin. These men had refused to navigate the *Swallow* for Captain Nesik. They told how the cyclone had parted the two vessels and the *Swallow* had been driven to her present isolated moorings. They told also of the four boxes into which they had seen the Hankers place the sunken treasure.

For a second time, believing their enemies and the *Raven* lost in the storm, the Fearless party started homeward. Incidentally they had enabled a worthy young fellow named Henry Dale to earn a large sum by towing with them a lost derelict ship. This they had turned over to an ocean liner they met. Then, the *Swallow* needing some repairs, they had headed for Minotaur Island, their present port of moorage.

This island had originally belonged to the government of Chili. Just now, however, it was claimed by Peru, and was also in a certain state of rebellion. The governor was a miserly and tricky individual, and had demanded a large sum from Captain Broadbeam before he would let him moor the *Swallow*.

He sent out as pilot a wretched, drunken fellow, who ran the *Swallow* into an obscure creek where she struck some obstacle, tearing a hole in her hull.

Thus disabled, Captain Broadbeam found it necessary to shift the various articles in the hold. The four sealed boxes were removed, and Amos Fearless naturally suggested that they take a look at their golden fortune.

Ten minutes later the startling discovery was made which has been recorded in the opening lines of the present chapter-

The great Washington fortune was not, as had all along been supposed, aboard of the *Swallow*.

CHAPTER II

FOUL PLAY

Captain Paul Broadbeam came up on deck, his face red as a peony, his brow dark as a thundercloud.

He was manifestly irritated. In his great foghorn bass voice he gave out a dozen quick orders. His evident intention was to break up the little groups discussing the happening of the hour.

"Avast there!" he roared to a special set of four seamen they had taken on at Mercury Island a week previous. "No mutinous confabs allowed here. If you expected something never promised, that's your lookout. Those that can't be satisfied with plain square wages can take their kits ashore."

Amos Fearless had followed the captain from the cabin. The veteran ocean diver looked greatly disappointed and distressed. He made out Dave and went over to where he sat.

"Well, my son," he said, disturbing Dave's deep reverie by placing a trembling hand on his shoulder, "this is a bad piece of news."

"Yes, father," replied Dave gravely.

"We've been big fools," continued Amos Fearless, with a sigh and a dejected shake of his head. "Might better have kept to our sure pay back at Quanaack. We are only humble folk, Dave, and should have been satisfied with our lot. Might have known million-dollar fortunes don't come falling on such as we, except in story-books."

"Wrong, father!" said Dave sharply. "I don't look at it that way at all. We are the legal Washington heirs, and had a right to expect what was our due. It was a clear-cut, honest piece of business."

"Well, it's turned out worse than nothing for us."

"I don't see that, either," observed Dave. "We went at the matter right. We located the sunken treasure. Someone has stolen it. Surely, father, you don't mean to tell me that you will fold your hands meekly and make no effort to recover the fortune we have worked so hard for? Why, father," declared Dave, with spirit, "all we may have to go through can't begin to be as difficult and dangerous as what we have already accomplished. It looks simple and plain to me—our duty."

"Does it now?" murmured the old diver in a thoughtful way.

"Yes. Someone stole that treasure, and of course it was the Hankers and Captain Nesik and that crew of rascals. Well, father, they can't spend it on a desert island in mid-ocean, can they?"

"Why, I suppose not," said the diver.

"Certainly not. They will try to get back to civilization. Now I have been thinking out the whole matter. Mr. Drake, our boatswain, saw the Hankers make a great show of putting the gold into the four wooden boxes. Now we find out that this was just a pretense to deceive the crew of the *Raven*. Later, of course, they secretly removed it. To where, father? To the *Raven*? If so, they ran into a bad predicament. From what the Island Windjammers told Pat Stoodles the last they saw of the *Raven* she was scudding along in the cyclone, completely disabled. If she stranded, of course they hurried out the treasure before she sank. Then it is hidden somewhere among those islands where we had our hard fight for existence. The survivors are either waiting there hoping some ship will stray their way, or they fixed up the *Raven* and are making for the South American coast."

"That's a pretty long talk, but a sensible one, Dave," said the old diver, brightening up a good deal. "Go ahead, my son—supposing all this?"

"Yes, father," said Dave, "supposing all this."

"Well, what then?"

"Why, the next thing is to prove I am right or partly right. We must go back to the Windjammers' Island and hunt for a trace of the *Raven*. Stoodles can make his old subjects, the natives, tell what

they know. If we find that the *Raven* was not wrecked and has made for the South American coast, then we must put right after them."

"Dave, you give me a good deal of courage," said Amos Fearless-"you make me ashamed of my despair. I'm old, though, you see, and this is a big disappointment."

"Don't you fret, father. I feel certain that prompt work will soon put us on the track of the treasure."

"I'll speak to Captain Broadbeam right away," said the old diver, and Dave was pleased to see how nimbly his father started off, encouraged and hopeful from the little talk he had given him.

Bob Vilett had been watching Dave all this time. The young diver did not sit meditating any longer. He had thought out what had to be done. Now he must decide how to do it. He paced up and down with smart steps. Bob started to rejoin him. There was an interruption.

A man half-dressed, one boot on and carrying the other in his hand, came banging up the cabin steps.

"Bad cess to it! Begorra! Who tuk it-who tuk it?" he shouted.

This was Pat Stoodles. He seemed to have just awakened and to have learned of the astounding discovery of the hour. Making out Dave, who was a great favorite with him, Stoodles sprinted with his long limbs across the deck.

"Wirra, now, me broth of a boy, tell me it's false!" implored Pat.

