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A U. S. MIDSHIPMAN IN JAPAN

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER
A UNITED STATES MIDSHIPMAN IN JAPAN

by

Author of
"A U.S. Midshipman Afloat"
"A U.S. Midshipman in China"
"A U.S. Midshipman in the Philippines"

Illustrated by Ralph L. Boyer

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Introduction

PHILIP PERRY and Sydney Monroe are young officers in the United States navy. Although they have been out of the Naval Academy less than two years, and are still ranked as midshipmen, they have seen active service, as related in "A United States Midshipman Afloat" and "A United States Midshipman in China." "A United States Midshipman in the Philippines" tells how Phil, with Sydney for executive officer, commanded a small gunboat in expeditions against the insurgents. Boatswain Jack O'Neil has been with the lads in many of their hazardous adventures, and the three are now on the "U. S. S. Alaska" in Japanese waters.

The story deals with a misunderstanding between the United States and the Island Kingdom. This complication causes a few days of anxiety to both nations, and gets some people into serious difficulties but, needless to say, it is purely fictitious.
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A United States Midshipman in Japan.

7
A United States Midshipman in Japan

CHAPTER I

THE MAN IN THE NEXT COMPARTMENT

It was one o'clock in the afternoon, and there was unusual activity in the railroad station at Yokohama. Uniformed officials were scurrying to and fro, bending every effort to dispose of the great crowd of stolid Japanese travelers and at the same time, with due formality and ceremony, provide a special train for their lately arrived American naval visitors.

So painstaking and anxious were these energetic and efficient little personages to please those whom their government had chosen to honor, that suddenly, at a signal, they stemmed the great influx of their own people, sidetracked the steady and ever increasing flow of
bright colored silks, and did it as easily as if they were but putting a freight train on a siding. Not one murmur was heard from the crowd delayed so abruptly; the travelers waited, talking and laughing joyfully. To them it was all pleasure. There was no necessity for haste. When the honorable railroad officials were ready, then there would be plenty of time for them to get on their trains. They had no thought of questioning the acts of their Emperor's officials, who wore the imperial badge of office—the sixteen petal chrysanthemum.

"Did you ever see such docility on the part of a traveling public?" Midshipman Philip Perry exclaimed, gazing wonderingly at the good-natured, smiling faces of the Japanese about him. "Imagine, if you can, a New York crowd waiting like this at the Grand Central Station for a dozen Japanese officers to board a special train."

The midshipman was one of a party of American naval officers, recently arrived in Japan, and journeying as the guests of the Japanese nation to their picturesque and historic capital—Tokyo.
IN JAPAN

Lieutenant Hugh Winston, one of the party, smiled knowingly as he read the wonder in the eyes of the two youngest of the party, Midshipmen Perry and Sydney Monroe. Winston was an officer of some years' standing, and the character of the Japanese subject was one with which he considered himself on very intimate terms, after three cruises on the Asiatic Station in American war-ships.

"You can compare the Mikado's loyal subjects to no others on earth," Winston returned. "Every man you see in this crowd has served his country as a soldier or sailor. All recognize an order when they hear it, and I can tell you they obey, too."

There was small doubt of their obedience. The good-humored crowd, increasing in numbers every minute, stood in orderly merriment watching the tall representatives of the United States of America, led by obsequious railroad officials, pass through their midst and into the coaches of a special train. Following the handful of naval officers in their severely plain civilian clothes came many score of American men-of-war's men dressed in the picturesque sailor garb, while walking hand in hand with
them the little Japanese sailors, the hosts of their giant visitors, appeared in striking contrast.

The congestion in the traffic of the Tokaido Railroad was soon relieved; a shrill whistle from one of the officials—and immediately the wheels were again in motion and the patient Japanese were once more on their way to their waiting trains.

"A Japanese crowd has no terrors for the public officials," Lieutenant Winston said by way of information, as he and the midshipmen settled themselves in one of the compartments of the tiny coaches of the train. "In Japan discipline begins at the mother's knee. Filial obedience is part of their religion, and they are taught to obey their Emperor as the father of them all."

"I have always heard that they are classed among the best fighters in the world," Phil Perry said admiringly. "The fighting man with them is in a class by himself. Isn't it so?" he asked the older officer at his side.

"The 'Samurai,' or fighting class, is the aristocracy of Japan," Winston replied. "They symbolize the fighting barons of our
middle ages; quick to resent an insult or avenge a wrong. Their code of honor is centuries old. These are the men you will meet in Tokyo. The naval and military officers are all recruited from the families of the ‘Samurai.’ You will see in them the most polite of a polite nation.”

“What is the object of the ‘Alaska’s’ visit to Japan?” Sydney Monroe suddenly asked as Winston ended his eulogy on the Japanese race. “Our relations are not over friendly, if we can believe some of our yellow journal newspapers.”

“That is not to be discussed except within an air-tight cell,” Winston returned gravely, a warning ring in his voice. “We are here on a friendly visit to be present at the garden fête of the Emperor of Japan.”

Meanwhile the train had glided out of the long, low station shed and picked its way over a score of tracks to the one leading straight to the metropolis and capital of the island empire. Stations, consisting of miniature structures with their long, narrow platforms came noisily out of the world ahead and were left behind with a waning moan as if in
protest at being given but a fleeting glimpse of the big strangers.

The conversation had come to an abrupt stop after Lieutenant Winston's words of caution and the three Americans sat silently gazing out of their open windows at the ever-changing landscape.

The sailors with their Japanese escorts were in the cars ahead where they were leaning far out of the windows, excitedly acknowledging the "banzais" from the groups of peasants who had collected on the station platforms to see the Americans pass.

Philip Perry restlessly left his seat and walked slowly along the narrow aisle of the car. He noticed casually in passing that the door of the compartment next their own was closed, and the blinds drawn. The other two compartments he saw were empty, for the railroad officials had provided more than sufficient accommodations for their party. He reached the car ahead, and stood gazing for a second at the sailors within. Retracing his steps, he stopped at the side of the car opposite the compartment next his own. Suddenly he was conscious of a voice coming
through the compartment door which from a closer inspection he now saw was only ajar. The train had slackened its speed, then noisily stopped. While he listened the voice died away, and he was on the point of going to the platform to ascertain the cause of the stoppage of the train when the voice that had attracted his attention began again, this time clear and distinct. Phil unconsciously listened, believing the speaker was one of his brother officers, but what he heard caused him to catch his breath in surprise. He held himself rigid, straining to hear every word, while his indignation showed plainly in his set features.

"Baron, every day you put off this inevitable war with America makes Japan's chance for success in the Orient the less," were the startling words that Phil heard spoken with a marked British accent. "Now the opportunity is given you. Her fleet is in Manila, all naval men will tell you that it must be at a great disadvantage. It lacks supply ships and torpedo-boat destroyers. Your fleet is here at your source of supply. Depend upon it, Baron," the voice declared,
in excited, eager tones, "this cruise has come to mislead you. America knows the danger surrounding her fleet. She has blundered in sending it so far from home, and now wishes to safely withdraw it, or strengthen it with the Chinese ships. It is one thing or the other. You must increase your efforts with the ministers if your dreams are to be realized."

Phil's heart beat wildly as he stood listening, hardly daring to breathe lest he should betray his presence before he had heard all. The same voice was again speaking.

"You must know that whatever America will say, it will be insincere. America covets the entire trade of China, and unless your nation halts it as you did Russia she will through her rapidly growing wealth accomplish her end. She is negotiating for the Chinese battle-ships while this cruiser here will endeavor to allay suspicion. Unless Japan acts promptly ——"

With a succession of jolts the train was again noisily in motion, and the door of the compartment swung shut with a spiteful click. Phil was trembling with excitement.
Here on the threshold of their visit he had surprised a plot to force his country into a war. What should he do? He could not go openly and accuse those in the compartment; that would be dramatic, but would be barren of results. His best course would be to discover the identity of the speaker and the man addressed as Baron, who Phil knew must be a Japanese nobleman, and then warn his captain of the conspiracy on foot. But how should he be able to discover their identity? Who could tell him their names?

He could pretend to enter their compartment by mistake, and impress their faces indelibly upon his memory, to be used at some future time. With this object in view Phil placed his hand on the door-knob trying to turn it, only to find the latch had fallen from within. Frustrated, he stood thinking excitedly as to what his next move should be. The door of his own compartment suddenly opened and Sydney Monroe, his companion and classmate at the Naval Academy at Annapolis, gazed in surprise at the stern set face of his friend.
“What’s the matter, Phil?” he exclaimed. “You look as if you’d just seen a ghost. Nothing’s wrong, is it?”

Phil held his hand up for silence and entered his own compartment.

“There are people in there,” he exclaimed excitedly, indicating with a nod, “whom we must recognize and remember. It’s the most barefaced case of conspiracy that I’ve ever known.” And then he detailed almost word for word what he had heard.

While he was yet talking and his two companions were listening eagerly, consternation growing in their excited minds, the train again came to a halt, but for just a moment, and then was off again.

A few minutes later it was plain that the country had been left behind and that the suburbs of Tokyo were at hand. The train passed through row after row of tiny wooden dwellings, built like card houses, appearing to be ready for some giant hand to smooth them flat. On sped the train across miniature stone bridges and through beautifully laid out parks, until a sudden screech of the whistle and the gripping of the brakes an-
nounced that the journey was over, and Tokyo had been reached.

Phil scarcely waited for the train to stop before he was in the passage, gazing about in the gloom (the passage being unlighted) for the occupants of the next compartment. Its door stood open, but they were not there. He rushed to the platform, but he saw no strange faces, only his brother officers and the sailors. What could it mean? Then he understood the meaning of the stop only a few miles before the train reached Tokyo. The occupants of the next compartment were men of consequence, and even a special train ordered by the Emperor of Japan could be stopped at their will.

"Well, I shan't forget that voice, anyway," Phil exclaimed disappointedly to his companions while the three moved slowly toward the exit gate.
CHAPTER II

IN THE EMPEROR'S GARDENS

"If we could only have had a glimpse of the man's face," Phil Perry exclaimed dejectedly as the three naval men who had occupied the compartment together were driving rapidly from the railroad station. "Who can he be, and to whom was he talking?"

The streets fronting the depot were filled with a curious and enthusiastic crowd of Japanese, and as the Americans passed rapidly through in victorias, their mafoos wearing the royal liveries, the multitude gave voice to their welcome in repeated and prolonged shouts of "Banzai—Ten Thousand Years of Happiness!"

"Don't give yourself too much credit for discovering a plot," Lieutenant Winston returned sceptically, after their carriage had freed itself of the crowd and was moving along a quieter street. "What you heard is only the usual stereotyped opinion of our so-
called friends here in the Far East. The European merchant and also the European resident in the Orient are trembling for fear the United States may get all the trade of China, which she might readily be doing now, if our merchant marine were equal to that of Germany or England."

"I don't see how that has any bearing on the subject," Phil exclaimed, somewhat nettled at Winston's tone of patronage.

"Simply that in order to put us out of the running they are doing their best to talk Japan and the United States into a war," Winston replied. "To your face they are very friendly, but, behind your back! Well! it's really best to refrain from hearing, if you can, for it's never complimentary. They don't love Japan any too well, but the grasping Yankee——" he ended with an expressive wave of his hand, for the crunching of gravel under the wheels of their carriage drowned his voice completely. They were entering the courtyard of the Imperial Hotel. A few minutes later all had alighted in the spacious lobby, and were being led ceremoniously to their rooms, engaged by the imperial
government, whose guests they were as long as they remained in Tokyo.

"They are doing things lavishly," Sydney exclaimed, after he had surveyed the street from his window. Great crowds of eager people had gathered about the hotel with small American flags in their hands to bid their guests welcome, while the avenue beyond as far as the eye could reach was festooned with the colors of the two nations.

"Here's a program of our entertainment," Winston called from his room adjoining. "They are certainly most hospitable."

Phil and Sydney looked closely at the printed program which the servant had brought them. It was carefully and handsomely arranged, giving a sketch map of Tokyo with all the important buildings marked, and the locations of the numerous places of entertainment.

"You'd think we were foreign princes instead of only common every-day naval officers," Sydney said as he finished reading. Phil's face was thoughtful.

"I wonder if this welcome is really sincere," he questioned. "The newspapers say that the
relations between the two countries are terribly strained. In America we could not display this mask of friendship if there was dislike in our hearts. But the Orientals, if one may believe the writers on the subject, are different. An order from their Emperor would be sufficient to freeze a smile on every one’s face;—a perpetual smile, made for the occasion.”

The midshipmen and Winston were now fully dressed in their most official uniform, and were patiently waiting the summons to join their captain.

Captain Rodgers, in command of the United States cruiser “Alaska,” had arrived with his ship in Japan at the time of the annual garden fête, given at the height of bloom of the chrysanthemum, the sacred flower of Japan. It had been rumored that this was not the reason of the “Alaska’s” visit; but certain it was that His Majesty had immediately sent them out invitations for the royal fête, provided a special train, rooms at the Imperial Hotel, put carriages always at their disposal, and caused to be prepared an elaborate program of entertainment,—all for his unexpected American naval visitors.
All Tokyo was in gala dress. Everywhere the chrysanthemum was displayed, of all sizes and all colors. The holiday crowd was in good humor, and as the carriages of the naval men, in all their gold lace, drove rapidly along, they were greeted on all sides with welcoming "banzais" from hundreds of throats.

"There's nothing belligerent in this welcome," Lieutenant Winston exclaimed, as he waved gallantly to the smiling faces below him. They were soon approaching the residence of the ambassador; farther up the street the bridge, across which lay the sacred grounds of the Emperor's palace, came into view. The crowd here became more dense, and the carriages slowed to a snail's pace. The familiar uniform of the American sailors was seen, dotted here and there among the crowd. Some were in rikishas, while others were on foot; but all were thoroughly enjoying the novel spectacle.

The ambassador's carriage met the naval officers in front of his own gate and led the way toward the stone bridge. Many policemen were lined up on each side of the thoroughfare, intent upon keeping the road-
way clear for the numerous state carriages. The little jinrikishas darted here and there between the carriages, making the onlooker almost fearful for the life of their occupants.

"If we were in New York, the traffic squad policeman would be on that fellow's trail," Sydney Monroe cried out as an automobile dashed by them.

The three watched the speeding machine with bated breath. A loud cry from the crowd and then a hoarse murmur of protest, and the machine had come to a stop alongside the next carriage ahead.

Phil's quick eye had seen the whole affair, and indignant he jumped to the ground to see if the sailorman whose jinrikisha had been so ruthlessly bowled over had received injuries. The Japanese onlookers, quick to resent injustice, had formed a solid wall about the machine, their intention evidently being not to allow the culprits to escape until the police had investigated the damages and injuries.

Phil helped the sailor occupant of the overturned jinrikisha to his feet. He was dazed but unhurt. One of the man's friends had
excitedly taken the driver of the machine to task for his recklessness, and the answer was angry and, Phil thought, almost brutal.

"It served him jolly well right. What right have you sailors to block the roadway?"

A toot of the horn and the crowd melted away from in front of the machine. There are few who can stand calmly before an automobile if its engine is whirring and the loud screech of its syren bids you to step aside. But the lad was angry straight through, not only at the man's recklessness, but at his unfeeling answer to the sailor, and further, there was something familiar in the man's voice. Phil therefore stood his ground.

"Please, I'd like your number," he cried out, raising his hand impetuously to stay the machine. The car gave a quick leap, and Phil all but fell to the ground. Then it stopped, and as Phil recovered himself the picture he beheld was a very stirring one. The motor had come to a halt, but not voluntarily; a sailorman was standing on the step, the clutch lever held securely back, while the man in the car had taken off his goggles and was staring angrily at the bold American.
"How dare you lay hands on me!" he cried.

Jack O'Neil, boatswain's mate in the United States navy, might not have heard the angry exclamation, for all the answer he gave. He was awaiting orders from his superior officer.

"I've got him, sir," he said quietly.

"We have his number, sir," another sailor volunteered.

Phil waved his hand to O'Neil; the latter let go the clutch lever, and slid back into the gaping crowd, not however without a parting sally.

"Say, mister, remember next time when you're in a hurry not to run over an American; he is liable to puncture your tire."

The noise of the gears drowned his words, but from his gleeful chuckle O'Neil seemed to have enjoyed his own bit of pleasantry, and after all that was all that was necessary, for a foreigner could not be expected to understand American wit.

The little Japanese police had been hard by, and doubtless enjoyed the businesslike way in which O'Neil handled a delicate situation, but they were carrying out their orders received
from no less an authority than the chief of
police—to hold themselves aloof from the
visiting man-of-war's men, and under no cir-
cumstances to make arrests unless for the
sailors' own safety.

The little incident was all over in a few
moments, and before the occupants of any
other carriage could reach the scene to inquire
into the cause of the disturbance, Phil was
back again in his own carriage, writing
the number given him by the sailor in his
pocket note-book, to be saved for future
reference.

"Not hurt, only jolted a bit," was his ex-
planation to the inquiries of his companions.

"Did you notice beauty in distress on the
rear seat of the auto?" Lieutenant Winston's
eyes were twinkling. "There were two of
them, and, by Jove! I envied you standing
there championing the fallen, with their ad-
ming eyes upon you."

He read the surprise in Phil's face. "What,
didn't see them! My! it looked to me as if
you were playing up to the part. I'll wager
that the chap driving will have a bad half
hour with them for his recklessness."
Phil decided not to announce his suspicions, for after all he might be mistaken. The man's voice certainly sounded like the one in the next compartment in the train, but then there was a great similarity between English voices to an American ear.

The arrival of the leaders at the gates of the palace grounds cut short further speculation upon the incident.

"On foot from here," they were told by obsequious gentlemen in waiting, and glad to be able to stretch their limbs after the drive, the officers alighted, and were conducted through the Emperor's magnificent gardens to the large pavilion where the fête was to be held.

For the next hour the two midshipmen felt that they were peeping at a scene from fairy-land. The grace and color of everything the eye touched upon was pleasing—the foliage of the trees, the profusion of flowers, the delicate perfume impregnating the air. Silks, satins, and gold lace were on every hand. Men whose names were household words for diplomacy and war were where a hand could be reached out to touch them.
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"This is as near fame as I'll ever get, probably," Sydney whispered as the well-known features of the prime minister appeared at his elbow, their coat sleeves touching in the crowd.

"Look at Winston over there," Phil returned in the same spirit of fun. "That's as near to a naval hero as he'll be for some time."

So engrossed were the lads in noting the famous Japanese statesmen and celebrities of two foreign wars, whose likenesses had become familiar to them from studies of the history of this wonderful island kingdom, that an elderly gentleman had been striving to speak to them for several moments before they became aware of his presence.

Turning, both midshipmen grasped eagerly the outstretched hand of the American ambassador.

"I have you both here, after all, and I mean to hold on to you if I must imprison you to do it," the Honorable Henry Tillotson exclaimed, shaking their hands warmly and smiling down upon them from his stand on the grassy embankment.
"Nothing would suit us better, eh, Syd?" Phil cried gladly.

A young girl, dressed all in white, stood at the ambassador's side, but he paid her no attention, so delighted was he in welcoming the two lads. She smiled happily upon the scene, while her gloved hand plucked her father's arm gently to remind him of her presence.

The passing crowd glanced admiringly at the group, and especially at the graceful American girl.

The ambassador was still oblivious of her. His kindly face beamed with pleasure, and he was loath to give up the sturdy brown hands within his own.

Then came a sudden pause, and the smile on Mr. Tillotson's face died suddenly away. His thoughts had quickly traveled far off to the Philippine Islands, where he had last seen these young men beside him. He had gone there to bring away the body of an only boy—a son whom he had loved, but who had grieved his father's heart by his wild and erratic life. A soldier's grave had sealed within it his boy and all the bitterness that
had been in the father's breast for him. And these young men, barely more than boys, had been important actors in the closing tragedy of that son's life. One of them had led a forlorn hope in an endeavor to save him from the Filipino traitor who had taken his life, and yet there this boy stood—Philip Perry—in the bright sunlight, and he would never see his son again.

But his boy had been a soldier, and had died a soldier's death. The joy of the present must not be marred.

The ambassador was being attentively observed by the young girl at his elbow; she had seen his keen joy upon greeting these two striking young American officers, and then almost immediately had seen the smile fade and his shoulders perceptibly droop, and her womanly instinct was at once alert to help him overcome this burden of sorrow and dead hope.

"Father, I shall have to introduce myself, if you forget your parental duty," she whispered softly in his ear.

This brought the wandering thoughts of the sorrowing man to the scene before him.
He was again his jovial self. His arm went out and about the girlish waist and he drew her gently to his side.

"Why, child, I thought you were with the Kingsleys," he said. "My daughter, Helen," he added proudly.

The midshipmen bowed. Phil felt a deep blush mount to his face as he took her proffered fingers. He had expected to see a child, and here was a grown up young lady. Yet he assured himself that he was not sorry.

"I feel as if I had known you both for years," she said cordially. "We came in a motor," she added to her father's exclamation. "That was how we arrived before you." Phil cast a swift glance of inquiry at her, and the quick look of understanding in Helen Tillotson's face brought again the blush to his cheek. She had been one of the two ladies in the car he had stopped. Then she would know the name of the man who had run down the sailor. "I don't want to go into the receiving tent with the Kingsleys, when I can go in with my own countrymen," Helen continued coaxingly to her father.

"I must present Captain Rodgers and his
officers, Helen," the ambassador returned, his face anxious. "I thought you were quite satisfied with the plan. You are very uncertain," he added in some annoyance. "You know how much the Japanese think of etiquette in these formal affairs."

"Why not go in with Mr. Perry and me?" Sydney asked, as he stepped forward eagerly to the girl's side. "We are not important—midshipmen don't count for much with all this rank about." Phil smiled broadly on his companion for so ably saving the situation; the ambassador appeared greatly relieved, while Helen gladly accepted the offered escort.

"They are going in now," she exclaimed, letting go her father's arm as a Japanese aide-de-camp of high naval rank bowed ceremoniously to the ambassador and offered himself as their companion to escort them into the presence of their Majesties.

The two midshipmen experienced that sensation that every one has felt who has marched behind a band as they walked slowly between two lines of Japanese imperial guards, their rifles held rigidly at the "present," while the
Emperor’s band played the impressive national anthem of Japan. Ahead of them were many notables; the diplomatic corps in their court dress, their breasts emblazoned with jeweled orders and decorations; officers of the army and navy, and with these were the naval and military attachés from foreign lands. Helen and her midshipmen followed after the military and naval men, while behind them came the court set of Tokyo.

Neither of the lads remembered afterward much of what happened when they were once inside of the spacious receiving tent; its walls hung with flags to represent one great red and white chrysanthemum, emblematic of both the flower and the Mikado’s family crest. To Phil the Emperor’s face had been a blur, while the Empress he could recall only as a slight figure in black with many sparkling jewels. It was over in a moment, and the three young people found themselves strolling together along one of the beautifully kept garden paths.