"If you mean that we've got four boxes of junk aboard instead of gold," said Dave, "unfortunately it's true."

"Acushla! luk at that now," groaned Stoodles, throwing up his hands in sheer dismay. "And I was to have had a thousand dollars."

"More than that, Mr. Stoodles," answered Dave. "You have been one of our good loyal friends, and my father has often planned starting you in a nice paying business, had we reached San Francisco with the treasure."

"Hear that, now!" cried Stoodles. "Didn't I write that same thing to my brother in New York? Didn't I tell him I'd be home, loaded down with gold? I sent the letter from Mercury Island. And now I must write him again, telling him it was all a poor foolish old fellow's dream. All I've got is my losht dignity as king of the Windjammers."

Poor Stoodles tore his sparse hair and looked the picture of gloom and discontent.

"I'll write to my brother at once," he resumed. "Have you a postage stamp to spare, Dave?"

"They use the Chilian stamps here, I believe," replied Dave. "You will have to go to the town to get one, Mr. Stoodles."

"I can accommodate you," spoke a brisk, pleasant voice promptly.

All hands turned sharply to view the speaker. Dave, in some surprise, saw a bronzed bright-faced young man coming up a rope ladder swung over the side of the *Swallow*.

Dave had never seen him before. The newcomer had rowed up the creek in a skiff. Looking down into this, Dave saw an artist's sketching outfit, also a camera.

"Excuse me," said this newcomer, "if I am intruding here. I am a traveling artist out for health and views. Thought I'd take a picture of your ship, if you don't object."

"Not in the least," answered Dave courteously, although the request came at a time when his thoughts were absorbed with more important matters.

"And again," said the young fellow, "I wanted to see some home faces and hear home voices. My name is Adair. I live in Vermont. By the way, though," he continued to Stoodles, taking out a wallet, "you asked for a postage stamp, I believe?"

The speaker ran over the compartments in the wallet. A stray gust of wind caught a little paper fragment it held, blew it up into the air, and Stoodles caught it just as it was being carried over the rail into the water.

"Good," said Adair gratefully. "I wouldn't like to lose that, I can tell you."

"A postage stamp, too, isn't it?" asked Stoodles, looking at it.

"Yes," nodded Adair, "and a pretty valuable one. You see it is canceled and ragged. That don't matter. For all that, the little scrap of paper is worth over two hundred dollars."

"You don't tell me!" gasped Stoodles, staring at the stamp vaguely.

"That's right," insisted Adair. "Here's an island stamp," he added, extending one to Pat. "No, don't bother making change for that trifle. Want to see it?" continued the young man, extending the canceled stamp to Dave.

"I used to have quite a collection myself at home," explained Dave, glancing with interest at the canceled stamp. "Morania? I never heard of that."

"No, a short and solemn history, that of Morania," said Adair. "It was one of the South Sea islands with a population of about one thousand natives. Some shrewd Yankee got their king to establish a post office, so he could sell the government a stamp-printing outfit. There wasn't much business, but one day Morania without any warning was swept to destruction by a tidal wave. Very few letters had ever been sent out. Of course the few stamps to be had became immensely valuable. I have managed to pick up four of them in my travels. I value them at one thousand dollars."

"Why-" said Dave, with a sudden start, and glanced at Stoodles queerly. Whatever the artist's story had suggested, however, Dave did not have time to explain. Captain Broadbeam came storming by like a mad lion.

"There's foul work here," he roared-"foul work all around. First that stupid, drunken pilot runs us afoul of a snag and stove a hole in our bottom. Now that rascally governor sends word asking a small fortune for the timber and truck and men to mend up the *Swallow*. All right. Pipe the crew, bosun. We'll have to overhaul the keel ourselves and do the best mending we can. Then I'm out of these latitudes mighty quick, I can tell you!"

"Don't he know?" inquired Adair, stepping closer to Dave's side and speaking confidentially.

"Know what?" inquired Dave, in some surprise.

"Why, that the snag he ran into, or rather the snag the pilot ran him into, was a sunken brig that everybody on the island has known for years blocked the creek bottom."

"Is that so?" said Dave.

"As I get it from the talk of the natives here, yes," said Adair.

"Did the pilot know it was there?" asked Dave.

"Could he miss knowing it?" demanded Adair. "Truth is, I came down here with a sort of fellow-feeling in my mind for you people. The governor here and his friends bleed every American they get hold of. They are a precious set of thieves, and when I heard of your predicament I wondered what new mischief they were up to."

"Then," said Dave, in a startled way, "you mean to insinuate that the pilot ran the *Swallow* into her present fix purposely?"

"I do," nodded Adair.

"Why?" demanded Dave, with a quick catch of excitement in his voice-"why did he do it?"

CHAPTER III

MR. SCHMITT-SCHMITT

"Yes," cried Bob Vilett impulsively. "Why did the pilot try to wreck the *Swallow*?"

The young engineer had been an interested listener to the conversation that had passed between Dave and Adair. The latter shrugged his shoulders.

"Sheer natural meanness and hatred of foreigners," he said, "or they mean to delay you."

"Why should they delay us?" protested Dave.

"To bleed you. The longer you stay here the more they will get out of you. They overcharge for everything, make you pay, and fine you, and make you trouble on every little technicality of the law that wretched governor can dig up."

"Why, that's abominable!" declared Bob.

"You see, the island here is in a squabble between Chili and Peru," explained the artist. "The governor has set up an independent dictatorship. He knows it can't continue, so he is hurrying to make all the money he can out of his position while it lasts."