“Isn’t it marvelous?” Helen exclaimed as she saw the wonder in the lads’ faces. “The Japanese are the most artistic people in the
world. Every place they touch turns into a fairy-land."

"What strikes me most forcibly," Phil replied enthusiastically, "is how such matter-of-fact, serious people as they are can find time to be so artistic. Now with us in America we find ourselves too busy keeping up with the progress of the day to indulge in art and beauty. We leave that to those who have nothing else to do."

"I know," Helen said sorrowfully, "and more's the pity. We are so prosaic in America; while here even the poorest artisan has the magic gift of beautifying what he creates. A thing that displeases the eye, never mind how strongly it is made, is a failure."

"And all this fuss is being made over the blooming of a flower," Sydney said questioningly. "We don't have any such fête in our country."

"I see you don't know your own country," Helen replied banteringly. "In California they have the flower battles when the roses are in full bloom, and they crown a king and queen, while in New Orleans they have the winter carnival. Both ideas are very similar"
to the flower fêtes in Japan, only here there is no necessity to crown a king.”

They stopped before a number of large plants which appeared covered with flowers; the stalk of each had been secured to a stick stuck in the ground to support its burden of blossoms.

“'There is the highest chrysanthemum cultivation,’ Helen said, indicating the bush; ‘you may count sometimes one thousand flowers on a single plant.’"

The lads looked disappointedly at the tiny blossoms.

“'They don’t look like the chrysanthemums we know,’ Phil said. ‘They are so small. Ours are big and massive.’

“'So were these before the Japanese began the cultivation,’ the girl returned. ‘They consider our flowers crude and ugly. The highest art is accomplished when one small plant is grown to give many hundred blossoms.’

Phil strived to appear interested in the cultivation of Japan’s national flower, but his thoughts were mostly upon the identity of the man in the next compartment on the
train from Tokyo. He was on the point of inquiring from Helen Tillotson the name of the driver of the machine she had come in, but he decided that it would be more seemly if she first said something about the accident. The lad had not long to wait, for as they turned about Sydney left them and he found himself alone with the girl.

"You were splendid this afternoon," she said enthusiastically. "I was so glad to see Mr. Impey taken to task for his reckless driving."

"I had no idea you were in the machine," Phil returned, highly pleased at her friendliness. "I hope you weren't annoyed at being held there before such a crowd. I saw it happen and my anger got the better of me. I really didn't intend to be theatrical," he added, blushing fiercely.

"You weren't a bit," Helen hastened to assure him, "but I was so incensed at Mr. Impey's retort to the anxious sailor, who was only giving him some well-meant advice, that I have refused to ride back with the Kingsleys in his car."

"The sailor was not hurt," Phil said
thoughtfully, "and I hope I haven't made one of your friends my enemy. He is here, I suppose?" he asked, his pulse beating quicker as he remembered the similarity in voice to the man on the train.

"Yes, we shall see him before long," she replied. "He goes everywhere, and knows every one in Tokyo worth knowing."

They had come to a crossway in the path; the conversation had died out from lack of a topic. Phil contemplated the regular profile of the girl beside him.

"We will turn here," she said, indicating the path to the left, "and go to the refreshment tent. That's where we shall find all our friends."

"I am in no hurry to return," he exclaimed, stopping suddenly.

"You don't know how anxious you are to return until you meet all the dainty little Japanese maidens waiting to serve you with all sorts of nice things to eat and drink," she said smiling. "Besides," she added archly, "I haven't met all our officers from the 'Alaska.' I know, of course, that Mr. Philip Perry is a host in himself, but——"
“I am sorry you think me so selfish and self-centred,” he interrupted, much confused. “You are so different from what I expected,” he blurted out. “I thought you were only a little girl. Won’t you forgive me for sending you all those senseless messages in my letters to your father?”

Helen bit her lips. “Oh, it was very nice of you to send them,” she said.

“Would you mind introducing me to Mr. Impey?” Phil asked, bravely changing the subject and speaking the wish uppermost in his mind. “I’d like to apologize for my rudeness to him. I did not know, until Lieutenant Winston told me, that ladies were in the machine.”

While talking they had approached the refreshment tent, and Helen was at once surrounded by Phil’s messmates from the “Alaska,” all anxious for an introduction.

The two midshipmen soon found themselves on the outskirts of the crowd. Helen had promised the introduction to Mr. Impey if Phil would only locate him, so the two companions drifted along on the lookout for him.
"I have an idea, Syd," Phil whispered, "that this Mr. Impey of the automobile is the conspirator I overheard on the train. Here's a chance for some nice work to run him to earth if he is. A voice is a dangerous identification to pin much faith upon, but people have been betrayed by that means in lots of criminal cases."

"Don't put too much confidence in such an airy clue," Sydney replied; "but it's worth investigation, at all events."

Leaving Sydney with Captain Rodgers, Phil strolled slowly away on his quest for the owner of the automobile. The crowd about him was dense, and he soon saw the hopelessness of locating even a familiar face in such a throng. Dazed by the crowd and still speculating upon Impey's identity, his eyes were on the gravel path. Suddenly a Japanese lieutenant barred his way. The lad politely stepped aside for him to pass.

Then he was aware that this naval man had prodded him in the ribs. A flush of annoyance came into his face. It was not pleasant to have one's thoughts so rudely interrupted. He raised his eyes and gazed
blankly at a Japanese officer standing directly in his path and laughing heartily up at him. Phil was conscious of even white teeth and a deep black moustache. No spark of recognition came to him as he once more stepped aside, murmuring an apology for his awkwardness. But the obstacle still was in front of him.

"Perry! how are you, Perry!" The naval officer's English, with scarce an accent, opened the flood-gates of memory.

“Well, of all the luck,” Phil exclaimed heartily, the annoyance of a moment since dying in his face as he seized the outstretched hand of his former classmate at the Naval Academy at Annapolis.

“Taki, you young heathen,” he cried, hugging the young Japanese boyishly.

Mutakito Takishima was laughing joyously, and in turn wringing Phil’s hand and slapping him over the shoulder.

“I am so glad to see you, Perry,” Takishima cried again, renewing his demonstrations of affection.

This meeting of two old friends and their evident joy at seeing each other again caused
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the curious ones to stop, and the little Japanese saw that very soon the walk would become crowded.

"Will you come with me, Perry?" he asked, and Phil, accepting readily, marched away arm in arm with his classmate.

They made their way to one of the many tents spread on the velvety grass of the garden. Phil gazed in admiration at the wonderful construction of these frail out-of-door houses. The material was of many delicate tints, and all bedecked with flags. The floors were covered with costly rugs, while polished tables and upholstered chairs were strewn about in profusion, the tables well covered with refreshments.

As they entered several dainty little Japanese girls came running up with their quaint shuffling gait, and bowed low, uttering polite words of welcome in their own language.

Takashima clicked his heels together and bowed almost to the ground before these sparkling-eyed little ladies, dressed in exquisitely embroidered silk and satin kimonos.

"Miss Kamikura and my sister, Hama-san," Takishima said, smiling with keen enjoyment
at Phil's evident pleasure. Phil bowed and shook hands in American fashion with the two bright-faced Japanese girls. He recognized the name of one to be the same as an illustrious admiral.

"My chief's daughter," Takishima added, in a low tone to Phil, while the young ladies with their own hands brought refreshments from the heaping tables. "They are ladies of the household, assisting our Empress at the garden fête."

Phil gazed with renewed interest at these doll-like beauties, wishing to speak, yet believing that surely neither could understand English.

"How old are they?" he thought—"surely not beyond sixteen years."

Takishima had been talking to the young ladies in his own soft language, while Phil studied their enthusiastic faces. He knew that he was the subject of the conversation, and felt very conscious until Hama-san changed this feeling to one of delighted surprise.

"Then you are one of my brother's schoolmates," Takishima's sister, Hama-san, ex-
claimed, again bowing gracefully to Phil. The midshipman was startled to hear one of these delicate dolls speak his own difficult language, and the surprise in his face caused all three of his companions to laugh gayly.

"You speak English!" he gasped, and then joined in the laugh on himself. "How stupid of me," he added hastily. "O Hama-san was at Vassar while Taki was at Annapolis.

"Do you speak English too?" he asked of Miss Kamikura.

Cho Kamikura, or O Chio-san, as she was called by her friends, shook her head, smiling nevertheless into the lad's face.

Phil almost dropped the plate from which he was eating, as he suddenly saw his sought for Mr. Impey enter the tent and come directly toward his party. Takishima grasped his hand cordially, while his woman companion stopped to speak with Phil's new found girl friends. Then, his pulse beating fast, he felt Takishima's hand on his arm, and he turned about to encounter the not too friendly eyes of Impey.

"Perry, let me introduce you to Mr. Impey. He is a great friend of His Excellency, the
American ambassador,” and then the ceremonious Japanese officer introduced Phil to Mrs. Kingsley and then to Mr. Kingsley, who had lagged behind his wife.

This was the automobile party with whom Helen Tillotson had come to the garden fête, and who on their way had run down the sailor’s rikisha. Phil glanced covertly at Impey as he bowed over the hands of the two Japanese young ladies. “A friend of his ambassador and, of course, of Helen,” he thought; “then he could hardly be the same man who had insisted in the railway coach that America was intentionally misleading Japan, and would eventually force a war upon her to wrest from her the fruits of her victory over Russia.”

“By Jove, Mr. Perry,” Mr. Impey exclaimed loudly as he returned to Phil’s side, “it was very stupid of me to run down one of your sailors. I was most awfully glad to find he was unhurt.”

Phil thanked him quietly, but without enthusiasm. He felt that his sympathy was not genuine.

“You championed him beautifully,” Impey added, smiling patronizingly. “The ladies
with me were much impressed, and showed me their displeasure."

Phil blushed deeply. The apology that he had determined upon stuck in his throat. He decided now it was unnecessary. There was a vague, intangible something in the man's voice which made Phil suspicious that Impey was not what he would like to appear. What it was Phil was at a loss to describe, but he resolved that he would give his best efforts to discovering it, and hoped that his judgment had not misled him. He now believed that Impey and the man in the next compartment on the train were one and the same person.
CHAPTER III

WAR TALK

They had only just finished the cooling refreshments so daintily served them, when the American party, led by one of Japan's most illustrious admirals, entered the tent. Lieutenant Takishima was on his feet in an instant, his heels firmly together, and his hand raised to his cap vizor. Phil followed the little Japanese's example, and grasped the naval hero's hand warmly as the latter stepped over to greet him.

"Admiral Kamikura is my chief; he is our Minister of Marine," Takishima whispered as the high ranking naval officer returned to Captain Rodgers' side. "It was he who commanded the cruiser squadron during our late war."

Phil nodded: his eyes were devouring admiringly and with a great deal of reverence the short well-built naval officer. He marveled at the youthful appearance of this
admiral; Captain Rodgers looked years older. He turned questioning eyes upon his foreign classmate.

"He is very young for an admiral?" There was mystification in his voice.

Takishima shrugged his shoulders.

"About forty-five," he answered. "He has been an admiral two years."

Phil sighed thoughtfully. He was thinking of the difference between the two navies. Captain Rodgers, he knew, had passed his fifty-fifth birthday, and was no nearer than three years to his rear admiral's commission.

The Kingsleys had left Mr. Impey with his new found friends, and had joined Miss Tillotson and the newcomers. As if by mutual consent Takishima and his party had withdrawn to a small table farthest from the refreshment booth where Sydney had enthusiastically pounced upon the Japanese lieutenant, and the two were demonstrative over this unlooked-for meeting.

"Less than two years ago, Taki, you were only a midshipman, and now you have two gold stripes on your sleeve!" Sydney ex-
claimed in wonder. "That's promotion for you!"

"It is a high compliment to your academy at Annapolis," Takishima replied, smiling blandly. "You and Perry would now be lieutenants if you were in our navy."

"Oh, that would be impossible," Phil laughed gayly. "Imagine our giving orders to your sailors."

"Do you remember how you tacked ship in the 'Severn' on the practice cruise?" Sydney asked reminiscently, his happy face all smiles at the recollection. "You were so rattled you had forgotten your English, but you sang out your orders in Japanese at the right time and she went about beautifully. You knew the time, but didn't remember the words, eh, Taki?"

Takishima was not the slightest bit hurt at this playful jibe. His answer showed that only too plainly.

"Do you remember Lieutenant-Commander Hesler?" he exclaimed happily. "Well, I tried to imitate the sound of his orders and I don't know what I said. I think most of it was Japanese, but I was not so frightened
that I forgot when the orders should be given."

"Did you see anything of the war?" Phil asked the question suddenly.

"I was in the big battle with Admiral Kamikura; on his staff," Takishima answered proudly.

The two midshipmen gazed with envious eyes at their classmate. They now regarded him in a different light. He was no longer the unassuming little midshipman they had known at the naval academy; inoffensive, good natured, ever willing to play a practical joke and never hurt when one was played upon him. This diminutive youngster, probably a year younger than they, had taken part in, seen with his own eyes, the greatest modern naval engagement of the century. He had seen great battle-ships in action, had experienced the horror of high explosive shells bursting near him. He had seen many men killed and battle-ships sink beneath the seas, carrying their doomed crews with them.

"There was one point on which you were touchy, Taki, and I could never understand why," Sydney said, and immediately looked
as if he would have liked to withdraw the question, for he saw a cloud of annoyance pass over Takishima’s face.

“At being called a ‘Jap’?” Takishima asked. His face was quite sober as he made his inquiry, and received Sydney’s nod.

“Would you like me to call you a Yankee?” The question was asked almost fiercely. “Well, that’s why I didn’t like being called a Jap. I don’t know why, and neither do you, but you see we both object to the words being used to us by people of another race.”

“I’ll try to remember, Taki,” Sydney agreed in conciliation, “but we Americans are so prone to abbreviate everything. We don’t mean to belittle you when we speak of your people as ‘Japs.’”

Mr. Impey, although silent, had not missed a word. He was carefully studying the characters of this little scene. How might he use them in the plans that he had been carefully formulating in his scheming brain? Trained to diplomacy, he quickly perceived the relationship existing between these naval men. Their training had been along parallel lines, but one had gone back to his own people and
had been entrusted with duties high above the grasp of his classmates in naval school days. The Americans impressed Impey as irresponsible boys, while the young Japanese seemed deeper, more thoughtful and calculating. Impey could see that each in time of peril would not shirk danger; but the Americans would be rash, while the Japanese lieutenant would be cautious and calculating.

"And you," Takishima asked quickly, to change the subject; "you have seen service?"

The lads nodded their heads, while Phil answered in an apologetic voice.

"In the Philippines, in China and South America, but nothing like your experiences. You must tell us about it some time."

"There isn't much to tell," Takishima replied truthfully. "I was very much frightened at first, but afterward I became so excited I forgot my fear.

"Yet I don't remember a thing that happened," he went on. "I tried to afterward when the admiral directed me to write a report. All I could say was we opened fire at the enemy and they fired back at us."
Sydney and Phil both laughed at Takishima's droll way of putting things.

Suddenly Takishima rose to go.

"Don't let me disturb you," he begged politely. "My admiral, on whose staff I am, has already gone, so I must follow." He shook hands affectionately with his classmates. "I am sure you and Mr. Impey will have plenty to talk about," he added. "Mr. Impey is very much interested in war-ships."

Phil believed he detected that Impey started imperceptibly at Takishima's words; but nothing he had said seemed to Phil to be of significance. He welcomed an opportunity to talk with this man and perhaps surprise him into that which would betray him. They watched Takishima walk briskly away, his small dirk, the Samurai emblem of honor, jingling at his side.

"Nice chap that," Impey said quietly. "He's the Minister of Marine's right hand aide."

They had all risen to bid Takishima good-bye, and now found themselves once more on the gravel walk of the path.

"Come," Impey exclaimed as he led the
way. "It's not often we barbarians get a glimpse within the royal inclosure, so we must make the most of it while we can."

Robert Impey knew when to be silent. While the midshipmen were conversing with their classmate he had listened discreetly; but now he displayed the conversational art which had lifted him from an humble accountant in a Chinese bank to a position of wealth and influence. What his position was Phil and Sydney as yet had no knowledge.

He described to them the objects of artistic interest about them, and after a quarter of an hour's intimate talk even Phil had almost changed his mind and felt that such a delightful personage could hardly be a two-faced rogue.

They had exhausted the beauties of nature but were still strolling through the gardens when a group of Japanese army and naval officers came suddenly around a turn in the path. The midshipmen's eyes noted their erect carriages, their breasts covered with medals, commemorating deeds of valor accomplished in two wars. The Americans saluted, and their brothers in service stepped
aside politely, bowing low in their own fashion. Impey doffed his silk hat, and greeted one of their number by name, advancing to take his outstretched hand. In a second the group had passed onward.

"That was Captain Inaba, one of the brightest men in the Japanese navy," he added as he joined the midshipmen, who had strolled ahead slowly during the short interruption. "He is the man your navy will have to be careful of in case of war. I dare say he has fought it all out and could tell you just where the battles will be and who will win."

"You talk as if war were an accomplished fact," Phil blurted out; the idea of the identity of Impey with the "man in the next compartment" was again strong in his mind. "I see no reason why my country and Japan should go to war. Certainly we don't want a war with anybody, least of all Japan, whom we have helped to become one of the great world powers."

An expression of cunning came into Impey's face, which was unseen by the two lads, while he began to explain earnestly. "Japan is an enigma to you Western men."
Her diplomats have not a selfish drop of blood in their bodies. Every thought is for the empire. At this very moment the history of Japan for the next twenty years has been tentatively written by men like Captain Inaba, whom we have just passed. Every step has probably been considered and solved by their tacticians. Is war with America then such an impossibility?"

"War with my country would be more of an impossibility than it is," Phil exclaimed angrily, "if those who are intriguing behind her back would only come out in the open to do their talking." He glared fixedly at Impey.

"Your own countrymen at home are doing most of the harm," Impey replied with an expressive shrug. "Your labor party is alienating what good feeling Japan has had for America."

"That has been adjusted," Sydney said, up to now content only to listen, "and the immigration question has been made a national one."

"Yes, but the friction stirred up by the labor unions on the Pacific coast between your
countrymen and Japanese immigrants has been echoed in every part of Japan."

"And there are those here in Japan of neither nationality who take great pleasure in fanning the blaze of misunderstanding," Phil exclaimed pointedly; but Impey appeared perfectly serene under this direct insinuation.

"I know that our newspapers have often harped on a probable war with Japan," Phil continued more quietly, "but it's ridiculous." To the younger it seemed almost ungentlemanly to talk so belligerently while they were the guests of the Japanese nation. "The United States have a very much larger fleet than Japan can maintain, and besides, she knows that if a war should occur Japan must provoke it."

"Your country has been at peace for over fifty years," Impey replied, "for the war with Spain was too insignificant to count, and a wise man once said that 'a war every fifty years was an excellent tonic for a nation, if it wished to avoid becoming commercial and effeminate.'"

"Our nation will not provoke war," Phil
insisted. "There'd be no object in it. Japan is too far away for us to quarrel with."

"Then you believe that nothing would induce the United States to go to war with Japan?" Impey asked. "Even if Japan should suddenly buy China's new navy, for instance."

Both midshipmen gasped in surprise.

"Where is it?" they both asked excitedly.

"On its way from Europe to China," Impey returned, smiling blandly, "with Chinese crews and in command of Admiral Ting. You see you are not too well up on what is going on in the world," he added pointedly.

"Can you tell me the reason of the presence of your fleet in Manila Bay?" he asked.

"Of course," Phil replied quickly. "It came out on a practice cruise and will return within a month."

Impey shrugged his shoulders, a knowing smile on his face that angered Phil greatly. "If Japan means to buy these ships—then look out; for if she does—it means war."

Further talk on this dangerous topic was cut short by the discovery that the American
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party had driven away. The midshipmen were much chagrined to find that no carriage had been left behind for them. The Kingsleys had left a note for Mr. Impey saying that they had gone on with the ambassador and the American officers to the embassy.

"Come with me in the machine. I can set you down anywhere you say," Impey suggested as he cranked up his waiting machine. "From this note I fear I am not included in your ambassador's invitation," he added.

Phil hesitated; he was still angry at himself for allowing Impey to discuss with him the relations between America and Japan. He felt that it were better to have nothing to do with this man, who was apparently leading a dual life in Tokyo—one minute advising a Japanese nobleman that America was insincere, and the next, assuring the Americans that Japan was unfriendly.

Sydney appeared to have no feeling in the matter, for he was already in the rear seat. Phil followed, the consoling thought in his mind that Impey might bear careful watching too and that this was the best way to do it.
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Impey threw in the clutch, and the machine glided along the macadam roadway.

"To the American Embassy, I suppose?" he questioned over his shoulder as they turned into a narrower street. The speed did not slacken, but the horn was being sounded in warning to the startled holiday crowds that filled the street ahead of them.

Phil managed to answer in the affirmative, but his voice was lost in the wail of the syren.

The crowd ahead had quickly cleared the road, while Impey, seeing the way clear, was soon tearing at full speed down the street. The official buildings of the empire flashed past on either hand.

Opposite the navy building a great crowd had collected to do honor to one of Japan's naval heroes.

"Hadn't you better slow up?" Sydney asked apprehensively, as he realized the density of the crowd, but the driver of the machine gave no heed to the anxious voice behind him. The masterful way in which he guided the great car in and out among carriages, rikishas and pedestrians won the admiration
of the midshipmen in spite of their dread of an accident.

"He certainly can handle her," Phil exclaimed, "but it raises my hair to see the close shaves he makes."

Just ahead a figure in uniform was running at the side of the roadway. It was plain that he was an official messenger, and carrying government despatches.

Phil gave a warning shout. It seemed to the lad that the machine was bearing down directly upon him—too dangerously close for comfort.

"Why doesn't he sheer off?" Phil gasped. "That man must be deaf."

Everything happened so quickly that no appreciable time had elapsed between the sighting of the messenger ahead and the sudden stop made by the car just as the man tried to cross in front of it.

Tingling with nervousness, the midshipmen had cried out repeatedly at Impey's recklessness, but he turned a deaf ear. The pedestrians could all be depended upon to jump away at the first sound of the horn. Impey doubtless thought the messenger ahead would
do the same; but unfortunately for his calculations the man was stone deaf, a pensioned sailor, whose hearing had been ruined in an explosion on shipboard. As the car approached, he was first conscious of its presence, but not its direction, from the information received in the faces of people about him. He suddenly stopped in his tracks bewildered. Even now all would have been well had he not done just the one thing that could lead to disaster.

"Stop her!" both lads cried in horror, but even then they realized it was too late.

With faces blanched with terror the three men sat rooted to their seats. They had seen the poor man fall directly in front of the speeding machine in a wild attempt to save himself from an unknown danger.

A cry had risen from the hundreds of bystanders. It held an ill-omened note of menace. The faces were no longer smiling, but wore a look of horror and righteous anger. The machine was completely surrounded. Phil would have leaped from the car to help the injured man, but he was met with open opposition and was forced back into his seat.
Aghast, the midshipmen saw Impey in the grasp of nearly a dozen threatening Japanese. His hands still clutched the steering wheel, and in a second his perfectly-fitting frock-coat was torn from his body. His face was white with fear, and his eyes, turned toward them, had a dumb animal appeal. To be hauled from his seat meant instant death at the hands of the outraged mob.

The car was given a sudden lurch by the efforts of several score of men who had lifted the forward end from the ground. With a shudder of horror they saw the form of the injured one carried away from under the cruel wheels.

Impey yet clutched his steering wheel and fought off the mob with a strength born of desperation. The two lads were upon their feet, expecting any moment to find themselves attacked by the Japanese, for a mob has no reasoning power, and with it the uniform of an American naval officer would have no significance.

However, there was no time to speculate upon their own dangerous position. Impey’s peril was imminently before their startled
eyes. He must be saved, even if in the attempt they drew down the wrath of the mob upon their own heads. They could not see him dragged to death without making an effort in his defense.

"Help me," Impey cried piteously.

The appeal was not unanswered. The two midshipmen cleared the front seat in a bound, and laid firm hands upon the trembling body of the terrified man.

"Hold him tight, Phil," Sydney exclaimed as he threw himself upon those who were attempting to drag Impey from his seat. Sydney's face was determined, only no anger was displayed, and he relied alone upon his strength to break the holds of the mob. The surprised Japanese gave way. They saw the lad's uniform and the authoritative manner of his movements, not as an enemy but rather as a peacemaker. They withdrew before him, and waited as if making up their minds what to do.

A European, past middle age, suddenly pushed his way to Sydney's side, just as he had stooped to pick up a long white envelope which had caught his eye as it lay on the
ground nearly under the fore wheels of the car.

"That's mine," the newcomer exclaimed eagerly, snatching it from Sydney's hand and thrusting it into his pocket.

"Can I help you, Mr. Impey?" he asked deferentially. Impey drew him into the car beside him, and then almost collapsed in his arms. Sydney still held the crowd at bay, when he was startled to see it of a sudden surge toward him. A fear came into his heart as he thought of how it would appear for him in uniform to be fighting a Japanese mob. Phil from his position of vantage had understood the movement, and jumped to the ground by his friend's side just as the crowd parted and two American sailors shot through, bringing up almost in the arms of the midshipmen.
CHAPTER IV

STIRRING UP TROUBLE

"I'd like to have seen the garden fête." The speaker arose from his seat at a desk, pushed a mass of papers aside and glanced at his watch.

"By Jove, it's nearly over," he added in some surprise. He put his watch back in his pocket, and took a coat and hat from a peg in the corner. "There's my stuff on the desk. I am ashamed to be the author of it.

"Jim, I think I'll go around and take a look at these naval officers I've been maligning. They'll be coming away from the party just about the time I get there, and I've a card of admission here in my pocket.

"Hello! this is your coat. Why on earth don't you have the lining sewed up? You'll be losing something out of it before long if you don't."

George Randall, newspaper correspondent,
hung up the other's coat and took his own, putting it on thoughtfully.

"Jim, you haven't any business sticking to such an uncertain game as this," he added, a note of sympathy in his voice. "You've a family, and ought to be home earning honest money."

The man addressed, probably twenty years older than the speaker, laughed uneasily.

"I was attracted by the price, the same as you were, George," he replied regretfully. "Neither of us understood what would be expected of us, and if we weren't so hard up we wouldn't have accepted. But we are in it now, and there's no turning back."

"Some one of these mornings," Randall said gravely, "we're going to wake up to find we've been caught, and I'd hate to think what the Japs will do to us. Boil us in oil, probably. That used to be the favorite punishment for high treason in the days of the late Shoguns.

"I am frightened at Impey's methods," he added. "He's playing a dangerous game, and now with this American cruiser in port he'll have to be doubly careful."
"Well, as long as he keeps that turbine yacht in Yokohama harbor my mind will be easy," James Wells exclaimed, smiling at his companion's earnestness. "The Japs don't know that she has the speed of a torpedo boat."

Randall's hand was on the door-knob, but suddenly he seemed to change his mind, and walked back to where his companion was standing.

"I feel like a cur, writing the things I do when I know they are all untrue." His voice was vehement and his young face wore a troubled look. "There's only a filmy web of truth for all the woof of falsehood. If I were not so completely up against it, I'd chuck the whole business and go back home."

James Wells' face hardened slightly, and he bit his lips to suppress an emotion which the younger man's words caused him to feel.

"Look what we've been doing here for the last year, nearly," Randall continued savagely. "Arousing these slow minded Japanese to believe that the United States is sitting up nights figuring out how to rob her of her spoils from Russia. Everything that has come up we've
turned to our ends. Those San Francisco immigrant cases we twisted about so that the Japanese believed that their people were being hung from the lamp-posts. Now we are trying to dispose of the Chinese battle-ships to the country that's silly enough to buy them. We've made the Japanese believe that the American fleet is only waiting to seize them before coming north from Manila and putting Japan entirely out of business.

"The surprise to me is," he added gravely, "that men like Captain Inaba and the Emperor's ministers believe it."

"When you hear a thing every day, served up to you with all kinds of fancy dressing, by and by you begin to believe there must be something to it," Wells answered with a smile. "Your eloquence, George, is so wonderful that sometimes, 'pon my soul, I believe it myself."

Randall smiled grimly at the implied compliment to his pen.

"It's a low underhand game we are playing," Randall exclaimed. "We are nice Americans to be doing such work. I'd like to see that yellow sheet, the 'Shimbunshi,'
suppressed; then you and I would be out of a job.

"Yes, and ten thousand a year," Wells answered; "that's more than we'll ever make again; and most of mine is going to a bank at home."

Randall heaved a sigh.

"I wish I was on to Impey's real game," he said thoughtfully. "He knows all the big men here. He goes up to see the Chinese ambassador and dines with him informally. He just came back from Peking the other day and let drop a remark to me in a thoughtless way that told me that he knew Lord Li, and Chang-Shi-Tung well. He learned Chinese from one of the big men there who has a seat on the Wai-Wu-Pu, the privy council to the throne of China. There's more in it than just selling battle-ships, I'll make a bet on that."

Randall shook himself very much as a big dog would after coming out of the water, as he exclaimed feelingly:

"Of course there's more in it. Impey's stirring up a war between our country and Japan, and what attracts me is the risk we run."
It's stimulating to know that if we're ever caught a Japanese prison and rice three times a day will be our reward. And then you see, Jim, if we can bring on this war, we're right on the ground for war correspondents. That's an inducement for even an old shell-back newspaper man like you."

"The world owes each of us a living, I suppose," Wells answered sadly. "The more risks, the better pay."

He picked up Randall's "copy" from his desk and glanced carelessly over it. Then a spark of interest showed in his sombre face, almost immediately supplanted by oblivious concentration. Randall gave an impatient shrug and, seeing that his friend would be absorbed for quite half an hour, he threw himself in a chair to wait patiently until the reading was over.

The minutes ticked away on the big clock opposite him, and he drummed nervously with his finger nails on the arm of his chair. His glance roamed from his companion and back to the clock.

"I told Impey I'd go to the garden fête." His voice was in a half aside. "I don't know
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how he worked it to get me an invitation." He took it from his pocket and glanced at the big black Japanese letters with the golden chrysanthemum at the top. "I suppose it reads, 'His Majesty the Emperor of Japan requests the extreme pleasure of Mr. George Randall’s company to a garden fête to meet Her Majesty the Empress.' I hope the dear lady was not greatly disappointed when I didn’t appear." His face broke into a happy smile at the ridiculousness of his thoughts. "With all the viscounts and barons, to say nothing of counts and sirs, I hope it was really a relief to Her Majesty to find I had not come.

"I wonder if I should write her and explain there was no offense, but that I became so absorbed in something I was doing, to put it plainly, to make trouble for her government, that I quite forgot the time of day. But I am sure Impey made up for my absence. That fellow is a wizard, the way he pulls the wool over people’s eyes. He’s as thick as fleas with the American ambassador—and, by Jove!" Randall stopped his spoken introspection to whistle softly, "even
the ambassador’s daughter has been taken in. He has a picturesque part in this show. I believe I’d like to take his end. I am not allowed to see; I only write from notes furnished me, like a blind novelist.”

“What’s all that rot you’re talking?” Wells had finished his reading and was regarding Randall, a half smile of amusement on his earnest face. “Do you know, George, you ought to be doing something worth while. This thing,” tapping the manuscript he was reading, “is a gem. How can you do it? The ‘Shimbunshi’ will make a big hit in its morning edition, and just at the time when Japan is entertaining our officers. To-morrow the American captain is to lunch with His Majesty.”

Randall heaved a sigh and rose from his chair. “Jim, if I could get out of this thing honorably, I’d do it to-day, but I can’t go back to that little old town in Indiana without money. They’ve got me here solid. Good-bye, Jim; I am going down the street and talk to some of those clean looking American sailors I saw this morning. I am just hungry to hear them talk. You’re such
an old musty bookworm that you don’t know what it is to pine for the latest slang from little old New York.”

After his companion had gone, James Wells sat silent at his desk. His mind was reviewing the last few years of his life, conjured out of the almost forgotten past by Randall’s boyish outburst.

Little by little his friend was making him see their calling through younger eyes. He was himself an old newspaper man. All news to him was merchandise to sell to the highest bidder. To highly color it, to make it more readable, was part of the game. No idea of being a traitor to his country or a spy had ever entered his even, methodical, sober thoughts until this youngster had sowed the insidious seeds. Was he really harming his country? He had never thought of it in that light. Every country was advancing in military and naval development and he had been put at the head of the Tokyo office of a newspaper syndicate whose avowed purpose was to collect all manner of news affecting the armaments and also the political relations between countries. If he thought that this
syndicate had for its aim to strain the relations to the breaking point of two naturally friendly countries, one of which he still considered his own, why then he would quit, and go back to a minor position on a big New York paper which he knew would always be open for him. He had not always been shown the effusions of Randall. His work was to systematically arrange the information received so that Impey and Randall could use it. He picked up George's manuscript and let his eyes wander slowly over the scrawl.

"It seems peculiarly paradoxical that a cruiser of the United States navy, commanded by an officer who until recently was at the head of the Bureau of Naval Intelligence, should be sent to Japan just at the time when the American battle-ship fleet having sailed for the Orient via the south of Africa, has arrived in Manila Bay. And is it less of a paradox that one of her officers is the inventor of a torpedo which is rumored to have the greatest range of any yet tried in any navy? Again another officer is known to be an experienced aeronaut, having been until recently the instructor with naval flying machines at
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Washington. If one will take the roster of officers and give it a close scrutiny he doubtless will discover that every method of prying into the naval preparedness of Japan for war is represented by an expert."

Wells looked up from his reading and there was a flash of fire in his steel-gray eyes. "George is a darned hypocrite. He had the nerve to write this, and then preach to me about our dishonorable trade.

"I wonder how much of this is true. Impy doubtless furnished him with the data." He seized the sheets, and read on while the clock ticked the seconds slowly away. Finally he finished, put the copy into an envelope, and struggled into his coat. "This must be in the 'Shimbunshi's' office this afternoon if it is to make the sensation intended," he muttered grimly to himself as he pulled his slouch hat over his thick hair. "I'll make sure and take it myself," he ended decidedly as he shoved the letter into his inside overcoat pocket and buttoned it tight before he issued forth into the street.

About the same time two sailormen were striding along one of the main thoroughfares
of Tokyo. They both towered head and shoulders above the people about them.

"It's been nearly five years since I first visited our little Japanese brothers. They're a curious lot, but, Bill, there ain't nothing soft about 'em."

Boatswain's Mate John O'Neil glanced as he spoke at his companion, Seaman Bill Marley, both from the "Alaska."

"In that war with the Ruskis they were right up to snuff," he continued, as they strolled along aimlessly. "They saw their work and they went for it, and stayed on the job until it was finished."

The two man-of-war's men had come to Tokyo on the special train for a forty-eight hours' liberty in that Eastern capital, and were enjoying themselves thoroughly. Everywhere they met welcoming smiles, and even the little urchins playing in the streets stopped, and raising their tiny hands aloft, cried "Banzai" as they passed.

The day was balmy; the air laden with perfume of many flowers. In the shops they had seen many beautiful things and had spent a portion of their slender pocket money on such
articles as took their fancy, marveling the while upon the smallness of the price.

"Say, Jack, look here; all this war talk is soap-suds, ain't it?" Bill Marley asked.

O'Neil contemplated the back of a man a half a block or so farther up the street before replying.

"He's in a big hurry about something," he muttered half aloud, and Bill Marley asked, "What's that?" for he had heard O'Neil speak, and thought it might be an answer to his question.

"Oh, about this war talk," O'Neil responded, his mind reverting from the stranger ahead, whom he made out to be a European in a big hurry to get somewhere. "I don't take no stock in it. There ain't nothing that I can see we've got to fight for, unless it's just to see who's the best man. This war business cost too many people too much money. These Japs are nice little fellows; they like us and they want to show us they like us. They are mighty proud of their knowledge of fighting, too, and they've got a code of honor they call 'Bushido,' 1 or something like it, which means,

1 Bushido is the code of chivalry in old Japan.
as far as I can find out, 'If any one insults you, and you can’t lick him, cut yourself open with a sharp knife.' Now fellows with ideas like that ain’t to be monkeyed with. If we treat ’em square and be careful about treading on this 'Bushy porcupine,' they’ll continue to yell 'banzai' at us, but if we get funny and put it over them in some way, they’re apt to tackle even us."

"And if we lick them," Bill Marley asked, "then I suppose they’ll take to the tall timbers and disembowel themselves?"

"That’s about the situation," O’Neil replied, "but as far as I can see there ain’t no sense in fighting. Can’t we leave these little fellows alone with their troubles? Ain’t we got enough to do in those South American republics, with them at each other’s throats every month?"

"Yes," Bill Marley acknowledged thoughtfully. "Why does any one want to spoil a nice place like Japan by going to war? I’d rather make a liberty here than any place I know—outside of the Bowery."

O’Neil paid this answer but scant attention. He had seen the European ahead fairly run
down the street and become lost within the crowd. Upon approaching nearer, a piece of white paper caught the sailor's eye as it lay on the tiny sidewalk, almost on the edge of the crowd. Had it been dropped by the European in his haste? The sailors picked it up, and Marley shoved it down the bosom of his shirt for safe-keeping. It was a long white envelope addressed to the "Editor of the 'Shimbunshi.'" O'Neil had read the inscription as Marley held it toward him.

"That's for a yellow journal published in Tokyo. Hold on to it, Bill," he instructed. "There's a row on here," he added excitedly as they pushed their way forward.

The two men soon realized that this crowd was more than a simple assemblage on a street corner. From a swaying motion inside it appeared that a struggle was in progress at its centre. They now again saw the stranger pushing his way through, his head towering above the shorter Japanese around him.

"I hope it ain't a rikisha fight," Bill said eagerly, as he hurried after his companion. "These rikisha coolies is mighty mean when you don't give 'em three times the fare."
"Come on, Bill, quick," O'Neil exclaimed, but there was scant need for urging. Both had seen enough to know that what was happening was a great deal more serious than a rikisha fight. The midshipmen were in danger from a mob.

"Put your shoulder in the small of my back and shove," O'Neil cried excitedly, as he dived into the crowd thickest about the machine, scattering the people left and right. They were at the wheel of the motor car before the mob could take in the meaning of this human battering-ram.

"What's the row, sir?" O'Neil asked hurriedly, turning toward the crowd and pulling up his sleeves in a businesslike way.

"We ran over a man," Phil replied in a nervous voice. "I hope he isn't dead. They took him from under the wheels and carried him over there," indicating a small house about the door of which many curious people had collected. "Can't we persuade the crowd to let him go on?" he added anxiously. "They would have killed him a moment ago."

O'Neil raised his voice and shouted "Junsan"
"WHAT'S THE ROW, SIR?"
at the top of his lungs several times. Immediately the crowd moved backward. Three or four policemen (Junsã) appeared suddenly as if they had leaped from within the earth and cleared the way in front of the machine.

"Tell them we'll answer for his appearance before the authorities," Phil said to O'Neil, in his excitement, believing that O'Neil could interpret for him. However, he was not far wrong, for the sailor's sign language was quite clear enough.

"Blow your horn and beat it, mister," O'Neil sharply directed the driver of the car. "It's getting to be a habit with you, I see," he added maliciously to Impey. "The man in such a hurry too," he murmured as he recognized the man on the front seat next the driver.

Impey made a hasty recovery, and with his horn blowing, the car glided cautiously away, leaving the Americans to grapple with the situation.

"It would have served him right if they had given him a sound beating," Sydney cried indignantly a few moments later as they looked down upon the white face of the vic-
tim lying on a mat within a tiny store opposite the scene of the accident. "Has a doctor come?" he asked solicitously; but the Japanese addressed only shook his head, saying something in his own language which Sydney interpreted correctly to mean that he did not understand.

"Why doesn't some one get a doctor?" he exclaimed. The strain of helplessly watching the sufferer was becoming unbearable. "Are you a doctor?" he asked as a uniformed naval officer forced his way through the curious throng and knelt at the injured man's side.

With fascinated eyes the lads watched this grave little Japanese examine the injured man. They saw his nervous hands move quickly over the senseless form, resting momentarily here and there to make sure before passing on to other parts of the crushed victim's body. Finally he rose to his feet while ready hands tenderly lifted the silent figure to carry him away.

"He will not die; luckily the wheels did not pass over him. Only contusion of the head and a broken leg," the little doctor said in studied English and with a very impress-
ive professional smile, as he shook hands with the midshipmen. "I was in the navy department building, and came as soon as I was informed. He is an employee in one of the offices, and was out with a message."

The midshipmen followed the doctor into the hallway of the navy building, where the injured man had been taken. They were quickly surrounded by naval officers, asking for the story of the accident. Phil found himself talking to Lieutenant Takishima, while behind him stood Captain Inaba listening eagerly. There seemed to be much concern over the deplorable affair. Several officers went out hurriedly and soon returned, their faces grave, to make their report to Captain Inaba. What was the meaning of so much concern over the mishap to a mere employee?

"Can I not give him something, poor man?" Phil inquired anxiously, producing his purse. "Of course, Mr. Impey will provide for him, but maybe a little money would aid his family." He innocently attempted to put the bank-note into the victim's pocket, but much to his surprise his arm was held
tightly by Captain Inaba. A look into the naval man's face convinced him that the attitude of those about them was not friendly. Did they then blame Sydney and him for the accident? Surely they could not be so unfair.

The midshipmen quietly withdrew, seeing that their presence was a source of embarrassment. They found O'Neil and Marley waiting for them, having engaged and held four rikishas. All thoughts of the ambassador's reception had quite passed out of the lads' minds, so they were soon on their way to their hotel as quickly as their coolies could carry them, the sailors bringing up the rear.

"What is it, Marley?" Sydney asked as Marley signed them to stop as they alighted and were entering the hotel.

"We've got something important to show you," O'Neil said mysteriously, his face grave, while Marley nodded soberly.

"Come along then," Phil answered, leading the way through a side entrance which opened on the court near the rooms assigned the American naval officers.

O'Neil closed the door quietly, while Marley
nervously put his hand within his sailor blouse and produced the big envelope which he had hidden within.

Phil took the proffered letter in silence.


Marley had turned red and was stammering incoherently. O'Neil came to his rescue.

"It was lying in the street just before we hit the crowd, sir, and Marley picked it up. I advised him to keep it snug."

"But we must send it to its address; we have no right to keep it." Phil's voice was indignant.

"Just as you say, sir," O'Neil answered without emotion. "You notice, sir, it is unsealed."

Phil was devoured with curiosity to read the contents. The scene in the hallway of the navy building now took on a new aspect. The injured man was Inaba's messenger. So ran Phil's thoughts. He had been intrusted with this letter. He had lost it. That surely was the cause of the perturbation of the Japanese naval men. Some naval secret, perhaps,
but undoubtedly in Japanese, which they could not read. The more honorable thing to do would be to go back post-haste and deliver the letter to the Japanese navy department.

"It's in English, sir, and it's about us." Marley had found his tongue during the silence. "I stole a look while you were in the building."

Phil's curiosity had beaten down all scruples of honesty, and his eyes were running rapidly over the words of the letter. At first only amusement showed in his face, but it soon gave place to surprised indignation and anger.
CHAPTER V

WHO WROTE THE LETTER?

"Well, if this isn't the most barefaced treachery!" Phil exclaimed angrily, as he handed the letter to Sydney.

O'Neil and Marley stood, caps in hand, both eager to hear all within the letter. They received it in their turn, and both, according to their way, displayed the anger they felt.

"Say nothing of this to any one," Phil counseled as the sailors moved toward the door. "And, by the way, O'Neil," he added, "you saw the driver of the motor and also the man who got in with him." O'Neil nodded eagerly.

"See if you and Marley can find out their business here in Tokyo."

O'Neil's face lighted up in pleasurable anticipation at the suggestion of detective work.

"The man who got in the motor with Impey, just before O'Neil and Marley arrived,
dropped a paper," Sydney interjected. "I picked it up for him."

"You did!" Phil exclaimed in surprise. "What was it like?"

"A long white envelope," Sydney replied. "I was too excited to notice it particularly."

Phil was thoughtfully silent.

"Here's Sago, the captain's steward's address," Phil said after a few minutes of deep thought. "If you need an interpreter look him up. Come back here when you have anything to tell us."

The sailors departed, and the midshipmen again read the letter for the "Shimbunshi."

"No Japanese could write this," Sydney declared. "This is the work of an Englishman or American."

"The writer of this," Phil answered grimly, "is one of the gang of rascals who have been for months trying to break up the friendly relations between Japan and the United States. Could the man with Impey have dropped it? O'Neil spoke of its lying where he had passed."

"He dropped one letter; why not this one too!" Sydney exclaimed.

"If that is what happened," Phil cried
eagerly, "then we've found out Impey's calling. He's the leader of these conspirators."

"What shall we do with the letter?" Sydney asked suddenly.

"I shall place it at once in Captain Rodgers' hands," Phil replied decidedly. "It's too much responsibility for us to shoulder."

"But," Sydney said gravely, "then what was the cause of the constraint in the navy building? Something was lost by their messenger. It might have been this letter. Remember, Taki can write excellent English, quite as good as this, and the handwriting, as I remember his, is not unlike it."

Phil whistled softly to show the seriousness of this thought.

"If this letter was composed in the Japanese navy department," Sydney continued excitedly, "it means but one thing."