"It looks as if you have given us some pretty straight information," said Dave seriously. "I must tell Captain Broadbeam. No," Dave checked himself. "I'll wait till I am sure of what you suspect, and look a little deeper into this matter."

"There's a group I'd like to take," interrupted Adair, glancing with an artist's fine interest at the sailors of the *Swallow* getting some tackle out to keel the ship.

He seized a boathook and, leaning over the side, caught its end in his camera outfit lying in the skiff below.

"There are some island views, if you would like to look them over," he observed, unstrapping a square portfolio from the camera rack.

Adair set up his portable tripod and focussed the group amidships. Dave turned over the photographs in the portfolio.

"You'll find a pretty good picture of that rascally pilot," said Adair. "Third one, I think."

"I've got it," nodded Dave, "and-say!"

So violent was this ejaculation that Adair was startled into snapping the camera shutter before he was quite ready.

"You've spoiled my picture for me," he said, but not at all crossly. "Why, my friend, what's struck you?"

Dave was wrought up all out of the common. Generally cool and level-headed, his nerves seemed to have suddenly gone to pieces.

He had dropped the portfolio, and Bob was scrambling to preserve its scattered contents. Dave himself held a single photograph in one hand; with the other he was pulling Adair by the arm. He drew the surprised artist out of direct range of the others.

"Look here," he said, with difficulty steadying his trembling voice, "this picture?"

"Yes," nodded Adair, with a casual glance at the photograph—"our friend, the pilot."

"There is no trouble recognizing him," said Dave. "It's the other fellow in the picture, I mean."

"Oh, do you know him?"

"I think I do," answered Dave, in a suppressed but intense tone.

"Likely. He's been haunting the harbors here for several days. I happened to see the two sitting on that bench in front of the pilot's shanty, and took a shot."

Dave, looking worried and hopeful, in doubt and suspicious, by turns, kept scanning the photograph.

"Who is the man, anyhow?" he asked, placing his finger on the pilot's companion.

"Schmitt-Schmitt, he calls himself-from the Dutch West Indies, he says."

"He calls himself that, does he?" said Dave thoughtfully, "and he is a Dutchman?"

"All I know is that he got onto the island here somehow-I believe from a tramp steamer a few days ago. He's close up to the governor and the pilot. Every craft that touches here, he visits its captain and wants to charter the ship."

"He wants to charter a ship," repeated Dave-"what for?"

"Mysterious cruise. He has discovered an island full of diamonds, or a mountain of gold, or some such thing," replied Adair. "He makes fabulous offers to any captain who will take a thirty-day cruise on the speculation. When he turns out all promises and no ready cash, of course the captains laugh at him. Been to you to join in his speculation, eh?"

"No," said Dave emphatically. "He knows too much to try it! Mr. Adair," he continued, warmly grasping the artist's hand, "you have done us a service you little dream of."

"Glad of that," responded Adair, with a hearty smile.

"I don't know how to thank you. May I have this picture for a day or two?"

"Keep it-I've got the negative. Time to go, I fancy," added Adair, as the crew crowded with the repair tackle in their direction.

Dave saw the artist safely into the skiff, waved his hand in adieu, and went in search of his father.

Amos Fearless sat in the cabin, immersed in deep thought.

"What is the captain going to do, father?" asked Dave.

"He's all worked up, and I hardly know how to take him," replied Mr. Fearless. "His only idea for the present is to get away from Minotaur Island; he says they're a set of conscienceless plunderers."

"He is right in that," declared Dave. "Did you suggest to him anything about searching for the stolen gold?"

"I did, Dave."

"What did he say?" eagerly asked Dave.

"He shook his head gloomily, said he would like to help us out, but according to his contract with the owners of the *Swallow*, he was due in San Francisco. You see, this cruise was taken by him under direction of Doctor Barrell. The doctor having accomplished his mission, there is nothing for him to do but to get the government collection of curiosities home as soon as possible."

Dave looked somewhat cast down at this unfavorable report. Of course, without the *Swallow* at their service it was useless to think further of the stolen treasure.

"Well, father," he said, after a long, thoughtful spell, "just let things rest as they are for the present. Only I wish you would warn Captain Broadbeam to keep close watch over the *Swallow* and to allow no strangers aboard."

"Why," exclaimed the old diver, "is there danger?"

"In the air and all around us," declared Dave. "I don't want to alarm you, father, and I don't want to say anything further until I have gone up to the town here."

"Going ashore?" murmured his father, in an uneasy tone. "I wouldn't, Dave, if things are not safe."

"Oh, they will be safe for me, as I shall take Mr. Stoodles and Bob Vilett along with me. When I come back, father, I think I shall have discovered something that will put Captain Broadbeam on his mettle and open the way for one more effort to find the fortune we have been robbed of."

Dave went to the deck again. He sought out Stoodles and Bob in turn and told them he wished them to go to the town with him. Of the trio the young engineer only was under ship discipline. He reported to the boatswain and was soon ready to join the others.

They rowed down the creek to the ocean in a small yawl, rounded the coast, and landed about half a mile from the town.

"I'll just drop my letter to my friends in New York while I'm in town," observed Pat.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you, Mr. Stoodles," advised Dave.

"Eh, why not, lad?" asked Pat.

"Just a few steps further and I will tell you," answered Dave.

He led his companions to a spot where there were some low rocks and motioned them to be seated.

"No one can overhear us at this lonely spot, that is sure," said Dave. "Now then, my friends, I want to have a serious confidential talk with you."

Bob looked curious and Stoodles important.

"Captain Broadbeam is worried and undecided," went on Dave, "my father is slightly discouraged, the crew sullen and discontented over losing that treasure. If no one stirs up something, as we must do-then things will drop, and we will go back home poorer than when we started out. Now, I don't give up so easily."