Phil nodded, his pulse beating faster. It meant that the Japanese navy department was itself prejudicing the people against Americans.

"The 'Shimbunshi' is the newspaper that has been most vituperative against everything American. It then would be the government
organ,” Phil said grimly and in a lowered voice. “The silent partner of the Mikado’s ministers. It seems monstrous! I can’t believe it possible! And Taki helping to poison the minds of his people against us after greeting us so affectionately this afternoon!”

Phil was striving to excuse the people whom he admired greatly for their wonderful achievements.

“Before we show this letter,” Sydney suggested, “hadn’t we better try to find its true source? Let it rest until to-morrow, anyway. Maybe O’Neil will be able to find out something to throw light on its origin.”

The lads therefore decided to wait until morning before giving Captain Rodgers the highly colored letter whose author attributed the vilest reasons for the “Alaska’s” visit to Tokyo.

Even Lieutenant Winston was not taken into confidence by the midshipmen. They both rather feared his scepticism. To them the adventures had become of great importance, and Winston’s remarks could have only thrown cold water upon their boyish enthusiasm.
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"Syd, I believe we have hit upon a big thing," Phil exclaimed, while they were dressing for the evening. "This fellow Impey is a clever rogue, I feel sure of that. He may even be in the pay of Japan. That may account for his friendliness with such important personages as Captain Inaba and the Baron of the railroad train."

"What can be his object?" Sydney returned questioningly. "He must have strong reasons or else a large salary to serve as an agitator of that kind. A man must be pretty far in disrepute to be willing to play the part of a blackmailer, even if the blackmail is directed upon a government and not an individual."

The prime minister's summer home had been made into a veritable fairy-land for this grand ball in honor of the American naval officers. Every available officer from the "Alaska" was there by nine o'clock, dressed in full uniform. The court set of Tokyo was all present. The Emperor was represented by the princes and princesses of the blood, who remained seated while the guests bowed before them.

Phil and Sydney had been greeted by
Lieutenant Takishima almost immediately on their arrival, and to the lads he seemed like his old self in Annapolis days as he insisted on leading them by the hand around the great ballroom, introducing them to one young girl after another.

"By Jove! Taki, you're as much a fusser as ever," Phil exclaimed good-naturedly as they arrived at their starting point; the midshipmen meanwhile having engaged several dances.

"I am very fond of talking to your women," Takishima answered seriously; "they are so quick, so witty; not like our women, who are not allowed to form opinions of anything outside of the household; but I do not dare to dance with them; they are so tall and I am so short. It would make me look so funny.

"Captain Inaba asks me to say he is very sorry for his brusqueness to you this afternoon," the officer continued, his voice showing a trace of embarrassment. "He did not come himself. The man Oka was on an important mission, and he lost a valuable paper which has not yet been recovered."
Phil and Sydney strove hard to control their faces, and attempted to appear only solicitous for the loss.

"I quite understood," Phil commenced, then he blushed and stammered for fear of arousing Takishima's suspicion. The paper the sailors had found had not as yet been explained. "I mean, I thought it was natural that he should be abrupt with that poor fellow lying there hurt by our recklessness," he explained quickly.

Takishima turned his dark almond eyes on Phil during this attempt to excuse Captain Inaba's apparent rudeness. His subtle mind was seeking a reason for Phil's remark. Could the document have fallen into the hands of the Americans? However, he was sure Captain Inaba would be thorough in his search even to a careful scrutiny of their rooms at the hotel.

That the paper would be of great interest to the Americans, Takishima was sure; it was in the Japanese characters, but doubtless there would be some one ready enough to translate it. It was in the young officer's mind to ask his American friends, frankly, if they knew
where the letter was; but even in his desire to help Captain Inaba, his great friend, he realized that a ballroom was hardly the place to broach such a subject. Poor Inaba, he had been completely crushed over the loss. It was such an important and secret paper that it should not have been trusted to a messenger and last of all to poor deaf Oka. As to what would happen to Inaba in case the letter had gone into American hands, Takishima did not dare think. He would be irreparably disgraced, and by the old Samurai law might even be forced to wipe out the stain of his dishonor by committing "hara-kiri." Takishima believed that hara-kiri was a crime. To destroy one’s life, no matter how hard living would be, was by his Western teaching suicide, and a sin against society. He was not in accord with this barbaric teaching of feudal Japan.

There had come a lull in the music furnished by the guards’ band, the same that played before the Emperor. Phil had nearly forgotten the presence of the thoughtful lieutenant, for his own eager eyes had been searching the ballroom for some one who he knew was amidst this profusion of bright colors.
The dancers had stopped, and were fast disappearing from the ballroom floor to seek the cooler air outside, in the spacious hallways and porches, draped so artistically with the national colors of America and Japan.

Helen Tillotson and Winston had joined the three classmates, and each had penned his name on her dance card. They were standing near one of the doors to the garden. Phil could see the many lanterns flickering their subtle invitation. Winston still retained the girl's fan, but plunged into conversation with Takishima. The lad tried not to listen but could not help catch the words, "torpedoes" and "distance," and it suddenly dawned upon him that Winston was the torpedo expert mentioned in the "Shimbunshi" letter. He recalled that Winston had in the last few months perfected the air chamber and superheater of the "Alaska's" torpedoes, and an experimental run had given it a much greater danger radius. How could the author of the letter know this? Phil was more perplexed than ever. Sydney, after writing his name on Helen's card, hurriedly excused himself with an implied intention
of returning instantly. "Some one I must see!" he exclaimed as he hastened off.

Helen's eyes were directed out upon the garden, the dimly lighted walks of which were already dotted with white shadowy figures from the ballroom.

A moment later Phil and Helen had left the two naval officers deep in their discussions, and walked out together into the garden.

They walked silently, admiring the illumination made with row after row of delicately tinted Japanese lanterns.

"We looked for you and Mr. Monroe this afternoon," she said as they reached the seats of a small pagoda from which they could look out upon the fairy-like scene about them. "You can't say you didn't know it," she added pointedly, noticing the look in Phil's face, "for I told Mr. Monroe of it myself."

The midshipman hesitated in some confusion. He saw that he must take Helen into his confidence, or seem extremely rude to his ambassador's daughter.

"We were on the way," Phil explained, "in Mr. Impey's motor car, when we ran over a Japanese messenger. Afterward it was so
late and we were both so agitated that we went directly to the hotel."

Helen showed her interest and sympathy for the victim in many rapid questions, and Phil thereupon told her the story.

"Mr. Impey will not be here to-night," she said, after Phil had finished his recital. "I had a note from him before leaving home, in which he said he would be detained on business." She was glancing as she spoke at her dance card: the music had again started, and the dancers were moving toward the ballroom.

"This dance is his," she added as Phil made a movement to stand, expecting Helen would also return to the ballroom. "Are you engaged for it?" she asked.

"No, I'm very glad to say."

"Then if you don't mind we shall stay here; it's too beautiful to go inside."

Helen regarded the young man with anxious eyes as she suddenly asked a question which had been long in her thoughts.

"Why has the 'Alaska' come to Japan?"

Phil looked up, surprise in his face at the sudden turn in the conversation.
"I am sure I don't know," he replied honestly; "just a regulation visit of courtesy, I suppose. Why do you ask?"

"Do you believe in the Japanese? Are they honestly our friends?" she asked another question for an answer to his.

"I believe they are," Phil replied thoughtfully. "Our misunderstandings are caused by the great gulf between the two races. The Japanese understand us much better than we do them."

"Do you think a war is likely?" she exclaimed impatiently, not wholly satisfied at Phil's indirect answer.

"Not likely," he replied quietly, "but always possible. Miss Helen, there are people here in Tokyo, men of influence, who are working to bring on war between Japan and our country."

Helen's blue eyes opened in alarm.

"What do you mean?" she asked in an excited whisper.

Phil told her of the conversation he had heard on the train and also of the letter for the "Shimbunshi."

Her face now was rosy with eagerness.
“And you and Mr. Monroe are going to endeavor to discover the identity of these people,” she cried enthusiastically. “I wish I could help.”

“Maybe you can,” he said quickly, then he hesitated.

“Go on,” she urged.

“How long have you known Mr. Impey, and what is his business?” he asked hurriedly, and in some embarrassment, for he did not know how close a friend the foreigner might be to the ambassador’s family.

“What has that to do with it?” Helen asked.

“I’ll tell you presently,” Phil insisted, “after you’ve answered my question.”

“I have known Mr. Impey since we came to Japan,” she returned haughtily; “he is a very warm friend of father’s. What his business is I haven’t the remotest idea. He owns a yacht, and an automobile. I don’t believe he really has any steady business except society. One always sees him out.”

Phil smiled grimly. The girl’s description of Impey’s occupation more than ever made him feel suspicious. Could he trust himself to ask another question? He decided to take
the risk and brave Helen's displeasure if she divined the course of his mind.

"Was Mr. Impey in Yokohama this morning?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes, I am sure he was," she answered innocently, not dreaming of Phil's reason for asking the question. "While we were driving to the garden fête he told us he had come up on the train with the American officers through the help of his friend, Baron Kosuba."

Phil's eyes were fairly dancing with delight; but Helen's face was turned away; the music had ceased and the dancers were coming out into the garden.

"Who is Baron Kosuba?" Phil asked eagerly.

"Why, don't you know?" she asked. "He is one of Japan's richest men. He is the president and owner of her largest steamship company.

"I wish you would talk to Mr. Impey," she added. "He told me in strictest confidence that the Japanese statesmen could not be trusted—that they were determined to force a war very soon."
Phil's face became suddenly thoughtful as he felt Helen's eyes upon him.

"So he has been giving the identical medicine to both sides," he thought.

"But why all this mystery?" Helen asked, suddenly remembering that Phil had not as yet enlightened her. "Why shouldn't Mr. Impey have been in Yokohama to-day?"

Phil was silent, thinking how best to avert an awkward situation.

"You don't mean to insinuate that Mr. Impey was the man you overheard on the train?" she exclaimed. "Why, the idea is ridiculous. He couldn't be such a blackguard."

"It may have been only a coincidence," Phil hastened to say, in an attempt to relieve the tension, for he saw that Helen was indignant at his presumption in accusing a friend of being a traitor. "I didn't see the man; his voice was that of an Englishman. Impey is an Englishman, you know."

"He is not an Englishman," Helen exclaimed eagerly. "His mother was not English; she was an East Indian of high rank. His father was in the British East India Company first, and afterward in the Chinese
Customs service. Mr. Impey was born in the Orient. He speaks and writes Chinese and in that way can read the classic Japanese."

"Are you quite sure that Mr. Impey is sincere?" Phil asked. The case in his mind was quite clear against Impey. His desire now was to convince Helen and put her on the guard against him. "Has he any reason to dislike Americans?"

"How should I know?" the girl answered. "I have always believed him sincere and very friendly to us, but you upset all my beliefs."

"I am truly sorry, Miss Helen," Phil returned. "I suppose I should be just and not condemn him unheard. If you believe in him I hope I have been mistaken in my estimate of him."

As much as Phil desired the companionship of Helen, whom he had come to admire greatly, he nevertheless welcomed the interruption of Sydney's coming for his dance. He was beginning to fear he had said too much. Takishima and Sydney entered the pagoda together. After a few moments Phil found himself alone with his Japanese classmate.
"Taki, it certainly seems good to see you so unchanged," Phil exclaimed, turning enthusiastically upon him after the two were seated. "You must come on board the 'Alaska,' and Syd and I will show you how you would have been existing if you'd been born an American."

Tkishima showed his white teeth in a smile, through the not too abundant black moustache.

"Perry," Tkishima's face was again grave and there was marked hesitancy in his speech, "you and I are old friends and classmates. By birth we are of widely different races. Your ancestors have been living in what is termed civilization for some hundreds of years. Mine, by your standards, have been living in the dark ages, under a feudal system similar to that of the days of King Arthur and his Round Table. It therefore is not odd that my countrymen and yours hold widely different views on many subjects. There is no reason, however, why you and I should not look into each other's hearts and talk as brother to brother."

Phil's face had gone serious. The playful
banter on his tongue was nipped in the bud. He laid an affectionate hand on the young lieutenant’s shoulder, as they sat on the bench of the summer-house.

“What is it, Taki? What has happened?”

“Perry, where is the much boasted generosity of your country? Are all the Lincolns and the Washingtons dead? Did your people awaken us from our peaceful, childlike sleep of medievalism, showing us the path to greatness and civilization, only to make us sorry that your great namesake, Commodore Perry, forced us to embrace the new civilization?”

“I don’t understand!” Phil exclaimed amazedly. “What has my country done that you should so condemn it?”

“Can’t you see to what we are drifting, Perry?” Takishima replied excitedly. “Only a year ago our two countries were friendly. Nothing but what was good was being said by one of the other. My Emperor’s subjects in America were everywhere treated kindly, and here in Japan we bowed respectfully and affectionately wherever an American appeared. Now all is different. Each looks upon the other with suspicion.”
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"I think you are wrong, Taki," Phil exclaimed, his pulse beating fast at Takishima's words. "I have not been in America for over a year, but I am sure no such feeling as you describe is felt there. Our labor unions have fought against your countrymen coming to America because they will work for much less money than will our own people, and they will not join the unions, but that is hardly enough reason for making Japan distrust America."

"A year ago only it started," Takishima said, scarcely heeding Phil's denial. "First there were only vague hints, but gradually it has grown until to-day every move my country makes is misunderstood and condemned in your great newspapers, which are the eyes, ears and brains of your countrymen. We are doing our duty by China and Korea. We have been awakened from our long sleep of inaction, and it is our duty to awaken our blood brothers. Japan stands in the same light in the Orient with China and Korea as your great country with the republics of South America."

"In the newspapers?" Phil exclaimed smil-
ing. "Why, Taki, you can't take everything
that's said by our newspapers seriously. You
know we have entire freedom of the press. Our
newspapers can say anything. You Japa-
nese are entirely too sensitive."

Takashima smiled grimly.

"Do you think it over-sensitive to be hurt
at hearing that the legislature of one of your
states considered a measure to exclude Japa-
nese from the state?"

Phil's face was very grave. As Takishima
had stated, it was only too true.

"But the measure was lost," Phil hastened
to say.

"Yes, but not before much discussion,"
Takashima returned, "which showed us that
our countrymen were not as welcome in
America as yours are in Japan."

"That is purely commercial," Phil declared.
"We have a tariff to exclude goods made in
other countries; a laborer is as much an ar-
ticle for purchase as anything else. We can-
not require him to pay duty upon himself in
order that his hire will be the same as that paid
to our own countrymen; so the labor unions
wished to prevent the Japanese laborer from
landing in America. It is only a question of money, nothing more.”

“We are old friends, Perry,” Takishima said soberly, drawing nearer to his classmate and lowering his voice. “I am in a position where I hear much that is not intended for young ears. Our statesmen have given a life-study to questions of the Orient. Have yours given these far-reaching, perplexing questions the attention they deserve?”

Phil was silent. He did not wish to belittle the statesmen of his country, but he could but acknowledge that their conditions were different. A statesman in America was a very rare and precious person. The entire government changed every four years; new statesmen arose every four years to die politically at the end of their term. Policies, therefore, were unstable. Only the great publicists could be depended upon to diagnose a situation. Phil knew that his country was in this greatly handicapped.

“Taki, common sense and justice make a statesman. Such men are born, and no amount of study can produce them other-
wise. We have enough such statesmen in my country," he returned proudly.

"Perry, you are a faithful champion," Takishima said, an affectionate ring in his voice, "but even that cannot lessen our danger. Our people believe that America is aiming to control all of China; to use that vast country as a market for her manufactured articles that cannot be sold elsewhere. They believe that Japan will be excluded and sealed forever within its island kingdom."

"But why should they believe such ridiculous nonsense," Phil cried angrily, "when there is not an atom of truth in any of it?"

"Manchuria and Korea," Takishima continued, "have been won through the spilling of much precious blood. So you can see how such thoughts arouse my people. The Emperor is fearful that something unpleasant will occur during the 'Alaska's' visit, and has issued an order from the throne for all to be courteous to the Americans."

Impey and the "Shimbunshi" letter had danced before Phil's mind during this long talk with Takishima.

"What has caused this sudden misunder-
standing, Taki? Who has kept the discussions alive?"

Takishima shook his head.

"It began when your fleet started for Manila by way of the south of Africa," he replied, "and has steadily increased in intensity until now, when we are nearer to war than we have ever been without having it."

"Then in a month more it will die a natural death," Phil said, brightening, "for the fleet is to return next month to the east coast of the United States. The cause then of all this jingo talk will have been removed."

"A month!" Takishima exclaimed grimly. "Much can happen in that time."

"If Japan is truthful when she says she does not desire war," Phil said, "I can see no cause for worry. We are not seeking a war. We have enough to care for without getting into a fight so far from home."

"But how can Japan be sure that what you say is correct?" Takishima asked quickly. "To whom in America can we go to be assured that she is peacefully inclined?"

"To our President," Phil answered, his eyes flashing proudly, "the most powerful
leader in the world. If he gives his word it is law. Even Congress would not dare betray it.

"Taki," he continued, "I am sure that our people admire yours. We think your head may be just a little swollen over your prowess in war, and would like to see the swelling subside; but a war with you or any other country is not our desire now or at any other time. The United States fights only when its honor is involved, and not for conquest. If both countries are honest and do not attempt to trick each other by threatening to strike in order to force a favorable action on a measure or treaty unfavorable to the other, then there can be no war."

"And you will help me to prevent these misunderstandings?" Takishima asked.

"To-day Captain Inaba lost a valuable paper," Takishima added earnestly. "The messenger Oka, who was injured, was carrying it in his hand when he was struck by Mr. Impey's machine. If that paper, translated, should fall into the hands of indiscreet persons, it would cause a vastly greater strain on the friendly relations between our countries."
Phil listened eagerly. Could it be possible that the paper the sailors had found was the one in question, and if so did Takishima know the character of it? Phil recalled quite clearly the venomous composition, calculated to arouse the entire Japanese nation against the American people in general and the cruiser "Alaska" in particular. If this was the letter and Takishima knew the contents then there was but one conjecture to make; that Taki's protestations of honesty were hypocritical. But Phil would not condemn his classmate unheard.

"Do you know the contents of this paper?" he asked breathlessly.

"Yes. I helped prepare it; it was addressed to the general board, the Emperor's advisers," Takishima answered without hesitation.

Phil breathed more freely. Then this paper was, as he had begun to suppose, a composition written by an English speaking person for the "Shimbunshi" and was in no way official. But what of the one Sydney had picked up and given to Impey's companion? Might not that have been the lost official letter?
"Go on," the midshipman urged, for he knew that Takishima had not opened the conversation simply to tell of the loss of the paper.

"Captain Inaba has just sent me word that he has discovered that one of the two sailors with you this afternoon picked up an envelope that in description resembled the lost document. They drove away with you, so it is natural to suppose that you know of the existence of this paper." Takishima recalled Phil's evident embarrassment when he had apologized for Captain Inaba's abruptness. He now regarded the midshipman beseechingly.

"You realize what it will mean to Captain Inaba if the document is not found or if its contents are divulged?" he asked.

Phil shook his head.

"It will mean disgrace, worse to us than death." Takishima's voice was dramatic.

Phil thought quickly.

He would not tell him of the letter to the "Shimbunshi." Not at least until he had shown the letter to Captain Rodgers and obtained his advice.

"Taki, we didn't find your letter," Phil as-
sured him. "If it ever comes into my hands, or if I ever have knowledge as to where it is, I will tell you."

Takishima’s face had regained its composure. If the Americans had not the letter then it would soon be found. It undoubtedly was in the hands of one of his own countrymen and the secret service men would soon place it in Captain Inaba’s hands.

Takishima pressed Phil’s hand as he rose to his feet.

"I feel better now that I have unburdened myself," he said earnestly. "You can be certain that Japan wishes above everything to avoid trouble. That does not mean that we will neglect our army and navy, for we see that preparedness for war is the surest road to peace. If there is any way in which I can aid you, consider I am always more than ready. Above everything it should be peculiarly our duty, yours and mine, to reestablish the good opinion which was once held by each nation for the other."

Phil became aware during Takishima’s earnest talk that a Japanese policeman was awaiting attentively just behind him. The lad
saw that he was endeavoring to attract the lieutenant's attention; seeing at once that it was on a matter of importance he gently pushed Takishima toward the impatient guardian of the peace.

Phil waited, silently wondering what manner of trouble was brewing, for he could see that Takishima's face had become suddenly serious, while the policeman talked excitedly.

"Just what I feared has happened, Perry," Takishima exclaimed, making a gesture of finality, as much as to say, "that's the end of all our good intentions."

"Get Monroe and meet me at the entrance to the street," he added promptly. "If we are to be on time we must not lose a minute."

The policeman had saluted and hurried away, while Takishima, after standing for a moment, silently dejected, straightened up his broad little shoulders and half ran toward the house, followed as rapidly by the midshipman.

"What on earth has happened?" was Phil's unspoken question; in his mind he was revolving all the possibilities.
CHAPTER VI

BILL MARLEY’S FIST

After leaving the midshipmen at the hotel, O’Neil led his friend Marley to a much frequented Japanese eating house, on the outskirts of Shibu Park, kept by an American. There he believed he would find some one who could tell him about the mysterious Robert Impey. The boatswain’s mate understood quite plainly that Phil would be able to find out all that was possible about the man from the people of his world and that he, Jack O’Neil, was to get what information there was in the keeping of those of the underworld. In other words, O’Neil guessed, and rightly, that Impey, in Phil’s belief at all events, was leading a dual life.

O’Neil and Marley seated themselves at a small table from where they could observe those about them, for the dining-room was nearly filled with foreigners. Many waiters,
both men and women, moved quietly about administering to the wants of their patrons.

The proprietor stood behind a raised counter and directed the service, collecting the bills as those who had satisfied their hunger paid and went their way.

O’Neil gave his order to a waitress and at the same time slipped a hastily penciled note into the Japanese girl’s hand, pointing to her foreign master.

The sailors watched him read the note and then glance up at them, following the girl’s pointing finger. ‘In a few seconds he was wringing O’Neil’s hand.

“Well, shipmate, how are you?” he exclaimed. There was real pleasure in “Billy” Williams’ face. “This supper is all on me,” he cried gladly. “It’s been a long time since you and me have been together, and there ain’t nothing in the house too good for Jack O’Neil.”

O’Neil smiled good humoredly, and the three men sat down at the little table. Williams called up an assistant, and sent him to take his place at the cash drawer.

“Making money?” This from O’Neil.
"Well, I ain't losing any, but I miss our own ships," Williams replied, still smiling. "The 'Alaska's' the first we've had for nearly a year. American sailors certainly spend their money nobly. The foreign sailors make the eagle squeal on every dollar they hold before letting go of it."

"Where's the madam?" O'Neil asked. His eyes were searching the crowd. In his mind's eye he saw a graceful Japanese woman of some ten years ago, Haru-san by name, whom Williams had married and settled down after receiving his honorable discharge from the United States navy.

"She's back in the house," Williams answered in an offhand way. "She don't come into the restaurant any more. If you've got time, we'll go back and see her after you've finished supper. She often speaks of you."

An appetizing supper had been set before the two sailors, and they without ceremony commenced the attack. Williams sat watching them in silence, his smile broadening at the evident appreciation in his friends' faces of the good fare they were eating.

"Billy, you've been here in Tokyo long
enough to know who’s who?” O’Neil asked the question, shoving back his chair in sign of the end of his meal.

“If there’s any one I don’t know, you can bet that Haru-san does,” was Williams’ quick reply.

“Then, who is this fellow Robert Impey?” O’Neil asked eagerly.

Williams shook his head. “Don’t know the party, never comes here,” was his answer.

“Oh! he ain’t our kind,” O’Neil returned with a smile to set the matter straight. “He belongs to the court set, drives his own automobile, knows the American ambassador.”

Williams appeared to be deep in thought. “Believe I have heard of him, but don’t know anything against him, if that’s what you mean,” he answered.

O’Neil signed by nods of his head that Williams had guessed rightly.

“Hey! George,” Williams called, standing up and beckoning to the owner of the name sitting in the midst of half a dozen American sailors at a table across the room. “Come here a minute. I want you to meet an old friend of mine.”
The man addressed rose slowly, finishing a story that he had been telling his amused audience, and to the accompaniment of a loud chorus of laughter joined Williams and the two sailormen.

"Robert Impey," George Randall repeated, after he had shaken hands and heard Williams' question, "is one of the cleverest foreigners in Japan. No one knows his business better than himself, and he's stingy with his information about what he's here for. Where did you hear of him?" A suspicion had entered Randall's head.

"Bill Marley and I was having an argument," O'Neil hastened to explain. "You see, we saw him run down a Jap on the street with his chug-chug carriage about an hour ago. Bill and I helped him to get clear and we was naturally curious to know who we'd helped. We heard his name, but that's all."

"That's as far as my knowledge goes too," Randall added. "He and I revolve in two widely different orbits."

While the above conversation had been taking place, O'Neil, sitting with his face toward the door, had seen the search-light of
an automobile come quickly up the street and stop noisily outside of the restaurant. An attendant had hastened out in anticipation of influential guests and now returning came directly to their table. He whispered to Randall, and the latter rose at once, a half-surprised, half-guilty expression on his face.

"Good-night," he exclaimed, attempting to hide his surprise. "We newspaper men, you know, are like doctors, subject to a hurry call at any time."

After Randall had left them, O'Neil grabbed Marley by the arm and both took a hasty farewell of Williams.

"I'll be in to-morrow for breakfast, Billy," he said, giving no explanation of his sudden change of plans.

The sailor hurried after the receding figure of Randall. He saw him go direct to the waiting machine, and without a word jump in. The auto leaped forward, and as it passed under the arc light at the corner of the street, O'Neil received his reward in recognizing the man of whom he had been seeking information and with them also was Impey's companion of the afternoon.
"So Randall, after all, must know something more than he wished to acknowledge about Robert Impey!" was O'Neil's thought. He stood undecided for the fraction of a minute, thinking quickly and silently. Here was their opportunity to find out about the man in whom the midshipmen appeared to have taken more than a passing interest. It was really too good a chance to lose, at least, without trying. O'Neil was conscious of a half dozen rikishas which had hurriedly disentangled themselves from the score or more others outside Tokyo's favorite sailor restaurant, and were silently waiting, their shafts lowered, for the sailors to enter. On the other side of the street a victoria was standing, the driver on the box seat, his eyes on the two Americans.

A nod from O'Neil was enough to cause him to snap his reins on the sleepy horses' backs and in a few more seconds the boatswain's mate had pushed the obedient Marley in and given a quick order to the mafoo at his side.

At breakneck speed the carriage rattled down the macadam road after the slowly dissolving light of the automobile.
"Bill, there ain't the ghost of a show of catching those men," O'Neil confided, "and if we did we've got nothing against them." O'Neil glanced in amused interest at his friend, whose eyes were fairly bulging with excitement at the thought of an interesting chase after a possible criminal.

"I thought by the way you shoved me into this sea-going hack that you'd caught 'em with the goods," declared the disappointed seaman in an injured tone.

"This gent on the box seat will soon be losing them," the boatswain's mate declared quietly while he gazed indifferently ahead.

The streets were crowded with people, many carrying lighted paper lanterns, and through these the carriage was being driven at a most alarming pace in the endeavor to keep the automobile in sight.

O'Neil was correct in his surmise, for presently the carriage slowed to a walk, while the little mafoo had dropped down from his seat by the driver and with many low bows and polite speeches, of which the sailors could only guess the purport, announced that, "The honorable automobile had been swallowed by
a dragon, or else vanished into thin air.” At least this would have been the literal translation of the poetic speech if O’Neil and Marley could have correctly translated it into their own language.

O’Neil gave a few quick orders in his sailor Japanese to the mafoo, who nodded his smiling face in sign of understanding, and shortly the carriage turned up a less crowded street, while again the little horses were trotting gayly along, the shrill cry of the mafoo being raised periodically in warning the pedestrians plodding slowly along in the middle of the street; for in some streets in Japan sidewalks as yet are unknown luxuries.

“Why should that fellow Randall tell us he knew nothing of this Mr. Impey’s affairs?” O’Neil said, more as an introspection than with the hope that Marley could explain.

“I am always suspicious of these beachcombers in foreign ports,” the boatswain’s mate added; “they get sort of denationalized after they’ve been living apart from their own people, and they can’t always be trusted to play fair. Randall is an American, that’s a
sure thing; you can't miss the Broadway accent when you hear it so far from home."

While O'Neil was yet carrying on his one-sided conversation the carriage had stopped, and the mafoo was knocking loudly at the door of a Japanese house in one of the less pretentious parts of the city. After the occupants of the house had gone through the usual formula to discover the identity of their unexpected visitors, the door was opened and the two sailors were asked to enter.

"Is Sago in?" O'Neil asked the shy girl who was holding the lantern inside the dark little anteroom, where visitors were expected to remove their shoes before entering the house. She nodded, and in her high-pitched voice a summons was directed upward.

"Sorry to drag you out this time of the evening, Sago," O'Neil explained as, in answer to the girl's call, the captain's Japanese steward came down the stairs to meet them, "but we need your help, so I looked you up."

Sago's sphinx-like face did not portray the surprise which O'Neil's words might have been expected to cause.

"Please come inside," the steward urged.
"I wish to introduce you to my cousin and his family."

O’Neil and Marley readily followed the steward, while curious Japanese of all ages appeared mysteriously from many directions to gaze upon their visitors.

Sago motioned with his hand to a Japane of about his own age, which might be anything from forty upward, standing at the head of the landing. The Oriental bowed low with a loud hiss of his breath through his close shut teeth, while O’Neil and Marley insisted upon a good American hand-shake. The same process was gone through with about a dozen people who congregated about the sailormen. This formality over, the host clapped his hands and at once the women scurried away, like a covey of partridges, soon reappearing with refreshments, the usual cakes and tea.

"Do your friends speak English?" O’Neil asked in his usual direct way, avoiding unnecessary and useless ceremony.

Sago shook his head with an amused smile.

"Good!" O’Neil exclaimed. "Then I can tell you at once why we’re here."
Sago listened quietly while O'Neil told him of the automobile accident to the messenger Oka and the finding of a letter near where the man was injured, but he gave the steward no further information as to its contents.

"What we want to do," he added, "is to find this man Oka and see if he lost it, for he was on a message from the navy department, and Mr. Perry believes that the officials there were much more annoyed over the loss of something than over the injury to the man."

Sago's little almond eyes shone with excitement. "I have heard of it already. Oka lives only a short distance from here, and is a friend of my cousin," he replied in quaintly pronounced English. "He is hurt badly, but he will not die. My cousin has already been to visit him. The letter he lost was an important one, and he is more sick over that than his wounds. Come, we shall go and pay a call on the injured man," he added leading the way.

Leaving the house after saying good-bye very ceremoniously to Sago's friends, the two Americans and the steward entered the car-
riage and under the latter's guiding hand soon reached the small wooden cottage where lived the injured messenger.

"I have a gift for him from the young American officers," O'Neil explained to Sago as they were admitted by a comely Japanese woman.

Oka was lying on his mats in one corner of the small living-room.

"It's as clean as the quarter-deck," Marley exclaimed admiringly, glancing critically about the tidy room.

The woman noiselessly glided to her husband's side, kneeling at his head to tell him who his visitors were.

Over the man's pale features came an expression of sudden joy as he glanced up at the two American giants, whose huge bulk, for both were over six feet tall, quite filled their part of the tiny room, while a faint voice asked a question.

"He thinks you have brought back the document he lost," Sago interpreted.

"Tell him to describe it," O'Neil ordered.

"He says it's large, with the big red seal of the Emperor, and is addressed in black
characters on the outside.” Sago had put the question and gave the sick man’s answer.

“Nothing doing,” Marley blurted out thoughtlessly, having been eagerly listening, mouth wide open.

“Just tell him we’re sorry, but we didn’t find his letter;—and say we came to give him this from the American officers,” O’Neil said, passing Sago the money that Phil had given him, “and tell him to let you or your cousin know if he needs more.”

O’Neil’s soft heart was touched and by mutual consent both he and Marley pressed into the woman’s hand at parting amounts of money which to her were large, but to the Americans meant simply a small amount of self-sacrifice and one day less liberty with money in their pockets.

“Well, Sago, you can go back to your happy family now,” O’Neil said banteringly as the three reached the waiting carriage, “unless of course you have in mind something entertaining for Bill and me; he’s in need of a little diversion, ain’t you, Bill?” with a poke in the seaman’s ribs. “You’re as glum as an oyster.”
Marley gave a forced smile. He recognized his mental inferiority to O'Neil and was content to listen in silence.

Sago gave orders to the mafou, and the three were soon on the way back to the main thoroughfares of the city.

The carriage drew up, after about a half hour's drive, in front of a Japanese theatre. O'Neil could not, of course, read the posters, but from the grotesquely painted pictures on sign boards in front of the entrance he saw that it was a naval play.

Sago bought the tickets, and they were shown seats in a small box close to the stage. O'Neil saw there were many American uniforms about the theatre and that the stage was draped with American and Japanese colors.

The curtain had already risen and the play was in progress.

O'Neil could not understand the language spoken, but the character of the play was only too evident. The scene was laid during a war between Japan and some foreign country.

O'Neil sat an amused spectator, but Marley
had soon passed the amused stage. O’Neil watched him with almost as much relish as he did the play itself. Marley at first was interested, then excited, and last angry. When an American naval officer, for he told O’Neil in a sullen growl that was the intention of the queer uniform displayed by the villain, was shown to be rude to a Japanese lady of high rank and the hero, a Japanese naval lieutenant, interfered and vanquished by sword play his much bigger antagonist, it proved all O’Neil could do to suppress the irate sailor-man, who would have gone to the American officer’s aid. Then the tide turned and a party of foreign sailors marched to the rescue of their officer.

“The nerve of those fellows, carrying our flag,” O’Neil exclaimed, for the first time showing his displeasure.

Marley was uttering imprecations under his breath; his strong hands were clutching the brass railing in front of the box.

Then on the stage the tide of battle turned; a company of Japanese sailors swarmed from the wings, rolling over their enemies like ten-pins. The American flag fell to the ground,
where it lay, while the stage foreigners beat a hasty and inglorious retreat.

Before O'Neil could fathom the actions of Marley, the sailor had leaped over the low railing on to the small stage and within ten feet of the insulted flag. So quickly was it done, that those in the audience, so absorbed had they been in the scene before them, had not differentiated the real American sailor from the imitations. Even the actors were not aware that a newcomer with a feeling akin to murder in his heart was in their midst.

The faithful Jack O'Neil had sat spell-bound for the fraction of a second, undecided what action should be taken. Sago's eyes danced with excitement. Fully three-quarters American at heart, having lived fifteen years in the United States navy, he was as much out of sympathy with this quarrel-breeding play as was O'Neil himself.

"Bring the manager," O'Neil cried suddenly, shoving the steward out of the box. "Tell him to call the police, for there's going to be the prettiest little boxing match he's ever seen," and with that he was on the stage in Bill Marley's footsteps.
O'Neil was close to Marley; in another step he could have laid hands upon him and carried him, if resistingly, to the box; but unfortunately for this peaceful intention of the boatswain's mate, one of the Japanese actors was due to pick up the fallen flag and wave it in triumph above his head. His cue had come just as Marley's hand was reaching out for the staff. Their hands nearly met and then Bill Marley's doubled up, shot straight from the shoulder, and with terrific force, directly into the surprised actor's face; he fell to the floor with a very unstagelike thud.

Yet even then the actors seemed blissfully unconscious that anything unusual was happening and it was not until nearly a dozen had gone down under the trip-hammer blows, measuring their length on the stage, that the situation was understood.

"Come away, you blooming idiot!" O'Neil exclaimed, grasping Bill Marley's collar and dragging him backward, still waving madly the flag he had succeeded in rescuing.

But Bill Marley was in no mood to be led like a lamb by the collar even by his friend O'Neil. His fighting blood was aroused.
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His slow mind had been deeply outraged by this evident insult to his countrymen. His thoughts were alternating between the vague belief that it was his duty to contend single handed with those on the stage, erasing the impression of a Japanese victory, and that those impersonating American sailors needed only his leadership to turn the tide of battle.

"Come on, you little midgets!" His voice was loud and angry, but the firm twist which O'Neil had given his wide sailor collar nearly stifled the encouraging words that were to follow for the benefit of the vanquished stage foreigners.

"Follow me and we'll show 'em——" The rest was only a gurgle, for O'Neil had encircled the excited sailor's neck with a strong arm and had lifted him fairly off his feet.

The next second the boatswain's mate had let go of his companion and the two were standing at bay against a score of infuriated Japanese, who had suddenly become cognizant of the true conditions.

O'Neil was still dizzy from the effects of a blow on the back of the head, received while he was yet struggling with Marley. Now the
usually cool-headed petty officer was white hot with anger and resentment.

"Don't let them get a hold on you, Bill," was O'Neil's warning, hissed through his closed teeth, while his two fists were driving forward like battering-rams.
CHAPTER VII

THE SECRET DOCUMENT

Phil reached the ballroom just as the music had stopped, and looked quickly about for Sydney. He saw him at the far corner of the room and hurried to his side.

"Syd, get your coat and hat and meet me at the door, quick!" he whispered excitedly. "I'll stay to explain if necessary," he added, glancing at Helen, the centre of a group of officers.

Sydney would have asked for an explanation, but a look at his friend's face showed him that it was a matter of grave concern. Helen became suddenly conscious of something unusual. She had caught the danger signals in the excited faces of the midshipmen as she glanced their way just as Sydney was on the point of leaving.

Phil knew that some explanation would be necessary. "Go on, Syd," he urged; "I'll tell Miss Tillotson and then join you."

Sydney had gone, picking his way across
the crowded room. Helen was standing beside Phil, her eyes dilating with apprehension. "What is it?" she exclaimed in a low voice. "Has anything happened?"

Phil cast about for appropriate words to explain something which he himself could only guess.

"Where can I leave you?" he began tentatively; "for I must hurry if we are to be of any service." The officers who a moment before were with her had gone.

"Can't I go with you?" Her face was flushed and her eyes bright with excitement at the thought.

"I don't even know where we are going," he replied, his voice deprecating the idea of her accompanying them. "It might be something serious. I couldn't think of putting you in any danger."

Phil was relieved to see Lieutenant Winston making his way toward them. He waited impatiently until Winston reached Helen's side and then hurried away without a word of further explanation.

Outside the brightly lighted entrance Takishima was waiting; three rikishas stood
ready, and the three classmates lost no time in jumping in. Takishima quietly gave the directions, and the next moment they were rolling rapidly along the evenly paved boulevard. Takishima's rikisha was in the lead, while Sydney and Phil trailed after in single file. The Japanese policeman ran along at Takishima's side.

Phil was in an agony of suspense. He longed to ask what the trouble was, but to do so he would have had to shout at the top of his voice. He thought over all the things that might have happened, becoming more anxious as the minutes dragged by. He saw that his coolie was lagging behind, while Sydney's kept close up to Takishima.

Phil called loudly the word he had heard meant hurry, "haiaku," but the distance between Sydney and himself slowly increased.

Phil's coolie was evidently giving out; he could not keep up the pace set by Takishima. Phil was on the point of getting down and running to catch up. He was sure he could easily overtake them.

Suddenly Phil's rikisha stopped, and the coolie lowered his shafts to the ground, breath-
ing heavily and wiping his face with a large handkerchief. The lad glared at the Japanese angrily and roundly berated him for his incompetence, but he soon realized that he was but wasting precious moments; his companions were now far ahead. He gazed about him anxiously. The narrow street was dark and deserted, the road ahead was empty. Takishima and Sydney had turned to the right or left, but in which direction Phil had not seen. Planting his cap firmly on his head the midshipman ran swiftly down the street.

A cry for help came feebly to his ears. The lad stopped abruptly, his heart beating wildly, for the cry was in English. He saw he was in the old business section of Tokyo; the houses were mostly two-storied. Again a cry came to him faintly, as if a man were being throttled in the house beside him. Phil sought in vain for an entrance, shouting a word of encouragement. What could it be? Was an American sailor being robbed? There was no room for further doubt; a high piercing cry of a man in mortal fear filled the air, and suddenly died abruptly away. There was evidently not a moment to lose, but where was the entrance?
A dark alley caught his eye a few feet ahead, and down this narrow lane Phil turned quickly. A door on the right stood open; a flight of steep steps led to the second floor. Floundering noisily in the dark he rushed on. Reaching the landing, he perceived a light shining through a chink in the farther wall. With pulse throbbing loudly in his ears he stopped guardedly to listen. A scratching noise of a struggle came indistinctly to him.

What should he do? How many ruffians must he face? The lad suddenly remembered that he carried no arms, while the robbers inside must be well provided. While he yet hesitated a door suddenly opened, and the hallway was flooded with light. On the floor of a large room two men were struggling, while on the threshold stood a Japanese quietly watching the unequal battle. His back was turned to Phil. Spellbound, stupefied, the youngster stood scarcely out of arm's reach of this trim, stocky figure, garbed in the usual costume of a man of the middle class. Phil saw that he must act. To retreat would only cause his discovery and then the little Japanese would be forced to attack. Phil held himself rigid.
Silently he edged nearer the unconscious observer of the struggle; the man on the floor was now lying almost motionless, while the figure above him clung closely to him. Phil had reached the very edge of the door, and his victim was yet unconscious of his presence. For the fraction of a second the lad hesitated. A thought as terrifying as unbidden had come into his mind. Were these men detectives? If so he would be assaulting the Japanese police. Then all precaution was swept aside, for he remembered the cry for help was in English. He could not tell whether the victim on the floor was a sailor or not, but his spirit of chivalry spurred him on to take the part of the weaker.

A loose board under Phil's feet suddenly creaked with a ghastly sound, causing the man at the door to start and turn his face toward the hall. In that fleeting second Phil read authority and character in the quiet aristocratic face, and the next moment the Japanese gentleman went down under a sledge-hammer blow from Phil's fist. The midshipman had mapped out his battle plan. He saw the man who had nearly squeezed out the life of the victim on
THE JAPANESE GENTLEMAN WENT DOWN
the floor was powerful, and in a hand-to-hand fight Phil with all his muscular development might be worsted. The lad could take no chances. The first blow had been delivered so quietly that the second man had not divined what was going on behind him until a blow on the head from a heavy chair in the midshipman's hands caused him to relax his muscular fingers from the blackened throat of Robert Impey.

Phil gazed terrified about him. Three men lay motionless on the floor, while two of them had been stricken by his own hands. The first to fall lay deathly pale on the floor. Phil leaned over and listened for his heart beat. He had delivered a blow which he knew could hardly kill, but in the stillness of the room he would not trust his own judgment. At the man's side, as if it had fallen from his hand, lay a large white envelope. Phil grasped it eagerly. The seal was broken, and inside lay a dozen official sheets of Japanese writing. On the outside were great black characters and the gold seal of the Emperor, now torn and mutilated.

Phil's heart rose in his throat as he sud-
denly realized the meaning of the attack on Impey. These men whom he had just rendered senseless were employees of the navy department—secret service men. They had tracked Impey, believing he had the stolen document. The lad, in a fever of dread, crossed to the table and extinguished the light, and then he crept away down the creaking dark stairs, his brain in a tumult. Reaching the street, he gazed fearfully about him. The place was deserted. He walked a block and then broke into a run, fleeing from the horror behind him. Not knowing which way to turn, he kept straight on until he saw several rikishas coming toward him, when he abruptly turned to his right and ran faster.

"Phil! Hold up! Wait!" came joyfully to him as he slackened speed and allowed his companions to overtake him.

"We’ve wasted nearly a quarter of an hour looking for you!" Sydney exclaimed as Phil trotted breathlessly at his side. "What have you been doing?"

Phil evaded the question, breathing heavily as an excuse for not talking. A terrible guilt was on his mind. The secret and important
letter lost by the messenger Oka, containing that which if known by America might strain the relations between the two countries, lay next his rapidly beating heart.

"Where is it? What is it?"

"Taki says it's a riot," Sydney returned. "There you are!" he exclaimed, pointing. They had emerged into the lighted thoroughfare, and Phil's question was answered. Scarcely four blocks down the street a great crowd could now be seen completely filling the street.

Phil's pulses beat faster. A riot—and American sailors the cause! At this time it might lead to grave consequences.

Takishima had stopped precipitously; it was too dark to see his face, but his voice expressed quite distinctly the anxiety he felt.

"How has this happened? Some one shall suffer for this blunder!" he exclaimed angrily.

The mob was pressing toward the brightly lighted entrance to the theatre, but the doors were closed, barring its entrance. Though there were many policemen present, they seemed unable to control the ever-increasing
crowd, whose angry voice could be heard, raised ever louder and louder.

"This is a case for soldiers!" Takishima had cried out in English, and in his excitement talking to the little guide, who stood mute and mystified.

Across the street Takishima darted, telling the midshipmen to wait where they were.

"With all their training for discipline, the Japs are just like any one else." Sydney's voice betrayed his excitement, but he felt he must say something to relieve the tension. "Winston should be here to see this. No riots in Japan!"

Phil gulped hard. "What's happening inside?" he gasped. All thoughts of the two men he had rendered unconscious were forgotten.

"There are two hundred of our men in Tokyo; if they hear of this they will come on a run from all over the city." Sydney's diagnosis was not reassuring.