"Good boy!" nodded Stoodles approvingly.

"I shall make an effort to trace our stolen fortune if I have to do it all alone in a canoe."

"If we only knew where it was," said Bob Vilett. "That's the trouble, you see, Dave. It may be thousands of miles away. It may be adrift on the ocean. It may be halfway to China, or divided up and squandered by that miserable Hankers crowd."

"No," said Dave, with emphasis. "I have pretty good evidence in my possession that the treasure is safe and sound on the Windjammers' Island."

CHAPTER IV

A PAIR OF SCHEMERS

"The treasure is on the Windjammers' Island!" exclaimed Bob Vilett.

"Yes," nodded Dave confidently, "I have every reason to think so."

"Begorra!" cried the Irishman excitedly. "On my paternal dominions? On the principalities of King Patrick Stoodles? A horse, my kingdom for a-no, I mane a ship. Lad, if the goold those Hankers stole is anywhere among my subjects, we'll have it back, mind me!"

"Well, let me explain," said Dave, "and then hear what you have to say. We three have shared too many perils and secrets together, to need to be told that all I tell now is in strict confidence until we get ready to act."

"Spoke like a lawyer," commented Stoodles.

"Like a friend, you mean," corrected Bob. "Leave it to smart Dave to work a way out of a dilemma. I'm interested and excited, Dave."

"Well, first and foremost," continued Dave, "do you recognize that picture, Bob?"

Dave handed out the photograph that Adair had given him on the *Swallow*.

"Why, sure," answered Bob promptly. "It's a picture of that rascally pilot."

"No, no-I mean the other figure in the photograph."

"Oh-oh!" said Bob slowly, studying it. "N-no," he continued, quite as slowly. "Yes-no. H'm! One minute the face looks familiar, the next it looks strange. I can't fix it, although it seems as if I've seen that man before."

"You have," declared Dave. "Here, Mr. Stoodles, you take a try."

"Yes, there's the pilot," announced Stoodles. "The other is the ould pawnbroker that was on the *Raven*."

Dave's face grew eager and bright with satisfaction.

"Good for you," he said. "I knew I was right. Yes, that is the man the Hankers picked up at San Francisco-a pawnbroker named Gerstein. He furnished some of the money to fit out their ship for the expedition. Well, my friends, Gerstein, under the false name of Schmitt-Schmitt, is now on this island."

"Then the *Raven* crowd escaped!" exclaimed Bob.

"I don't know that," answered Dave. "I do know that Schmitt-Schmitt appeared here a few days ago. He has been trying to engage a ship to go after a fortune he says he can find. Of course it's our treasure."

"The spalpane! Of coorse it is!" cried Stoodles excitedly.

"My theory," went on Dave, "is that the *Raven* was terribly disabled or lost in the cyclone. I am also pretty sure that the treasure was saved. Perhaps it was already hidden somewhere on land. At all events, Schmitt-Schmitt was in the secret, either as the partner and emissary of others of the *Raven* crowd or on his own account. He managed to get a small boat afloat, was taken up by a liner, and landed here. Now his whole time is given, as I said, to finding a ship that will go after a fortune, as he terms it, on shares."

"Your theory is reasonable, your theory is right," insisted Stoodles.

"Schmitt-Schmitt," proceeded Dave, "made friends with the governor here. He seems to be staying at the pilot's house. When the *Swallow* was sighted he at once reasoned it out that we had discovered the real contents of those four boxes, that we might be bound straight back for the Windjammers' Island. He induced the pilot to run us onto the sunken brig in the creek."

"Dave, I believe you've got this matter just right," said Bob thoughtfully.

"If that is true," continued Dave, "they will do all they can to delay us. Who knows but what this rascally governor and his crew may intend to take the *Swallow* away from us and furnish Schmitt-Schmitt with the very means he wants to go after the treasure, with no chance of being followed?"

"Dave, have you told Captain Broadbeam about all this?" inquired Bob anxiously.

"I haven't had the chance. I learned what I have told you only in the past hour," responded Dave. "As soon as we return to the *Swallow*, though, I shall warn him. I had a purpose in coming ashore."

"Are we to help you, Dave?" asked Bob.

"All hands must help. I want to locate the pilot's house, I want to be sure that this Schmitt-Schmitt is really there and that he is the same fellow we knew as Gerstein on the *Raven*."

"That's easy," declared Stoodles. "The picture gives us a hint as to the house."

"We will separate so as to excite no notice or suspicions," directed Dave. "Let each one of us find out all he can, and report at this spot in three hours."

"In three hours be it," nodded Stoodles, looking very businesslike.

"All right," assented Bob, taking another good look at the picture of the pilot's house.

Dave allowed his two friends to select their own course. Then, when they were out of sight, he took an independent route.

He surmised that the pilot would probably live near the water's edge. In this he found his calculations correct, and an hour's search brought some results.

"That is the house," spoke Dave finally, peering from a clump of thick high bushes. "Yes, there is the very bench the pilot and Schmitt-Schmitt sat on when Mr. Adair took their picture."

Before Dave lay a ground plot of considerable extent and fairly smothered in luxurious vegetation, sloping down to the beach. In its center was a lone hut, open and rambling, and having a broad porch that ran clear around it.

It was a typical tropical habitation of the poorer class. No one seemed stirring about the place except far back in the rear. Here there was a thick plantation of high resinous bushes. One man was feeding these into a rude grinding mill operated by a big lazy mule treading in a circle.