"A fight between our men and a mob would mean indemnity, for some of them would be sure to be killed and wounded," Phil said tensely. "Do you recall the Chile
trouble, when we nearly came to war over just this same kind of thing?" Phil's thoughts were pessimistic. Both lads were aware of the terrible possibilities. They thoroughly understood the workings of their sailors' minds. Once they heard their companions were in trouble the American sailormen would flock to the rescue. "My countrymen—right or wrong," is ever their motto.

The impatient midshipmen could stand the strain of inaction no longer.

"Where is Taki? Why doesn't he return? Where did he go?"

Forgetting in their excitement the inability of their guide to speak English, they were pulling him violently by the arm toward the rioters, but the little policeman had received his orders, and remained firmly planted where Takishima had left him.

The naval officer suddenly reappeared.

"I have telephoned," was his reassuring greeting. "There's a back entrance to the theatre."

The four were retracing their steps. An alley, dimly lighted and deserted, opened before them and, led by Takishima, they rushed
down and through its many turnings. A heavy door barred their further progress. With hearts beating tumultuously they listened to the babel of angry voices from within.

The door was locked. The combined effort of the four failed to discover a weakness in the solid wood.

The midshipmen gazed wildly about for a means of breaking the lock.

Takishima soon solved the difficulty. The policeman, agile as a cat, was scaling the side of the house. Above him was a window through which a light was shining. Breathlessly and impatiently they waited while he climbed slowly upward. Then he disappeared through the window and after a few anxious moments the door was opened and they rushed within, securely locking the door after them. Up the stairs they ran, and then suddenly the full magnitude of the situation burst upon them.

A score or more of American sailors had captured the theatre stage and, with clubs and sticks stripped from the scenery, were holding at bay several hundred infuriated Japanese.

Phil recognized O’Neil and Marley in the
foremost ranks of the defenders, and his heart sank, for he realized that O’Neil would not abet a fight without real provocation.

“You go to your men. I’ll hold the crowd in check until the soldiers come,” Takishima exclaimed, as he threw off his cape and stood in full evening uniform, his golden epaulettes glistening brightly and his war medals sparkling on his breast. He walked out fearlessly between the sailors and the clamoring crowd. Phil and Sydney had placed themselves between him and their own men to protect him from a chance blow.

“Back, men, all of you. Do you realize what you are doing?” Sydney’s and Phil’s voices were tense with anger and excitement as they pressed the sailors away from their foes. “You, O’Neil, leading this disgraceful row!” Phil cried out accusingly and in tones that at the same time expressed the lad’s bitter disappointment upon seeing the boatswain’s mate involved in what appeared to him to be a disorderly fight against well-intentioned Japanese citizens.

“It wasn’t O’Neil, sir, what started it.” Bill Marley’s voice was raised excitedly.
“This is what they was dragging on the stage, sir, wiping their clogs on, and the man what carried it wasn’t no Jap. I can take my oath on that. He ‘beat it’ when he seen there was a row on.”

The midshipmen opened their eyes in amazement as Marley showed the tattered American flag in the defense of which the American sailors from all over the theatre had collected.

“Never mind that now!” Phil waved for silence as several excited voices were raised expressing forcibly the desire to be allowed to clean out the place and revenge the insult to their flag.

“Can’t you see by Marley’s evidence that it was fixed up on you?” Phil exclaimed, grasping at a straw. “The man with the flag was not a Japanese. Who was he? A sneaking, cowardly foreigner, anxious to bring about a conflict between you American sailors and the citizens of Japan.” Phil was eloquent in his anger and mortification. “And you, led into the trap like lambs. Aren’t you ashamed of yourselves?”

“What could we’ve done, sir?” An op-
pressive silence had descended upon the sailors; but a single one mustered up courage to half defend his companions’ actions. "We couldn’t just sit tight and watch; now could we, sir?" This last was said appealingly.

"No. I suppose it was natural," Phil admitted grudgingly, "but now you know that you’ve been ‘buncoed,’ just turn about there and we will try to smuggle you out without another disturbance."

Takishima was at a loss to understand the cause of the trouble. His great fear was that it had come about through the general ill feeling being spread broadcast in Japan by the Japanese newspaper, the "Shimbunshi." As Marley called the midshipmen’s attention to the flag, the lieutenant turned about hastily, his face showing perplexity.

"An American flag," he exclaimed in English. "I can’t understand. This is a scene from our last war. Could it have been a plot? You say the man who carried it was a foreigner. Yes, it was a plot, devised to bring on a fight between you and our people."

Meanwhile Impey, as he lay unconscious
on the floor of his office with the two men who had endeavored to take from him the stolen document, themselves senseless near him, might, if he had known, felt proud of the plot which had all but succeeded in precipitating a riot. While the events at the theatre were taking place the two defeated secret service men slowly came to consciousness. Impey lay inert, half dead on the floor. They rose defeated, mystified, for neither had seen his assailant. The precious document had gone. They quietly slunk off down the stairs to lay before their chief, Captain Inaba, the sad story of their failure after having the lost paper within their grasp.

The American sailors on the stage were lost in admiration at the dignified manner in which Lieutenant Takishima stemmed the tide of anger. At first beyond control, threatening to attack the score of sailorsmen who had outraged the spirits of those who had fallen in their last war, the crowd grew quieter until the people suddenly became silent, intently listening to the lieutenant’s calmly spoken words. What he was saying
the Americans did not know, but they saw that he held their attention upon an order worn upon the breast of his full dress uniform. It was the order of the rising sun; the sacred emblem of their Emperor was the mystic talisman that cast an hypnotic spell over that vast assemblage and forced them to listen to reason.

"That's the most marvelous thing I've ever seen." Sydney's excited whisper brought forth what was almost a cheer from the astounded Americans.

The Japanese audience gave way; moving as one man back toward their seats, their upturned faces were again good-natured.

Loud cheers of "banzai" echoed through the theatre, while several strong voices were raised at different points of the house, followed by cries of agreement from the multitude.

Takishima had turned toward the Americans, and was speaking to them in English.

"My people are sorry that this has occurred, and desire to say that they honor the Americans for their patriotism. They did not understand the reason for the interrup-
tion, but now that they see, they wish to beg the pardon of the sailors.” Phil as spokesman answered by proposing three cheers for the Japanese nation, which were given with a will, and the irrepressible Marley waved his flag, which had been the innocent cause of the trouble, high in the air.

The audience filed out of the theatre in orderly fashion, and as the wide doors were thrown open the midshipmen saw drawn up across the street a company of regular soldiers, those who had been summoned by Takishima.

“I would advise getting your men out by the back entrance.” Takishima was smiling, but his face was pale and his dark eyes bright with suppressed excitement. The lads noticed that the hand which raised his cloak trembled violently. Then they realized for the first time that the ordeal through which this youngster, scarcely a year older than themselves, had passed, had been one requiring every ounce of his nerve and grit. One mistake and the tide might have been turned against him, and the sacred order on his breast, the “rising sun of the second class,”
would have been defiled and himself dishonored in the eyes of his brother officers.

"Although Taki speaks our language the working of his mind is as different from ours as is the East from the West," said Sydney. "What have we in our country symbolic of majesty or power?" he asked in a low voice. "If you or I had attempted to quell a disturbance in a New York theatre what could we use to bring the scattered ideas of the vast assemblage together?"

Phil silently pointed to the flag as yet firmly clutched in Marley's hand. Sydney nodded, half convinced only that his countrymen's patriotism could be aroused by it to the point of obedience to a stripling's orders.

A blush of shame crept into Phil's face as he suddenly remembered the secret document in his pocket. Would it not be a courteous act to give it over at once to Takishima to restore it to those who were anxiously searching through the entire city and who would be forever disgraced if it fell into the hands of the agents of a foreign power?
CHAPTER VIII

MISUNDERSTANDING

The Honorable Henry Tillotson was much agitated. The night before he had been the honored guest of Count Kure, the great prime minister of Japan, and his impressions had been indeed reassuring. The prime minister had himself acknowledged the growing confidence with which diplomatic relations had proceeded. Then had come the account of the fight between sailors from the American cruiser and Japanese citizens, showing that ill feeling existed between the people of the two nations, a most disquieting sign. And this was the day for Captain Rodgers' presentation to the Emperor. The President of the United States had sent by this special naval envoy an autograph letter to the Mikado, the contents of which no one, not even the Secretary of State in Washington, knew. The fact that there was a letter had leaked out in some
mysterious way, but Captain Rodgers had never affirmed or denied its existence.

Leaning back in his chair near the ambassador's desk was Mr. Impey. A few scratches on his forehead, and a bandage about one wrist were the only outward signs of his struggles of the night before.

"Your Excellency, I now have positive information of Japan's intentions, and it is no less than a contemplated seizure, by force if necessary, of the entire new Chinese navy as soon as it has entered the Yellow Sea." Impey's voice was low, but in the still room the startling words caused the ambassador to glance uneasily about as if he feared the presence of an eavesdropper.

"The proofs," the ambassador exclaimed excitedly. "I dare not be mistaken if I should cable this to my government."

"I regret to say I have not the proofs. They were taken from me last night. I would have laid them before you, only for a misfortune. My house was entered last night by armed men who overpowered me. When I came to my senses the document was gone. It probably is now in the hands of the Japa-
nese officials who lost it. The seal was broken, and knowing that I can translate the Japa-
nese characters they will know that its con-
tents are no longer a secret. My yacht is
waiting me in Yokohama with steam up, for
I dare not trust myself longer in Japan. I
should now be on my way. My British
citizenship would not save me." Impey's
face showed his eagerness to be gone.

"Cannot you tell me more fully what was
in this document? This is a very grave
situation, Mr. Impey, and my government is
under great obligations to you for bringing
this information to me. If you believe that
your safety is endangered I shall be glad to
offer you an asylum here in the legation or
on board the 'Alaska.'"

The ambassador's usually composed aspect
had entirely vanished; nervously his fingers
drummed on the desk, while his eyes flashed
excitedly.

"The letter was lost when my machine ran
down a messenger who had been entrusted
with it," Impey replied. "I cannot tell you
now how it came to fall into my hands, but
it did, and I spent last evening translating it
and committing it to memory. It was rather long; if you wish I can write its purport."

The ambassador nodded his head eagerly, shoving a pad and pencil over toward the speaker.

Impey took the pencil and began to write thoughtfully. A woman's voice came softly intruding upon the silence of the ambassador's private office.

"You must pardon the stupidity of our servants, Captain Inaba." Helen's words were startlingly distinct, causing the ambassador to rise quickly from his chair and Impey's pencil to stop suddenly and then fall upon the desk with a sharp click, while his hand crumpled the paper on which it had been writing. "The idea of his not announcing you at once; father is there in the office, I am sure."

Impey gazed wildly about him. His face had gone quite white and the usual sang-froid of his manner had evaporated.

No avenue of escape seemed possible.

The next moment the door was opened and Helen's voice announced the Japanese naval officer.
“Captain Inaba was wandering around like a lost soul in the hall,” she exclaimed smilingly. “I didn’t know our servants could be so stupid.” She caught sight of Mr. Impey and noticed for the first time the strained attitude of the two men.

“Oh,” she exclaimed, a catch in her breath. She turned to Captain Inaba; he was standing straight, with military precision, on the threshold, waiting the pleasure of the ambassador to be invited to enter. His sphinx-like face betrayed nothing.

With an impatient toss of her head and a displeased frown she quickly withdrew, walking in stately fashion from the room.

In the big vestibule she discovered the two midshipmen. They had just arrived and were taking off their overcoats. She went quickly to greet them, a relieved smile on her face.

“What on earth is the matter?” she exclaimed suddenly, for there was an atmosphere of gloom in their solemn faces. “Tell me at once. I am not a child to be kept in ignorance. Is it the sailor fight in the theatre— for I read that hours ago in the newspaper?”

“Is the ambassador at home?” Phil asked,
ignoring her question. His voice was anxious and his manner studied.

"Yes, but he is with Mr. Impey and Captain Inaba, so you had best come with me to the library and wait until they go," she replied, annoyed at the evident secrecy in which she did not share.

"Mr. Impey, Captain Inaba!" both midshipmen exclaimed, casting inquiring glances at each other.

"Well, why not Mr. Impey and Captain Inaba?" Helen's voice betrayed her irritation. "Neither one is a very dangerous person to have in the house. You look as if you thought they were both anarchists."

The lads allowed themselves to be led into the library, while Helen sank down on the divan, motioning them to chairs near by.

"I want to know the whole thing, so you might just as well begin," she exclaimed impatiently. "Go on." She stamped her foot.

"Miss Helen, there isn't anything to tell." Phil had exchanged a look with his chum and received a nod to act as spokesman. "We've come to see the ambassador and ask his advice; believe me, there is nothing to tell."
“Have Mr. Impey and Captain Inaba likewise come to ask father’s advice? How extraordinary that all should come just at the same time!” Her tone was sarcastic.

Sydney suddenly offered a weak excuse and hastily left the two young people together. Phil’s face showed almost a panic, but Helen deftly placed herself between him and the only avenue of escape.

The stern lines in Phil’s face had already begun to relax. “Will you not trust me with your secret? For I see you have one,” she coaxed.

Phil shook from him his sombre humor and a smile played about his firm mouth.

“I suppose I shall have to in the end,” he said resignedly.

How clear the sky seemed now when only a short time ago it was all clouds.

“You have read the paper?” He indicated the “Shimbunshi” among other papers on the library table. Helen nodded shortly.

“That’s all pure fabrication,” he exclaimed angrily. “There were no people hurt on either side, and it is not likely to create a
diplomatic difficulty. The officers did not lead the sailors against the Japanese, and the American flag was not intentionally insulted by the Japanese."

Phil eagerly told the excited girl the true story of the trouble in the theatre and its happy outcome.

"We had as much as we could do in getting away alive," he exclaimed enthusiastically. "Taki's speech spread among the crowd like a prairie fire, and the whole town wanted to carry us around on their shoulders. I saw O'Neil this morning and he said the populace manned the shafts of their rikishas and insisted upon hauling them about town crying 'banzai America.' Our sailors were loaded with presents, and were not allowed to even show that they had money."

"I am so glad." Helen's face was dimpled in smiles. "I've never seen father so worried as when he read that account in the paper; he tried to allay my fear by telling me that he thought it was simply a local irritation, but I knew he thought otherwise."

Suddenly her face clouded again.

"But why then these solemn faces when
you arrived?" she asked abruptly. "There must be something else!"

Phil's boyish smile had also disappeared.

"Yes, there is something else," he confessed, "and that's what we came to see your father about. I fear we have been placed in a very false position, and all through my blunder."

Helen's womanly sympathies were aroused. "Go on," she commanded earnestly.

"I don't know just how to tell you," he began helplessly; "it's all so involved." She nodded encouragingly. He was bending forward, his chin resting in his hand.

"In the motor accident yesterday the man hurt was carrying an important secret document belonging to the Japanese navy department. He lost it. O'Neil and Marley, of whom you have heard me speak, were seen, by some of the bystanders, to pick up a letter resembling the one lost, but it was not the same. Last night I found this lost letter in a very peculiar way. I put it in my pocket intending to think over what I should do with it; but really my mind was made up to return it to its owners, the Japanese. Then came the
excitement in the theatre. After that we went with Taki to the Maple Club, intending to make ourselves presentable and return to the ball. The secret letter was in the inside pocket of my coat.”

Phil stopped, and Helen saw that his face was drawn and worried.

“Taki had told me of the loss of this letter,” he continued, “and I had promised him that if it came into my hands I would give it to him.” Phil’s voice was self-accusing.

“And he saw the letter in your pocket!” she exclaimed excitedly.

Phil sighed. “It was worse than that. I lost the letter, or at least it was probably taken out of my pocket.”

“Where? How on earth could that happen without your knowing it?” Helen’s eyes were opened wide in surprise. “With your coat on and also your cape?”

“I don’t know.” Phil’s answer was in the most dejected tone. “The whole way in the motor to the club my hand was over my pocket. I was on the point on two or three occasions of taking the letter out and giving it to Taki then and there. My conscience
hurt me terribly, for I had given my solemn promise and I knew I was breaking it. I told myself I was only waiting to frame a story, for I didn't want to tell him then how I had gained possession of it. When we arrived at the club, several Japanese attendants took our capes and caps and we went to Taki's rooms to tidy up. As I took off my coat I felt in my pocket for the envelope, intending to give it to him then. Taki had his back turned. I saw the document was not there and what I had supposed was it was only a fold in the lining of my coat."

"What did you do?" Helen asked breathlessly.

"What could I do?" Phil asked hopelessly. "I was stupefied with surprise. Then I thought he knew and was inwardly laughing at me and instead of telling him of the loss, I became sullen and resentful. Takishima's face was as unconcerned as ever. I knew mine was red, for my ears burned. He appeared to notice nothing unusual. Sydney seemed to see that something was wrong and blurted out, 'What's wrong, Phil?' and I mumbled something incoherently and felt
myself becoming more confused and mortified than ever."

"Do you believe Takishima really took the letter?" Helen asked anxiously. Her face showed the sympathy she felt.

"I've thought and thought," Phil declared, "but I can't make up my mind what I do think. It may not have fallen into Japanese hands at all, and if it has they will believe that I have broken my word in attempting to keep it and read it, and I had no such intentions. The seal was broken, so they will naturally believe that I am the guilty one."

Phil's head was bowed in his hands.

"I am so sorry," Helen exclaimed compassionately. She realized that nothing could comfort him.

"If I only knew what to do." Phil's tones were almost tearful. "If I were man enough, I'd go to Taki and tell him the whole story, but I am not. I haven't the nerve to acknowledge that I didn't play fair."

"You shall not run yourself down that way, Phil," she insisted indignantly. His name escaped from her lips quite naturally, and to the lad it was a soothing balm. "I
don't care what you did, you were honest. You were going to give him the letter. How could you know that it would be stolen?"

"I stole it from some one else." Phil's voice was almost a whisper. The accompanying silence caused him to sit erect and look up quickly at the girl beside him. She had recoiled, and there was an expression of horror in her eyes.

"Stolen from some one else?" she breathed incredulously. "How could you?"

Phil smiled at her earnestness, and Helen gave a sigh of relief.

"That wasn't friendly!" she exclaimed in a hurt voice. "How can you jest when you know how interested I am?"

"I took it from some one who had obtained it by force," he explained quickly. "Please do not ask me more, because that is all that I can now tell."

Helen was thoughtful, and just a shade reserved. That she was to be excluded from some of the secret hurt just a little.

"Now if the letter was taken from me by either Taki or one of his people, they will naturally think that I have had it right
along, and that I intended keeping it," he said soberly. The lad's voice was gloomier than his words. "The best thing I can do is to go back to the ship and stay there, and not show myself ashore until the 'Alaska' sails."

"How absurd!" Helen cried indignantly. "You have done nothing wrong. Why should you shoulder responsibility that does not belong to you? You must go to Lieutenant Takishima. I am sure that he will believe you; tell him everything, even the name of the person from whom you took the letter."

Phil shook his head.

"There's the trouble. He would not believe me when I said that I intended giving it up."

Phil smiled bitterly as he rose to his feet. "It's done me a lot of good to tell you my troubles, anyway," he said. "I don't know how to thank you."

Helen's thoughts had gone to the dreadful tropical island, miles away, and she saw before her mind's eye this mere boy who eight months ago had gone cheerfully into the very jaws of death in the hopes of saving another
officer, and that officer her own brother. She knew that her father regarded him with the affection of a father for a son, and as Phil had been an orphan for many years, had talked openly to her of making him a son in fact as well as in thought. Phil's enthusiastic letters from the Philippines had always fallen into her hands after her father had read them, and she had kept them all. To her he was "Phil," and she desired nothing greater than that, conventionality being brushed aside, they should speak as well as think of each other by their first names.

Sydney suddenly returned and reported that Impey and Inaba were about to leave, and were approaching.

Phil's heart beat wildly at Sydney's alarming news; he dreaded meeting this inscrutable Japanese, whose eyes seemed to be able to read one's very thoughts. He had seen him but once at short range: in the navy building after the messenger had been carried there; but he had taken away with him the indelible impression of those far-seeing eyes.

Impey and Inaba were coming from down the hall, the ambassador with them, and all
three were strangely constrained and silent. Their way led past the open door of the library. Phil realized that to avoid a meeting was impossible. Helen was already in the doorway, and as hostess her smile was being bestowed upon her father’s visitors. She gave her hand to the naval officer, who bowed low over it, striking his heels together in the military fashion; and then she bestowed a more intimate smile upon Robert Impey.

“It was not polite of you,” she said to him in mock severity, “to stay away from the ball last night after you had asked me for two dances.”

Impey blushed in confusion, murmuring that a sudden business call had deprived him of the pleasure of dancing with her.

Helen made a sign of incredulity, and became suddenly aware that an introduction was necessary.

“Captain Inaba, I thought you had met Mr. Perry and Mr. Monroe,” she said apologizingly.

All three bowed, and Phil would have gladly welcomed an earthquake to swallow him from sight.
"I owe you an apology, Mr. Perry," Captain Inaba said in a low voice. The others had walked to the far corner of the library leaving the two alone together. "I was greatly disturbed when I last saw you, and am afraid I was not courteous. I have since seen your great friend and also mine, Lieutenant Taki-shima, and am sensible of the honor of having your aid in this painful misunderstanding. The lost letter was a great shock, but we hope to soon regain it."

Phil dared not raise his guilty eyes. He felt Inaba's searching gaze upon him and knew that the red blush of shame which was then on his cheeks was not lost on the subtle Japanese. Was Captain Inaba only making sport of him? The letter was at that time doubtless in Captain Inaba's hands and, what was worse, he knew that it had been taken from Phil's pocket!

Phil believed that all eyes were upon him, for in his anxiety he had not observed that the others had withdrawn. He felt utterly overcome with mortification and considered seriously running precipitously from the room. He cudgeled his brain for something,
anything to say, to relieve the tension of the situation. Then suddenly the apparent cruelty of the accusing attitude of the naval officer maddened him. He had not looked up, but he was sure that he was frowning upon him as the betrayer of his friend.

"I hope you will find it, if you have not already," Phil stammered out, half in humility and half in anger; then he raised his eyes and saw that Captain Inaba was bowing himself out of the room, his parchment-like face as cold and forbidding as ever.

Impey remained behind, and Phil noticed that his manner was constrained. He lingered but a few minutes talking to the ambassador and Helen and then left the little group of Americans alone together.

The ambassador nodded to the two midshipmen to follow him and led the way back to his office. Helen knew intuitively that she was not included in the invitation, and with an impatient pout turned back into the library.

Mr. Tillotson seated himself at his desk and signed to the two lads to come near him. They saw that his face was pale, and that there were lines under his eyes which showed plainly the
mental strain of much worry. When he spoke his voice was low and anxious.