Dave stood quietly in his place of concealment for fully half an hour. The man drove his mule away. The place seemed now entirely deserted. However, just as Dave was about to leave the spot someone came out on the front porch.

"It's the man. Yes, sure, it is Gerstein-Schmitt-Schmitt!" said Dave.

Schmitt-Schmitt was dressed in a thin linen suit. He carried a large but light wicker valise. This he set down beside a bench, looked at his watch, then in the direction of the town, and stretched himself out lazily in a hammock.

"Looks as if he was going away," mused Dave, critically analyzing all the movements of the person he was spying on. "Looks too as if he was expecting and waiting for somebody—probably the pilot."

Dave thought out the situation and its possibilities for about five minutes. He decided to go back to the yawl. Then he realized that he would be considerably interested in hearing what the pilot and his guest might say when they met.

Schmitt-Schmitt lay with his back to Dave. On this account, and because of the shelter of many shrubs and bushes, Dave found it no task at all to cover the space unnoticed between his present hiding-place and the porch.

Its floor was nearly two feet from the ground. Dave crawled way back under this open space, got pretty nearly under the hammock, and lay on his back. The porch boards were badly warped and splintered, and he could look right up at the hammock and its occupant.

At the end of about ten minutes Dave heard footsteps coming up the graveled walk. He turned his eyes sideways and was gratified to recognize the pilot.

"Whew, this is hot!" ejaculated the owner of the place, stamping heavily across the porch and throwing himself into a chair near the hammock, in which Schmitt-Schmitt now arose to a sitting

posture. Then the speaker glanced in the direction of the plantation where Dave had noticed the treadmill.

"Ah," continued the pilot, with an angry scowl. "That lazy rascal has ceased making the frew-frew? I will cut him half a day's pay."

"Yes, it is hot," answered his guest. Each of the precious twain had a language of his own, so they compromised on very broken English.

"What you done?" asked Schmitt-Schmitt. The pilot chuckled and grinned from ear to ear.

"I have undone," he said gleefully. "Have I not? But the governor went too far. He charged them prices for repairing the *Swallow* the captain wouldn't stand, and he is doing his own repairing."

"He is?" cried Schmitt-Schmitt, in a tone of alarm. "He is quick, smart. He will be off in twenty-four hours."

"Not at all," declared the pilot calmly. "You wish him delayed? Delay it shall be, a long delay. Delay after delay. Only-my pay must come. The governor's too. We are exceeding the law for you."

"Both of you shall be rich-rich! As soon as I get my fortune," promised Schmitt-Schmitt recklessly. "Have you found out for me yet-do they think they have the treasure aboard the *Swallow*?"

"They have just found out differently, my spies tell me," said the pilot.

"Then they will go right back to search for it," declared Schmitt-Schmitt. "I know them-plucky fellows, all. They must be stopped."

"Fear not. As I told you," interrupted the pilot calmly, "that end of it is easy. I hope your getting the treasure is as simple."

"Get these fellows out of the way, get me a ship, and I will show you," said Schmitt-Schmitt eagerly.

"One thing at a time, then," Dave heard the pilot say next in order. "See, my friend."

"A brush, a little bottle of paint?" inquired Schmitt-Schmitt.

Dave wriggled and twisted his neck to get a focus on these two articles, which the pilot held up. Then the pilot leaned over and said something to his companion in so low a tone that Dave could not catch its import.

"Capital, capital, oh, that is just famous!" gloated Schmitt-Schmitt. "You have found the man to experiment on?"

"He will be here to-night."

"And after the stuff is on?"

"Bah-a sponge and some turpentine, and the patient recovers."

"Good, good!" said Schmitt-Schmitt. "Yes, that will indeed delay the *Swallow*. Now, listen, my friend: I must not run the risk of being seen by any of the *Swallow* people."

"No, indeed."

"It would at once give them their cue-my escape from the Windjammers' Island. I have packed my valise, I will disappear for a few days."

"Excellent. You will go at once?"

"I think so. You will remember! A blue light, I am sick or in danger. A red light, I need provisions."

"Signal any time from ten to twelve. I will be on the watch. If you say so I will start up the launch at once and take you to your destination."

"H'm," mused Dave, as double footsteps sounded the length of the porch. "Some new mysterious trick to delay the *Swallow*? Schmitt-Schmitt going away somewhere? This is too interesting to miss."

Dave crept out from under the porch. He dodged in among some bushes. Peering thence he saw Schmitt-Schmitt leading the way towards the beach, the pilot carrying his wicker satchel.

Dave did not venture to follow them direct. He lined the "frew-frew" plantation, and at a clearing in it near the treadmill cut across it.

From the grinding-mill a rude wooden trough extended. This was full of a sticky resinous mass, and the ground all round was spattered with the glutinous substance.

"Frew-frew must be a sort of gum or oil they make from those stalks yonder," decided Dave. "The mischief! it's worse than fly paper."

Dave's shoes stuck to broad leaves and lifted them bodily as he walked; they became tangled in vines which raised about him like ropes. He made an effort to get out of the direct zone of stickiness.

Dave leaped over the edge of a board where the wooden trough ran in among tangled vines and plants.

"Oh, yes!" he gasped. In an instant, as his feet struck a soft, giving mass, Dave knew he was in danger. Unconsciously he had landed in the center of an immense cistern-the storage receptacle for the frew-frew product.

He tried to reach its edge but was held fast. He struggled to release his limbs but was pulled back and dragged down.

Dave sank in five seconds to the neck. His chin went under. As he started to yell his mouth was submerged. With a last dip eyesight was shut out and Dave sank under the sticky mass entirely submerged.

CHAPTER V

DOCTOR BARRELL'S "ACCIDENT"

"Begorra!"

That was the first expressive word that Dave Fearless heard as he realized that he had been suddenly saved from death by suffocation.

His eyes, mouth, ears, and nostrils were oozing with the sticky stuff in which he had taken so dangerous a bath. The top of his head seemed coming off. Dave felt as if he had been scalped.

Dave was lying on the grass and Stoodles was working over him, digging and dabbling with a handkerchief to get the youth's eyes and mouth clear of the glutinous "frew-frew."

"Sorra a bit too soon was I," said Pat, as Dave blinked and groaned. "I've a lock of your hair for a keepsake, lad! I saw you go into that threacherous pit, I threw a plank across, I grasped your topknot. It was loike taking a drowned cat out of glue. Sit up, if you can't stand up. If you let that stuff harden once, you'll be stiff as a statoo."

Dave tried to arise. He dragged grass, dirt, vines, and weeds up with him. By this time he could breathe and see. Stoodles got a stick and scraped off from his clothes as much as he could of the adhesive mass that coated Dave.

"Come on, lad," directed Stoodles, grasping an arm of his tottering companion. "It's a brickdust bath in soft soap you'll be needing. Acushla! but I stick to you like a brother."

Dave's feet gathered up everything they came in contact with. Then, every time he brushed a bit of foliage, the frew-frew took off leaves, and he began to look green and picturesque.

"Where is Bob Vilett?" he asked.

"I dunno," answered Stoodles. "I do know it was lucky I saw you thrailing the pilot and that rascally pawnbroker. If I hadn't you'd have been a goner, Dave Fearless."

"I guess I should," responded Dave, with a shudder, and then a grateful look at this eccentric but loyal friend. "Where have those two gone-did you notice, Mr. Stoodles?"

"Only that they set off seaward in a little launch."

"Get me to the *Swallow*, I have a lot to tell Captain Broadbeam now."

They lined the beach. A good many craft of various kinds were visible in the opening. All of them were too far distant to enable Dave to make out which one might contain the pilot and Schmitt-Schmitt.

When they got to the place of rendezvous where they had left the ship's yawl, Bob Vilett was discovered lying on the sand.

"Wandered off on a wrong trail," he reported; "wasted time and thought I was due here. Dave, what have you been into!"

"Frew-frew, I believe they call it, Bob."

"Phew-phew I'd call it," remarked Pat. "Up with the jibboom and across the briny, Bob. If we don't get our friend Fearless into hot water and soap soon, we'll have to chip off his coat of mail with chisels."

When they reached the *Swallow* they found the steamer the center of vast bustle and industry. Captain Broadbeam had keeled the craft and gangs of men were working inside and outside to repair the breaks in the hull.

The cabins and forecastle were accessible, but Mike Connors had temporarily removed cooking headquarters to a tent at the side of the creek. Stoodles sought out Mr. Drake, the boatswain, and explained Dave's dilemma. They rigged up a canvas bathroom on shore and supplied it with brushes, two tubs of boiling suds, and plenty of soap.

It took Dave over an hour to get off the worst of the villainous frew-frew. His hair was the hardest to clean. Finally he emerged, fresh and tingling in every nerve from the vigorous bath.

They had supper ashore and hammocks were rigged up under the trees. Captain Broadbeam set a guard about camp and ship. About half the crew decided to quit and he paid them off. They and curious visitors from the town were warned to keep away from the *Swallow*.

About dusk Captain Broadbeam had given out all necessary orders for the night.

"Well, lad," he said, coming up to Dave and placing his hand on the youth's shoulder in his usually friendly way, "I understand you have something important to tell me."

"Yes, considerable," answered Dave.

"All right. The others interested must hear it, too. We'll hold a council of war in my cabin."

Dave's father, Doctor Barrell, Stoodles, and Bob Vilett were invited to accompany the captain and Dave to the *Swallow*. The six of them soon found themselves seated in the captain's cabin. It slanted slightly from the present awkward position of the ship, but they managed to adjust the stools and settees comfortably.

"Now then, lad," spoke Captain Broadbeam to Dave, "my old friend here, your father, has intimated to me that you have discovered some things of general interest to all of us."

"I think I have," said Dave.

"Then fire away, my hearty."

Dave began his story with a narration of the visit to the *Swallow* of the young artist Adair. He followed this up with his discovery of Schmitt-Schmitt, and his overhearing of the conversation between that worthy and the treacherous native pilot.

Captain Broadbeam was interested from the first; when it became apparent from Dave's clear, logical story that the stolen treasure was still somewhere in the vicinity of the Windjammers' Island, the old tar's eyes glistened and he looked eager and excited. Then, as Dave told of the evident existence of a plot to delay, possibly destroy, the *Swallow*, Captain Broadbeam sprang to his feet.

"Delay me, will they?" he shouted, growing red of face and blazing with anger. "Why, the miserable scum! if they so much as hang around here I'll fill them with a charge of pepper and salt. If I catch them up to any tricks aboard, I'll swing them from the yardarm."

The doughty old mariner paced the cabin in a fine rage. When he had subsided Dave approached the subject nearest his thoughts.

"Captain," he began, "from what I have told don't you really think my theories are right as to the treasure being hidden?"

"I do, lad, I'll admit that," growled the captain.

"And that this fellow Schmitt-Schmitt is an emissary of the Hankers and the *Raven*, looking for a ship to go after the treasure?"

"Mebbe, lad, mebbe."

"Then what is the matter with hurrying up your repairs and getting back to the Windjammers' Island before Schmitt-Schmitt? Don't you see, captain, we are bound to locate the *Raven* crew, if they are there?"