"We are on the threshold of a national crisis," he said, speaking with his eyes on the floor. "No one can be believed. My government has entrusted to me the duty of finding out the real intentions of Japan, and I am beset with conflicting counsel on all sides. The Chinese squadron is near Colombo, Ceylon, on its way to China. Our fleet is between it and its destination, and we must know before it is too late whether Japan will attempt to seize these vessels to reënforce her navy, and if so whether her intentions are hostile. Mr. Impey has just informed me that a paper has fallen into his hands which divulges the secret that Japan has determined to buy or rather seize the ships. China has not paid for them, and is too weak to resist the Japanese fleet. If I could depend upon this I would cable Washington, and our fleet is in a position to checkmate the move. Captain Inaba then comes to see me with apologies from the Minister of Marine for last night's disturbance at the theatre. He praised our sailors highly, and said the Emperor wished to commend our men
for their loyalty and patriotism in saving our flag from insult. What can one believe?”

The two midshipmen shook their heads in deep perplexity. This then was what had been learned from the document which Phil had found only to lose it. The midshipmen mutually decided that what they had come to tell the ambassador would better for the present remain unsaid. To convince him that Impey was a double-faced scoundrel after this unsought confidence might be difficult. That must wait a more opportune time.
CHAPTER IX

MORE DISCOVERIES

O’NEIL and Marley decided that they had best leave Tokyo for the present. Their uniforms, which had been neat and trim when they arrived, were now in the bright light of morning in a deplorable state, torn and stained with dirt from their struggle in the theatre the night before.

“We are certainly hard-looking citizens, Bill,” O’Neil remarked sadly as they rapidly clothed themselves in their tattered remnants, “and a whole day more leave to our credit, too.”

Both sailors knew their first duty was to give to the midshipmen the information which they had been directed to get from the injured messenger, and this duty was now all the more urgent, for O’Neil carried within his torn uniform blouse the much sought document itself.

He had picked it up on the stage of the
theatre. At the hotel they were told that the midshipmen had gone, and believing they had returned to the "Alaska," they were just in time to catch a fast train for Yokohama.

"Bill, how would you like to fight these little Japs, eh? It wasn’t such hard work last night, was it?" O’Neil asked.

"No," Bill answered conditionally. "They had a look in their eyes, though, that wasn’t no way pleasant. It seemed to tell you: 'Go ahead and down me; there's lots more anxious to take my place.'"

"Right you are, Bill," O’Neil smiled grimly. "They're fatalists; it ain't nothing for them to die, no more than for you to get a tooth pulled. When a man is killed in battle here his family have a big celebration and invite all their friends in to help them."

"Have they got as good ships as ours?" Marley questioned.

"Ain't you ever been on board a Jap battleship?" O’Neil asked in surprise. Marley shook his head. "Well, the next time we go ashore we'll go down to the dockyard at Yokoska. They are mighty particular, but I reckon we can get tickets through that
Jap officer friend of Mr. Perry’s. But mind, Bill, you don’t let your fishy eyes rest too long on anything you see, and leave your kodak on board ship.”

Marley’s face wore a disgusted and pained expression. “You know, Jack, that I ain’t none of these long-haired, mushroom sailors with a ‘snap me quick’ over his shoulder.”

O’Neil laughed loudly. The idea was amusing. Then he caught sight of a familiar figure, just passing their compartment.

“Hello, you old parchment-faced pirate,” he called, and Sago, the Japanese steward, entered bowing and smiling.

“What did you mean by taking us into that hornet’s nest last night?” the sailor continued banteringly. “You might have known my friend Bill here would have ‘started something’; he usually does.”

Marley let the remark go. He was ever a lap or two behind Jack O’Neil in his train of thought.

“Bill, could you recognize again the fellow who carried the flag?” O’Neil suddenly asked. “If we could lay our hands on that gentleman we might find out something useful.
Did you hear Mr. Perry tell us that he and the little Jap lieutenant believe it was a fixed up game to start a row with our men?"

"It's all too mixed for me. I can unmoor ship from an elbow or a cross, but when my cables are all tangled up in knots, then I am done."

Marley had lapsed into a sailor metaphor indicating that the devious ways of diplomatic intrigue were beyond his simple comprehension.

"Sago, what does your methodical brain tell you is the real game being played here in Japan?" O'Neil directed his eloquence upon the silently complacent steward. "Do these one time countrymen of yours want to annex the United States?"

"No." Sago was emphatic in his negative. "Japanee very funny, all time want to learn something. American they don't understand. They think Japanee very curious."

"Say, Sago," O'Neil turned on him suddenly, and the little old man started in mild surprise, "suppose we had a war with Japan. What would you do? Skip back here and go in the Jap navy?"
Sago was indignant. "I wouldn't ever fight against the United States," he declared positively. "Sago think Japan no want to fight. Plenty soldiers and sailors, but no money."

"Strike me blind, if there ain't that yellow villain what carried the flag." Marley was half out of his seat, his eyes staring at what appeared to be a Japanese servant by his dark blue livery. In his hands were several valises, and in front of him, just entering a compartment in the same car as our friends, were two Europeans.

"Our friend Randall," O'Neil exclaimed as he laid a detaining arm about Marley's waist. "Hold fast, Bill, there may be something in this. Just sit tight and wait. They ain't going to get away until we reach Yokohama, because this is an express."

"You got that paper there, Jack?" Marley asked as he saw O'Neil's hand down inside his blouse.

"She's safe anchored here," O'Neil replied, "and I can't keep my hands off it. I'll bet a month's pay it's the same one that little Jap messenger lost."

The two sailors had examined it the night
before in their room by the faint light of a Japanese dip and the markings were the same as that described by Oka.

O'Neil drew a letter stealthily from his pocket, while Marley put his back against the door to ward off interruptions.

"Give us the dope of this in United States, Sago," O'Neil ordered as he held out the official document to the awe-struck steward. Sago's eyes were as big as saucers.

"Where you get him?" the Japanese asked, making a quick grab for the letter and in his excitement forgetting to speak good English.

"Belay there!" O'Neil cried angrily. "I'll hold it right here and you can read it backward¹ to us."

"This very serious," Sago exclaimed fearfully. "If some one see us we all go to Japanese jail. That Emperor's letter. More better you take quick back to Tokyo."

"Not on your life. I am going to know what these officers were so anxious about," O'Neil declared while Marley wagged his head in confirmation of his chum's sentiment.

¹The Japanese writing is backward from the end of a book or letter to the front.
"If you're as good an American as you try to make us believe you are, you'd read it instead of trembling there like a Chinaman about to get his head chopped off."

Sago read the letter slowly to himself. After his first surprise his natural sagacity asserted itself. He knew that the real contents of this letter should not be told the sailors. He trembled at the thought of knowing it himself. He must satisfy these two determined men and then endeavor to get the letter into his captain's hands. Sago saw that a military secret had been taken from a nation which prided itself upon its power to keep such secrets.

"That say nothing." Sago had expelled the anxiety from his voice.

"Read it," O'Neil demanded.

"It says that next month Japanese navy will have very big drills and that all ships will be present to be reviewed by the Emperor."

Sago looked up, his face now quite composed. "There is plenty more, but all orders of the admiral what each ship is to do." Sago had made this up quickly and O'Neil
and Marley saw no reason to doubt the honesty of his translation.

"If I'd known that was all there was to it, I wouldn't have taken the trouble of throttling that little Jap for it last night," O'Neil exclaimed in disgust. "I'd let him have it, for I suppose that's what he was after when he was hunting through my clothes."

"Where?" Sago asked quickly.

"In that joint of a hotel where Bill and I put up. They searched our room while we was asleep, but this was next to me under my shirt."

Sago looked worried.

"Where you get him?" he asked excitedly, touching the letter with his hand.

"I found it on the stage of that theatre after the row last night," said O'Neil placidly. "I was goin' to hand it to Mr. Perry, but he got away before I could slip it to him on the quiet."

O'Neil had made up his mind to know more of the movements of Randall, and with this intention in mind he placed himself deliberately in his path on the station platform when the train had arrived at Yokohama, a good-natured smile on his Irish face.
Randall appeared nervously apprehensive as he gazed about him, while his older companion and the half-breed servant hurried ahead in the direction of the entrance to the station.

“Going away?” O’Neil asked shortly, falling into step at Randall’s side.

“Taking a little trip for my health,” was the answer.

“What are you going?” O’Neil insisted.

Randall turned upon him, an angry frown on his face.

“I don’t see, stranger, as that’s any of your concern,” he replied shortly.

“Just a little friendly question, Mr. Randall,” O’Neil said evenly. “May I inquire if Mr. Impey is going with you?”

Randall’s face turned suddenly pale, and the hand holding the morning paper shook perceptibly.

“You know entirely too much,” he cried unguardedly.

“Oh, ho!” O’Neil exclaimed, “and the yellow boy there off the stage. I see he’s in the party too, eh?”

Randall had stepped between the shafts of
a rikisha into which he was about to enter, with one foot on the step.

After all, what had he to fear from this American sailor? The jig was up, and perhaps he could be made useful. Why then make an enemy of him?

"I am going to the English Hatoba," he replied quickly; "meet us there and I'll answer your questions."

When O'Neil and Marley arrived at the landing Randall and his friends were already in a little naphtha launch.

"Get in," Randall invited.

The sailors waved good-bye to Sago, who was waiting for the "Alaska's" steamer, and were soon alongside a trim little sea-going yacht anchored just inside the breakwater.

"That isn't my flag," Randall exclaimed in a relieved voice as he stepped over the side, and pointing to the British ensign at the yacht's gaff, "but it gives me a nice comfortable feeling of security. I have been jumping at my shadow for the last six months."

1 Japanese term for dock.
Randall led the way into the forward cabin. After the two Americans were seated he surveyed them for several minutes in silence.

“What do you know about me and Mr. Impey?” he asked finally.

“Bill and I saw you go away with him in his motor yesterday after you left us at Billy Williams’,” the sailor answered, “after telling us that you didn’t know him.”

“I don’t tell all I know to every chance acquaintance,” Randall returned; “but now as it’s all over with us I don’t mind answering your question. Mr. Impey owns this yacht, and is taking Mr. Wells and me for a little trip for our health.” Randall wore a good-natured grin upon his face as he continued.

“Mr. Impey found a very important letter yesterday, or at least Wells found it and gave it to him, and then he got robbed and was left senseless in his house last night after he had broken the seal and read it. That’s why we are changing our climate. Japan is getting a little too hot for our comfort.”

“What kind of looking letter was it?” O’Neil asked seriously, his hand in his blous
where the Japanese document was concealed.
“Was it in English?” he asked.
“No, in Japanese, of course, and sealed
with the big red seal of the Mikado,” Randall
replied.
you said it was in Japanese.”
“So I did. Mr. Impey read it. He knows
their fly tracks by heart; he’s a wizard on Ori-
ental languages,” Randall answered quickly.
“What did your letter say?” O’Neil asked
earnestly. His fingers had closed upon the
one hidden in his blouse.
“I don’t know all, but something about
seizing or buying the Chinese battle-ships;
also a lot of talk about what the United States
was doing—most of it untrue and furnished
by Impey and company, that’s us, you know,”
including himself and Wells in a sweep of his
hand. Then Randall’s eye fell upon the let-
ter which O’Neil had drawn forth.
“Hurrah!” Randall had jumped to his
feet and was hugging the astonished sailor.
“That’s the very letter. Impey thought the
Japs had taken it, and we were all ‘beating
it’ in the yacht.”
"Well," O'Neil's voice was sarcastic, "some one's been stringing you. This letter talks about a naval review of the fleet by the Emperor and a lot of other unimportant stuff."

It was Randall's turn to be sarcastic.

"I suppose you've translated it off-hand yourself?" he asked, "or maybe your friend there has an intimate knowledge of Japanese classics. He looks like a scholar."

"None of your high-brow jaw!" O'Neil's eyes flashed; he could chaff his friend if he liked, but he resented it from a stranger.

"It was read to us by a Jap steward from the 'Alaska.'"

"Well, he did it intentionally. He was probably afraid to tell you what was really in it. But where and how did you get it?" Randall asked. Then he turned and cried aloud up the hatch to Wells who had gone to meet a boat that had come alongside, "Say, Jim, here's the lost letter, snug enough, in this sailor's hand!"

O'Neil explained how he had obtained it. Randall shook his head in sign of mystery.

"It beats me," he said, "how it got to the theatre. I witnessed the theatre row and af-
"THIS LETTER TALKS ABOUT A NAVAL REVIEW"
terward found Mr. Impey knocked out on the floor of his room; both happened about the same time.

"Jim lost a paper in the crowd when the man was run over," he continued, "and one of your officers picked this up near the wheels of the motor, and Wells took it thinking it was the one he had lost."

"So you fellows are the authors of that pack of lies about our ship? Bill there got your yellow journal dope for the Jap newspaper." O'Neil's face was black with anger; he saw it all now. These were the men who had aroused the Japanese nation, who had embittered them against everything American. "And you call yourself an American, too!" O'Neil's fists were clenched tightly. "I've a good mind to give you a good thrashing here and now," he cried, advancing menacingly upon the surprised journalist.

Randall was between the two threatening sailors and the hatchway, with the heavy mahogany table between. He put up his hands as if he would appease the two angry sailors, and then with the agility of a cat cleared the ladder in one bound, and the sur-
prised sailors heard the iron hatch above them close shut with a loud report. They rushed madly up the ladder and with their combined strength attempted to force the steel door, but it withstood their combined attack.

"Shanghai'd, by Jove!" O'Neil's voice was tearful with anger.

A tramping of feet overhead and the sound of hurried orders given in a loud voice, then a clanking of chain, came to their ears.

"We're off, Bill," O'Neil said sadly, "and just when things was about to get interesting. We're playing in hard luck, sure."
CHAPTER X

CAPTAIN INABA

Sago watched the two sailors step into the naphtha launch with their new-found friends and go swiftly out to a little black yacht anchored just inside the long breakwater. He waited until it was evident that the sailors had gone up the gangway ladder and were aboard, and there was a puzzled look on the face of the Japanese. He stood for several seconds, his eyes on the yacht, and then finally walked quickly away.

The steam launch from the "Alaska" came alongside just as he turned, and its coxswain hailed him. "Going off to the ship, Sago?" But Sago did not hear, or if he heard he made no answer, nor did he slacken his pace. At the end of the dock he stepped into a rikisha and at full speed the little vehicle rushed toward the Yokohama railroad station.

An hour later Captain Inaba was in his
office at the navy department. His bronze face wore a worried look. From his secret service men, who had been detailed to trace down the missing documents, very baffling news had come. Two of his men had had the letter in their grasp only to lose it. The quarters in the Imperial Hotel had been thoroughly searched, but it had not been found, yet he was confident that it was in American hands. An official-appearing letter addressed to the editor of the "Shimbunshi" was found in Midshipman Perry's valise at the hotel. Inaba still held this letter on his desk awaiting Takishima's arrival to help translate its contents, for nothing must interfere with tracing down the important paper. His reputation, even his life, depended upon keeping the contents of the lost letter secret from the Americans.

"Some one to see me, and from the American war-ship!" the little naval man exclaimed, as an attendant delivered a message, holding the door open. "Let him enter at once." Inaba arose from his chair excitedly, and took several steps in the messenger's direction.
IN JAPAN

Sago came hesitatingly into the room. The American steward had not forgotten his early training, and when he beheld the important official, he stopped and made several low obeisances, drawing in his breath each time between closed teeth.

Sago was now essentially a Japanese. His fifteen years in the United States navy had quite passed from his mind. The oath he had taken to uphold the honor of his adopted country was forgotten. Those few silent minutes' struggle on the dock while he had watched the launch, knowing that the sacred seal of the Emperor had been violated and the letter polluted by alien hands, had proved to him that his allegiance yet belonged to his Emperor and Japan.

Inaba gazed in surprise at this fellow countryman in an American steward's uniform. He knew of course that there were many of his people so employed, but there was something singularly familiar about this man's face. Sago kept his eyes lowered, and his head hung down in sign of humility before this powerful adviser to the Minister of Marine.
"What is it? Speak, man!" Inaba commanded.

Sago looked guardedly around the office, assuring himself there were no other ears but his and his questioner.

"Your augustness," Sago began meekly, bowing again and sucking in his breath, "I have at last found great joy in being able to help my country. Years ago I wronged her, and have paid dearly for it by my self-inflicted exile."

Inaba approached close to the humble and penitent man and gazed long into his averted face.

"I am waiting," he said quietly. "Your face comes back to me out of the dim past, but I know you not."

"Do you remember Raku? He who allowed the war plans to be stolen, and who fled rather than face the disgrace, and who was too cowardly to take his own worthless life in atonement?" Sago raised his eyes and for a second dared to look into Inaba's face.

"And you have been all these years in exile?" Inaba asked kindly, his voice low,
thrilled with wonder. "Did you not hear that the plans were not stolen? The thieves carried away nothing valuable. The plans had been removed the night before by the Minister of Marine himself, and placed in a safer vault. Those very plans were used successfully in our late war."

Sago's care-worn, wizened face broke into lines of joy, and into his eyes tears rushed unbidden:

"My guilt was no less, augustness. I slept when I should have been watching," he said penitently. "And for this I gave up my country and the companionship of my blood and have lived among aliens. They have always been kind, and I love them next to my own people. Augustness, then you were a mere stripling in the office of the minister; now you have become the giant oak upon whom the nation leans for support. Your brain is the oracle on naval tactics and strategy; where before you followed, now you lead."

Inaba smiled, and in his eyes there was a look of joy.

"Raku, I am but the clay in the hands of
the sculptor. All my achievements have been possible only through the virtue of His Majesty, our Emperor.”

Both men bowed almost to the ground as the magic words were spoken.

Sago drew nearer and spoke quickly and earnestly while Inaba listened, his anxious face becoming more tranquil as the minutes went by. There was no interruption.

After Sago had finished, Inaba sat for several minutes in profound thought. This indeed was startling and baffling news. The letter in the hands of American sailors and on board Mr. Impey’s yacht. Impey he had seen scarcely two hours ago. He had seen him go into the American Embassy and had followed him in, as he himself had business with the ambassador. For some time he had mistrusted this smooth foreigner and his intimate relations with the American ambassador. If by ill fortune the ambassador’s daughter had not interrupted him after he had dismissed the servant, he might have surprised the conversation on the other side of the closed door to the ambassador’s office.

When he had entered he felt a delicate
situation had arisen, but his own confusion in being surprised had made it impossible for him to analyze the causes. Had Impey then given the ambassador the contents of this important letter? His spies had told him that Impey had held the letter; but why should he divulge it to the American ambassador? Sago stood silently watching the sphinx-like face which betrayed nothing of the methodical reasoning within Inaba's mind. Then the naval man nodded and smiled, patting the steward on the back as one would reward a child for a favor done.

The cable was his first thought. In answer to a bell several underlings quietly appeared. Inaba wrote hastily, sealed the letter, and a messenger quickly departed. No cable messages would leave the country until censored by Inaba. That order he had given by a stroke of the pen. The knowledge of the contents of the last letter would remain in Japan until the time had passed when it could do harm. The next letter was quickly despatched. It would prevent the British yacht "Sylvia" from leaving Yokohama harbor until he, Inaba, authorized its release.
"Raku, our Emperor does not forget the faithful," Inaba said after he had finished his writing. "Remain true to your conscience and the honor of your ancestors." Sago withdrew, a grateful look in his eyes.

Then Inaba drew out from a drawer in his desk the letter found the night before in the American midshipmen's room. His knowledge of English writing was not great, but as Takishima had not put in an appearance, he read on slowly, laboriously, seeking words frequently in a dictionary at his side. The situation had become more perplexing. Here was an article calculated to arouse the Japanese people against the American naval visitors, written in English and intended for a newspaper supposedly owned by a foreign syndicate. Takishima had brought him the word the night before that the midshipman had denied that the lost letter had been found by their sailors, and Takishima was quite confident that his classmate was honorable. Yet here was a letter found in his room which showed conclusively that he was not honorable.

And then came Sago's information that
the American sailors held the lost letter and had even asked him to translate it. Inaba felt that a great crisis had been reached. It was apparent to him that America was endeavoring to force a crisis on Japan through this visit of the “Alaska.” When this decision was reached the long projected and assiduously studied plans should immediately be put in operation. Then Japan would stand ready on guard, but would not strike the first blow unless her honor demanded it.

Inaba sat at his desk deep in thought. His dreams of a great war with a power worthy of his country's steel made his blood quicken. From the battle between two such fleets as America and Japan would pit against each other, many naval lessons yet unlearned, even as yet unthought, would be demonstrated. It would be a fight that would stand out in raised letters on the pages of the world's history, and he would be the man to whom future naval historians would give credit for the wonderful victory on the seas won by the Japanese fleet, for Captain Inaba was certain of success. It would be due of course entirely to the great virtue of his Emperor. All
Japanese would understand that, but the foreigners would lay it to the work of his methodical and far-seeing brain. A messenger had silently entered and spoke a few words in a low voice; scarcely hearing, Inaba had nodded, still deep in his revery. Then across his mental vision flashed a face and Impey stood before him—nervously smiling.

"I was the unconscious means of losing a valuable letter, Captain Inaba." Impey's manner was hasty and he talked as one not sure of his ground. The steely eyes of the Japanese gazed out on him uncompromisingly. His parchment-colored face was expressionless.

"Fortunately I have been enabled to secure this letter, and it is now safe on board the yacht 'Sylvia.'"

Inaba's face did not move a muscle.

"Yes. I had already learned so, Mr. Impey, and had given orders to prevent her sailing."

Impey's face was a picture of confusion and embarrassment. This little Japanese he had always feared, attributing to him powers more than human. He knew that Inaba suspected him, and that the two men who had assaulted
him in his own rooms were Inaba's men. He then must know that the letter had been in his hands. The sailors had taken it from one of these men before he could deliver it to Captain Inaba. Impey knew nothing of Phil's interruption.

"The letter came into my hands, its seal broken," he said nervously. "It was taken from me at my home, and not until this morning did I find out who had caused it to be impossible to return the letter to you as I intended." Impey's courage slowly returned as he hastily explained while Inaba's cold eyes looked on unmoved. "The sailors showed the letter to two of my friends, and they contrived to get them on board my yacht where they are now under lock and key, awaiting your pleasure."

"Then so far the secret is safe," Captain Inaba replied. His voice showed relief. "The Americans could hardly have had it translated so soon."

"There is a Japanese on board the 'Alaska'; he is Captain Rodgers' steward," Impey interjected. "He would be able to read the letter if there had been time. One of my friends
said the steward was on the train with the sailors."

Captain Inaba smiled. He knew that Raku could be trusted. Then if Impey had not translated it the secret was as yet safe.

"You can translate our language, Mr. Impey?" Captain Inaba questioned quietly. "If the secret then is out, you naturally fall under suspicion. The letter was in regard to the ships our Emperor has considered buying."

Impey raised his hand to his throat, something seemed choking him, before he answered.