Captain Broadbeam sank to a stool, bent his head, and groaned.

"Lad," he said, "I know what you want to do and what I'd like to do. It can't be done-no, no."

"Captain," interrupted Amos Fearless, in an eager, quivering tone, "we are old friends-"

"Belay there!" roared the veteran tar, springing to his feet and waving his ponderous arms like windmills. "Would ye tempt a man from his duty who has never yet over-stepped discipline? That duty is plain, Amos Fearless. This here *Swallow* was sent out to collect curiosities for the United States Government. Those curiosities are duly collected. Incidentally I helped you fellows all I could on the side. Now it's San Francisco. Them's my sailing orders. There's my duty."

"Ochone!" groaned Pat Stoodles, "and phwat of the foine treasure?"

"I'm out of this hornets' nest here the minute the *Swallow* is seaworthy," announced Broadbeam. "The minute I land at San Francisco and get my clearance, I'll hark back to the Windjammers with you if I have to put all my savings into chartering a ship specially."

"It will be too late then, captain," murmured Dave, in a dejected tone.

"Sorry," said the commander of the *Swallow*. "I am responsible to the owners. Why, friends, if I should step outside of my duty I am personally liable to a fine that would make me a ruined man and a pauper."

Dave gave a queer start at this, a quick color came into his cheek, a quick flicker into his eyes. He gazed at Stoodles in an eager, speculative way.

"One moment, captain, please," he said, arising and beckoning Stoodles to follow him from the cabin, "I have just thought of something important. I hope you will not decide finally on this matter until I have had a word in private with Mr. Stoodles."

"Surely not, lad," nodded the captain, but in some wonder regarding this peculiar move on the part of the young fellow he had grown to like greatly.

Silence fell over the little coterie in the cabin then. They could hear the low hum of voices outside; Dave talking rapidly and earnestly, and such violent ejaculations from Stoodles now and then as "Begorra!" "Luk at that now!" "Bedad!" and the like.

When Dave came back into the cabin he was calm and collected, but Stoodles squirmed about with a wise, important look on his moonlike face.

"Captain Broadbeam," said Dave, "I have just consulted with Mr. Stoodles on a matter covering his ability to raise a certain sum of money."

The captain of the *Swallow* grinned. It was so ridiculous to think of Stoodles ever earning or saving a penny that he could not well help it.

"Yes," announced Pat gravely, "by my royal authority as king of the Windjammers' Island."

"Nonsense," muttered Captain Broadbeam.

"You will take my word for it, captain, won't you?" insinuated Dave, in his smooth, convincing way. "I can say to you positively that if you will land Mr. Stoodles among his former subjects for a single hour, and later safely at San Francisco, he will be prepared to pay you five thousand dollars to meet any fines the owners of the *Swallow* may assess you for going back there."

"Why, Dave," began Mr. Fearless in wonderment-but Bob Vilett interrupted.

"If Dave says five thousand dollars, he means five thousand dollars."

"Remarkable!" commented Doctor Barrell, surveying Dave in astonishment through his eyeglasses close-set.

Captain Broadbeam was impressed. He studied Dave and Stoodles speculatively.

"How can you possibly get that sum of money?" he demanded.

"We can," declared Dave positively, "can't we, Mr. Stoodles?"

"Begorra! and ten if we made it!" cried Pat enthusiastically. "Oh, the broth of a boy! It takes my friend Dave Fearless for brains."

"Of course it is a secret," said Dave.

"A deadly saycret-I mane a close one," declared Stoodles. "I never knew how rich I was till the lad told me just now."

"Oh, pshaw!" exclaimed Captain Broadbeam, dismissing the matter with a worried motion of his hand. "Money can't count in this case. My duty is plain! I was ordered to sail for the home port as soon as the government collection was made. Doctor Barrell reported a month ago that he had finished that collection."

"H'm, just so," observed Doctor Barrell, "but, my dear sir-ha, a thought. A moment, Captain Broadbeam, just a moment."

"Thunder!" whistled Bob Vilett amazedly in his chum's ear. "What does that mean now?"

Dave shook his head in silent wonderment. Doctor Barrell had winked at them in a quizzical, encouraging way that was mightily suggestive.

To have the high-class old scientist so far forget his dignity was a most remarkable thing.

They heard Doctor Barrell stumbling about in the aft cabin where he had stored some of the curiosities he had gathered for the government.

Suddenly there was a loud bump followed by a great clash. The next minute the doctor burst into the captain's cabin holding aloft two cracked and broken specimens of starfish.

"Captain," he cried-"bad accident! The collection is incomplete. See, Captain Broadbeam, the only specimens of the *Mercuria stellaticus* we had, destroyed, case tipped over."

The commander of the *Swallow* bestowed a searching look on the speaker, but was silent. "They are to be found only at the Windjammers' Island," went on Doctor Barrell. "Oh, dear, dear! This will, I fear, necessitate a return to the island."

"Oh, will it?" snorted the captain sarcastically. "So, you're in the plot, too, to lure me from my duty, hey, you old conspirator? Well, you mutinous old humbug, after breaking your mercurian stellians purposely, you'll not get me to go a single knot back on the west course till you sign a paper officially ordering me to do so as a necessity of the expedition."

"Pen and ink-quick," chuckled Doctor Barrell. "Captain," he added pathetically, indicating their sturdy, loyal companions with a kindly affectionate wave of his hand, "their hearts are set on that stolen treasure, rightly too. They are our true, good friends. Honestly, won't you be glad to help them try and find it?"

"Shiver my timbers, but you're a set of conspiring mutineers!" roared the captain doughtily, but the fierce words were spoken with a secret chuckle.

CHAPTER VI

THE PILOT'S PLOT

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Vilett, tossing his cap up in the air.

"Don't crow too quickly, Bob," warned Dave Fearless. "We're not out of the woods yet."

"And don't you croak," retorted the sprightly young engineer of the *Swallow*. "Captain Broadbeam says that by this time to-morrow we will be on our way to the Windjammers' Island."

"Yes," nodded Dave significantly, "provided they let us start."

"Eh, who?" demanded Bob.

"The governor here and the pilot, Schmitt-Schmitt, the whole crowd, who I am persuaded are in league to delay us."

"Oh, nonsense," cried Bob airily. "What right have they to interfere with our business?"

"What right had they to wreck the *Swallow*?" inquired Dave pertinently. "I don't say they will dare to try to make us any further trouble, but they have planned to, that I know, and every one of us must keep our eyes wide open until we leave Minotaur Island far to the rear."

For all Dave's misgivings, however, he was a happy, hopeful boy. It had been settled that they should return to the Windjammers' Island to secure duplicates of the *Mercuria stellaticus* which Doctor Barrell had disposed of by accident.

"The royal old trump!" Bob Vilett had enthused. "Good-by to that treasure if the doctor hadn't acted so promptly. But I say, Dave, what was that bluff you and Stoodles worked up about five thousand dollars?"

"No bluff at all, as you call it," declared Dave seriously. "A hint from that artist Adair gave me a fine suggestion. Stoodles can easily make five, ten, yes, maybe twenty thousand dollars if he has a chance to once more, even for a single hour, regain his position as king of the Windjammers."

"If I didn't know you so well, Dave Fearless," said Bob gravely, "I'd say you was romancing."

"Wait till you see the reality, Bob," advised Dave, with a confident smile. "By the way, about this same secret of Stoodles'-I must make some purchases in the town to-day."

Just after noon, in pursuance with this suggestion, Dave was rowed to the town by the boatswain and two others of the crew of the *Swallow*.

When he returned he carried two heavy boxes, storing them safely under lock and key in the purser's own closet.

The inquisitive Bob tried to pump Stoodles, but it was of no avail. Pat looked crafty and wise, and only muttered some remarks about his royal prerogative and the like.

By sundown the *Swallow* had been completely repaired. She was righted and cleaned up, and everything put in order for a run to Mercury Island. Captain Broadbeam decided to provision up there. He was uneasy every minute he dallied among the tricky inhabitants of Minotaur Island.

They were short-handed as to a crew, on account of the desertions of the day previous. Several natives had applied for work, but the captain was distrustful of them as spies.

The second mate had several times gone to the main harbor port in search of English sailors, but there chanced to be none unemployed just then. He did manage, however, to pick up one recruit. This was a sickly-looking white man who called himself Tompkins. He was quiet and industrious, and wanted to go as far as Mercury Island, he said to the captain, who entered him regularly on the crew's list.

There had been a great ado that afternoon over maps, charts, and other details pertaining to a long cruise. Captain Broadbeam had engaged Dave in conversation several times about his discoveries and theories.

Both the captain and Amos Fearless now believed that Dave had reasoned out matters concerning the stolen treasure just as they existed in fact.

They could not hope to gain any specific information from Schmitt-Schmitt, even if they learned where he was now keeping himself in seclusion.

"No," Captain Broadbeam had concluded, "we won't stir up affairs any further hereabouts. We will let the people here believe that we are going home to the United States. Schmitt-Schmitt never dreams that we know of his living here. His suspicions will be allayed. We shall leave a clear field and probably get to the Windjammers' Island before he even finds a ship to go in search of the treasure."

The camp on shore was now broken up and its temporary equipment moved back to the *Swallow*. The work on the steamer was all in shipshape order by supper time. The men had labored diligently, and the captain ordered an extra-fine meal.

It was an hour of typical comfort. A brisk breeze had cooled the air, the sky was bright and clear, the surroundings picturesque and beautiful.

Some of the sailors were singing a jaunty rollicking sea ditty. Dave and Bob paced the after-deck full of their plans for the prospective voyage to begin on the morrow.

"This is certainly life as she is on the ocean wave," declared Bob enthusiastically.

"I love the smell of the brine, Bob," said Dave. "I was born breathing it, and now the seafaring life seems to be a regular business proposition with me."

"Good business, if you recover all that money," observed Bob.

"Look there, Bob," spoke Dave suddenly.

His companion turned. Facing the coast end of the creek a gruesome-looking craft with black funnels, and odd and awkward of shape, was hovering about the mouth of the little inlet.

"Hello," exclaimed Bob, "that's the government ironclad. What's she doing here?"

"Yes," nodded Dave, taking up a telescope and looking through it, "that's the *Chili*, the governor's special warship, sure. They say she's a poor apology of a craft. Bought her second-hand from some English shipyard. They are putting off a yawl."

"Going to visit us?" inquired Bob.

"It looks that way."

"More trouble?" insinuated Bob.

"More meddling and spying, more like," said Dave.

Both boys watched a natty, well-manned yawl come spinning up the creek towards the *Swallow*.

The Chilian colors adorned the bow, indicating an official visit. A man in military dress directed the boat. Beside him sat another of the governor's aides in semi-official uniform.

Dave called Captain Broadbeam, and all hands on board the *Swallow* were now interested in the approaching yawl.

"Colonel José Silverado, from his excellency the governor," announced the officer in charge of the yawl as he neared the side of the steamer.

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