"I did not read the letter," he said in a frightened voice. "The seal was broken when it came to me. Why should I wish to inform the Americans of a secret which I have been as anxious as yourself to keep? You must remember, Captain Inaba," he went on with attempted dignity, "that it is merely a business affair with me. As agent I have agreed to sell you these ships at a price stipulated."

Inaba's eyes flashed.

"Are you quite sure, Mr. Impey," he asked
coldly, "that you have not two strings to your bow?"

Impey paled as he heard the words and wished he had remained on board his yacht, instead of trusting himself back in Tokyo. He had risked much in this return; but this he was willing to do if he could be sure of preventing the reception of the American captain by the Emperor. This meeting Impey feared. He had heard of the letter written by the President of the United States, and believed that if this letter was read by the Mikado that Japan would decide not to buy the Chinese ships, thereby making his work of a year profitless.

"As for the secret being in the hands of the Americans, I cannot say," Impey said quickly, appearing not to have considered Captain Inaba's accusation of duplicity. "The letter was in the keeping of the Americans all night. It has been through many hands. I took it from the midshipmen while they were dressing for the reception at the prime minister's." This Impey decided to say, although it was untrue, hoping that Captain Inaba's suspicions might be diverted from himself to the Ameri-
cans. He in truth had obtained the letter from Wells and had but finished its translation when the two Japanese detectives interrupted him.

"The sailors," he went on, "appear to have trailed it down and eventually, as you know, succeeded in recovering it. The American ambassador sent for me early this morning to talk with me in regard to the concession for the Kiangsu-Hohan Railway in which my syndicate is interested. I noticed that he was strangely excited and when you entered his office I believe he was on the point of telling me the cause of his agitation."

While Impey was speaking a messenger quietly entered the office, handing Captain Inaba an envelope which he eagerly opened.

"The ambassador has our secret," the naval officer exclaimed. "Here are his cipher cables to Washington and Manila. They must contain the secret. The code is too difficult for us to translate, so I must act as if the letter had been read by the Americans. All cables by my orders are being held up by the cable operators until it is too late for them to harm us. That we are determined to secure at
once the ships of the new China navy will not be known by the United States government until the ships are in our hands."

The turn affairs had taken was a great blow to Impey. His single aim, for which he had even risked his life, for he feared a fanatic's knife if his duplicity was made public, was that the United States should be forced to seize the Chinese ships. Everything had been designed to lead up to this crowning event.

"Will you seize the ships at once?" Impey exclaimed, striving to inject a gladness into his voice which he was far from feeling.

The presence of the "Alaska" came suddenly into Impey's mind. She could not be stopped, and once away could send the secret by wireless to Guam, Honolulu, and thence to the United States. So after all his cause was not entirely lost.

"I shall advise sailing at once to intercept the Chinese squadron," Captain Inaba answered promptly. "Have you the release from the Wai-Wu-Pu ready—for we do not wish to appear to seize the ships?"

"It has not come from Peking," Impey re-
plied. "It was not thought that such haste would be necessary. I expect it in a few days."

"Then we shall proceed without it," Captain Inaba exclaimed. "The Chinese admiral will hardly risk a fight against our formidable fleet."

Impey had quite regained his natural humor. He had been given a severe fright, but he thought Captain Inaba's suspicions toward himself had been successfully allayed.

The yacht was ready to sail, and the permit from the Wai-Wu-Pu, the throne council of China, for the United States to take the entire new navy from the Chinese crews was in Impey's possession at that moment. The "Alaska" could sail from Yokohama, and send the important news of Japan's intentions of seizing the Chinese ships. The yacht with her high speed could carry ahead the permit to the United States admiral in Manila Bay.

"Japan is indeed fortunate, Captain Inaba, in the possession of an officer who so successfully combines the qualities of a strategist, diplomat and international detective. I take off my hat to you, sir." Impey pronounced
his words with great precision. No sign of the nervousness which earlier had been apparent was evident.

He was as yet safe from Captain Inaba's suspicion. With that thought bringing a smile to his lips he bowed himself out of the office.
CHAPTER XI

PHIL CONFESSES

The midshipmen were much agitated over the exciting news of the contemplated seizure of the Chinese ships by Japan given them by the ambassador. Where could Impey have obtained his information?

"Can we depend upon the truth of this story?" Phil asked anxiously as the two lads left the embassy to return to their hotel. Sydney shook his head.

"If what we've heard was in the secret letter then there's no way to prove its truth," he answered thoughtfully, "for now the letter is back in the hands of the Japanese."

"If that is what was in the letter, then the seal had been broken by Impey and the Japanese will believe that we are the guilty ones," Phil exclaimed. "That will make them even more determined to seize the Chinese ships."

The midshipmen were more than ever sus-

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picious of Impy's honesty. What was his part in this international intrigue? What was Impy's object? Why had he talked to them at the garden fête in the same strain as he had talked to the Japanese baron in the railroad train?

"I've found out who the baron is, Syd," Phil added. "His name is Kosuba, and he is president of the 'Koko Kishen' steamship line, the largest in Japan. They own over two hundred steamers. It's quite natural that he should want a big navy."

"It's very strange," Sydney replied thoughtfully. "Impy persuades him that Japan must at once buy the Chinese squadron to prevent our getting it and goes to our ambassador the next day with the news that Japan has decided to buy or seize them."

"And all the time," Phil returned angrily, "the United States is not giving a thought to the Chinese ships. No one can purchase ships without money, and Congress has not appropriated money for this purpose, and probably has no thought of so doing."

The entire affair puzzled the two midshipmen greatly.
"I suppose the ambassador will send a cable to Washington giving Impey's information," Sydney said as they walked toward the hotel to dress themselves appropriately for the Japanese dinner to be given them by Takishima and his sister at their own house.

"He believes implicitly in Impey," Phil replied impatiently. "I had it in mind two or three times to break in and give him the benefit of my experience with that individual, but I saw it would be quite useless. The affair of last night, when I found him being assaulted by two secret service men for possession of the paper, is the one thing that I cannot explain," he added. "That would convince the ambassador of his fidelity to us."

"Where can we find Captain Rodgers?" Sydney suddenly asked. "He must be told the entire story. This is the day he is to be received in audience by the Emperor."

Phil nodded his head; but secretly he did not relish this duty. His conscience pricked him for having foolishly held the document for even an instant. His proper course would have been to have given Takishima the letter when they met in the road after the fight at
Impey's and there told him where he had found it and the circumstances. That might have seemed the logical thing to do, but after his fight with two policemen it was not likely the youngster would confess his guilt so readily.

Captain Rodgers was in his room at the hotel when the midshipmen returned. He was much perturbed over the non-arrival of his steward, who had been sent to the ship for some of his uniforms; fortunately the executive officer had sent his valises.

Captain Rodgers saw in the faces of the lads that something serious had occurred, and questioned them in open alarm.

Phil undertook the ordeal manfully but with much embarrassment.

"We've just come from the embassy," he began, striving to speak calmly, "and the ambassador has information that Japan will surely intercept and take possession of the Chinese squadron."

Captain Rodgers' face showed the effect of these words. "The ambassador has information!" he exclaimed excitedly. "From whom did he get it?"
“From a man by the name of Impey. He was at the garden fête yesterday,” Phil answered.

“Yes, yes. I remember him,” Captain Rodgers returned. “Who in thunder is he, and how does he come to get such information?”

“We know very little about him, sir, but I can tell you some things that may help to show whether the information is true or not,” Phil mustered up courage to say.

“Sit down.” The captain waved his hand to chairs, but Phil preferred to remain standing. Where to begin was the lad’s difficulty.

“Yesterday on the train, Mr. Winston, Mr. Monroe and I overheard this man Impey tell the president of the Koko Kishen Steamship Company that he knew the United States had made up its mind to seize the Chinese squadron, and insinuated that our visit here was only a blind to conceal the fact.”

“The scoundrel,” Captain Rodgers cried angrily. “There’s not a word of truth in it; but my audience with the Mikado will change the complexion of everything. Go on!” he added eagerly.
"Since then we have tried to watch this Mr. Impey and find out something about him, but have had but little luck." Phil approached his confession with marked hesitancy, and Captain Rodgers showed plainly his impatience to learn what the youngster had to tell him.

"After the garden fête yesterday, Mr. Monroe and I came away in Mr. Impey's motor car." Phil saw the impatience in his captain's face and decided to take the plunge. "Unfortunately, we ran over a Japanese messenger carrying an official letter from the navy department. The messenger was severely hurt and his letter lost. Later, during the ball at the prime minister's, Lieutenant Takishima, hearing of a disturbance in a local theatre in which our sailors were involved, led us there. I became separated from Takishima and Sydney on the way, and by the merest accident I was able to save Mr. Impey from the assault of two Japanese who I thought were robbing him. It turned out they had traced the missing letter to his door and were bent upon regaining it. After rendering the two assailants unconscious, I took the letter from the
hand of one of them and put it in my coat pocket, and then hurried away to join the others."

"Where is this letter?" Captain Rodgers exclaimed anxiously.

"I intended giving it to Takishima, for I felt that I had no right to it even though it might hold information useful to the United States," Phil stammered, "but it was again taken or dropped from my pocket. I didn’t miss it until we arrived at the Maple Club, after smoothing out the difficulty at the theatre."

The captain had not read the morning papers, so Phil explained the theatre episode to him and the part Takishima had played.

"So Lieutenant Takishima also believes that the flag episode was arranged by some one for the purpose of starting this unpleasant encounter?" the captain asked quietly.

"Yes, sir, that’s what he said, and our men are sure that the man with the flag was not a Japanese. Marley said his eyes were round."

"Could he have been a Filipino?" Captain Rodgers questioned thoughtfully. "There are many Filipinos in the East, who have been..."
discredited in Manila and are quite willing to
do anything to injure the United States.”

“This letter,” Phil wished to clear his mind
of the fateful document, “was in Mr. Impey’s
hands long enough for him to obtain from it
the information he has given our ambassador.”

“You say it was taken again from you and
perhaps by the Japanese?” Captain Rodgers
asked, for he was just beginning to under-
stand the seriousness of the situation. “Then
they will know that the letter has been
opened and read, if it has been, and having
found it in your pocket will naturally suspect
you of having opened it and read it.”

Phil could only nod his head in mortified
silence. How much more culpable it sounded
in the voice of his captain!

“And further,” Captain Rodgers’ tones
were cold and accusing, “as I have brought
you to Tokyo as my aides, the officials will
suspect me of using you to spy upon them.”

The awkward situation came to the Amer-
ican captain’s mind in forceful colors. Through this unfortunate occurrence his
peaceful mission to Japan might be a com-
plete failure.
"When you found the letter was missing what did you do? Have you confided in your classmate Takishima?" The captain's voice was anxious, but Phil's silent negative showed him this hope of clearing up the matter was futile.

"Then unquestioningly they believe your intention was to hold this document, even though you had not opened it," he added in severe tones. "Your actions bear out this assumption. The Japanese authorities will know by now that you attacked their agents and took the letter."

Phil stood abashed before his captain. The situation was even more serious than he had supposed.

"I am sorry, sir," he said humbly. "I know that I acted ill advisedly, but how was I to know that the letter would be taken from me?"

"There's no use crying over spilt milk," Captain Rodgers rejoined more kindly. "What we must think of is how we are to counteract this bad impression."

Phil's face showed a sudden gleam of happiness.
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"I am willing to do anything, sir," the lad said.

"What if you should go to your classmate Takishima, and explain to him as you have to me?" Captain Rodgers asked.

"I will do so at once, sir, if you believe that is the best way," Phil replied quickly. He very much disliked the task, for he knew that Takishima would question his honest intentions. He would wonder why he had not immediately returned the letter, and why he had said nothing of it until it had passed beyond his control.

"I have an appointment to pay my respects to the Emperor in a few hours," Captain Rodgers replied anxiously. "If my meeting is a success, I hope all misunderstandings will be over. But if this meeting should be stopped now at the last minute, the effect would be very bad. All eyes in America are turned to this audience. It has been noised abroad that I am the bearer of a personal letter from our President to the Mikado, and the denial of an audience would be taken by our countrymen at large to mean that Japan is unwilling to meet us amicably."
Phil felt that the whole responsibility rested upon his shoulders. His blunder might readily be the cause of the catastrophe outlined by Captain Rodgers. The captain did not deny the existence of such a letter and had intimated that if the audience could be held, all misunderstandings would cease to exist; so undoubtedly there was such a letter.

"The ambassador has sent for me, and I am now going to the embassy," the captain continued. He was dressed in his special full dress uniform, worn only on state occasions when crowned heads and presidents were to be visited. "It must be to talk over the situation. He is much worried. I can't imagine what has happened to Sago," he added irritably. "He was to have been here nearly an hour ago with my valises, but the valises arrived and no Sago."

"He was with our sailors last night," Phil exclaimed, "and afterward Mr. Monroe and I met him in the corridor of the hotel. It was he that telephoned to a police station near the prime minister's house and in that way we heard promptly of the disturbance."

"Good for Sago," Captain Rodgers ex-
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claimed. "I really believe he is thoroughly loyal to us. He has been my steward for over five years, and I have implicit trust in him."

A servant knocked on the door announcing the carriage, and Captain Rodgers made ready to leave.

"I don't anticipate trouble, but make a point of telling your classmate Takishima the whole story. Don't allow him to harbor a single suspicion of the visit of the 'Alaska.' By the way," the captain stopped at the doorway, "I hear from the ambassador that the 'Shimbunshi,' a Tokyo newspaper, has been attributing all manner of motives to our visit, in fact, going quite as far as to claim that we are here to precipitate war. They bring up the visit of the 'Maine' to Havana before our war with Spain as an example. Was there anything more in this morning's edition?" he asked quickly. "The paper prints in both Japanese and English. I have been so busy writing important letters that I've not had time to open the paper."

Phil smiled broadly. It was the first time that morning that he had felt he could indulge in such a luxury.
"There would have been one," he replied, "only the man who was taking it to the 'Shimbunshi's' office lost it and O'Neil and Marley found it and gave it to us. I have it in my valise there in my room. It's a tirade against us, written in English."

Captain Rodgers went with the midshipmen a short distance up the corridor and waited at the threshold while Phil entered his room to obtain the letter.

"It's gone," came in a startled voice from the midshipman, after he had tumbled out on the floor the contents of his and Sydney's valises. "I am sure I put it here," he exclaimed anxiously. "It's not here now."

The lad's face was pale and worried as he met his captain's gaze at the door.

"We are under a close espionage," Captain Rodgers said smilingly; "after all, that can do us no harm. We can hardly be credited with an attempt to run ourselves down. While you are about it, Mr. Perry," he added jokingly as he started away, "you had better add this to your confessions to Takishima. I am afraid no one else would believe you, but he has known you both so long that I am
sure he will not credit you with such bare-faced villainy."

"Everything has gone wrong." Phil's voice was almost tearful as he sat on the edge of the bed and contemplated his disordered valise after Captain Rodgers had gone. "What will they believe after finding this and the secret document both in my possession?"

"They'll think you are a bungler as a confidence man," Sydney replied, half smiling in spite of the serious aspect of the situation. "But we can explain it all to Taki."

Phil's face brightened at this note of optimism in his friend's voice.

"I feel sure that Impey is behind all this trouble," he said thoughtfully. "How on earth he found the lost document I can't imagine, and I have my doubts whether it contained the information given by him to the ambassador. Unfortunately, that we shall never know. If we could trace this other letter to his door, I believe the whole insidious influence that is breeding ill feeling between the two nations would come to a stop."

"The letter was picked up by me and handed to Impey's friend. He claimed it
and I hurriedly handed it over,” Sydney exclaimed. “If I had only refused and held on to it all this trouble could not have happened. Maybe to go with Takishima and talk to Impey we might force him to confess to his part in the plot and then expose him.”

“I am afraid he’s too clever to be trapped that way,” Phil returned smilingly. “The ambassador has cautioned secrecy, so we can’t divulge what he has told us. If I claimed before him that I had found the letter in his room he would either deny it or show great joy in finding that he had not lost it, professing that he was on the point of returning it when the assault occurred. He may even now have told the Japanese officials that he had recovered the letter for them only to lose it. It’s a mighty embarrassing position to be in, Syd,” Phil ended sourly.

“What will the United States do if Japan seizes the Chinese ships?” Sydney asked.

Phil shook his head. “I don’t see why we should do anything. It would be a question between Japan and China.”

“Then it wouldn’t mean war?” Sydney asked.
"There are some annoying diplomatic questions yet unsettled between Japan and the United States, and a thing of that sort might be used to cause a diplomatic rupture. Let us hope that it is untrue, and if true, that the two countries will be able to adjust their differences amicably." But the youngster felt down in his heart that if what Impey had said was true there was serious danger of an open rupture between the two friendly nations.
CHAPTER XII

THE CONSPIRATORS

ROBERT IMPEY, much elated over his success in throwing the entire blame upon the shoulders of the American midshipmen, left the two Japanese naval officers in Captain Inaba's office and sought out his friend and co-conspirator, Baron Kosuba.

No word was spoken beyond those of welcome until after the servants had withdrawn, then when they were alone together Baron Kosuba said:

"After our conversation of yesterday I went at once to see the prime minister and the Minister of Marine, and they assured me that Japan would buy the Chinese ships at once. I have guaranteed the payment."

"I know already," Impey returned hurriedly. "The letter advising the purchase was lost. Captain Inaba believes the Americans have discovered his secret."
"Lost!" the baron exclaimed, a smile almost of triumph in his eyes. "How could the infallible Captain Inaba be guilty of such carelessness?" It was plain that Baron Kosuba and the naval strategist were not the best of friends. Doubtless the baron resented the younger man's power.

"But, baron," Impey interrupted, "I have little time. I have come to you on a most important matter."

The Japanese nobleman inclined his head as a sign that he was ready to listen.

"To-day, in but a few hours, the Emperor will receive the American captain," Impey hastened to say. "This audience must not take place. It is rumored that he is a special emissary from the President of the United States. If this audience cannot be stopped your dreams of naval supremacy in the Pacific will be at an end."

"Why should this audience change the naval policy of my country?" Baron Kosuba exclaimed. "The entire naval board is pledged for a strong navy, and only yesterday agreed to advise buying China's ships."

"If the United States should agree to give
up her intention of obtaining these ships," Impey said, "would not Japan hesitate before expending this large sum of money? The necessity would seem to be over. The consequence would be," Impey declared, "that America would go on building war-ships, and the time would have passed when your country can secure the supremacy of the Pacific."

The baron's face was wrinkled in deep thought.

"How can I prevent the audience?" he asked.

"That must rest with you," Impey said with a shrug. "If it takes place America will triumph over you commercially."

Baron Kosuba was much affected by Impey's words. He was not entirely patriotic. His country's welfare was second only to the accumulation of his riches. If the American navy could be destroyed, her merchant marine must die and his own steamers increase and multiply, for there were no other competitors worthy of notice. And for this he would gladly force a war.

"The United States fears now that she has
gone too far," Impey added after a short silence. "I have told you that the Washington government has agreed to buy the ships, and are now worried over Japan’s attitude. They fear that Japan will seize the Chinese ships. Their fleet in Manila is ready to move at a moment’s notice, and it is between the Japanese fleet and the Chinese squadron. Once the Washington government knows for certain that Japan has made her decision it will drop the mask of friendship and order its fleet to obtain the ships before they reach Singapore. This mission of the ‘Alaska,’ as I have told you before, is intended only as a blind to their real intentions, and if Japan is weak enough to believe in America’s honesty then our work will have been for nothing."

The baron’s face expressed his anxiety.

"I shall go at once to the navy department," he exclaimed, "and I trust I can stop this audience."

Impey bade good-bye to the financier, smiling proudly as they shook hands. He had won his point. Baron Kosuba would go immediately to his friend the Minister of Marine. Impey knew that before now Captain
Inaba would have laid before that official proofs of the guilt of the American visitors, which would bear out the baron’s arguments. If the Minister of Marine could be convinced, then his powerful influence would surely defeat the audience with the Emperor.

"What should be his next move?" was the question uppermost in his mind as he drove rapidly toward the city from the baron’s home. To make the United States see her apparent danger, and cause her to seize the ships at once was the result desired.

After Impey had left Captain Inaba’s office Lieutenant Takishima had entered. The former handed him the “Shimbunshi” letter to read.

“This is not written by one of my friends,” Takishima exclaimed finally, throwing the letter on the desk.

"Then why should it be found in one of their valises?" Captain Inaba asked. "Why will you defend them when you know that they concealed the official letter lost by Oka? Do you call that a friendly act? If it hadn’t been for Impey’s vigilance and the honesty of a former countryman of ours, we would never
have found out that these friends are really spies."

"Would it be likely that they would call themselves spies," Takishima picked up the "Shimbunshi" letter, and pointed to the words, "if they contemplated such work?" Takishima's voice was triumphant, while Captain Inaba was silent. "If they are spies they did not write this letter. If they wrote this letter they are not spies."

"Your reasoning, my dear Takishima, is quite illogical. They wrote the letter before they found the Oka document. Don't you see? With that in their possession they decided not to send this letter to the 'Shimbunshi'."

"Would the 'Shimbunshi' publish such a letter, not knowing who the author was?" Takishima asked.

"The 'Shimbunshi' is a syndicate newspaper, owned mostly by foreigners. It is an investment, is unpatriotic and appeals to the worst in men. I believe it will publish anything, no matter what the source, if a sensation can be produced," Inaba answered thoughtfully. "There is but one thing it
fears to do, and that is attack the government of His Majesty, for then it would be suppressed."

"Have you ever doubted the honesty of Impey?" Takishima asked suddenly.

"My nature is to be suspicious of every one," Inaba replied smilingly. "Impey, among the rest, has fallen under my espionage. Until Impey came to me and explained everything I believed he had betrayed us. The letter was in his hands last night. It passed from him to our men and was at one time in the hands of the American midshipmen. It was afterward in the hands of one of their sailors. Impey located the letter and brought me the information not an hour ago."

"What great harm would there be if the letter was read by the Americans?" Takishima questioned anxiously. "It is all true, in fact a matter of common knowledge, except the buying of the ships."

Inaba shrugged his square shoulders while the old sinister smile played about the corners of his straight lips.

"The American fleet is in Manila, holding its yearly target practice. Is it merely a
coincidence that it should have arrived there just now? Did it take a fifteen thousand mile cruise by way of the Cape of Good Hope merely to hold this target practice?” Takishima shook his head impatiently. “For some years Japan has lagged behind other nations in building war-ships because our country must meet other expenses, and our countrymen are already taxed to the utmost. America and the other nations have outstripped us. The addition of these ships would give us the additional strength which we have lost by an unwise naval policy. Again our growing merchant marine would have ample protection. Again we would become a factor to be reckoned with in the Far East. Baron Kosuba is our strongest friend in urging the transaction. I believe if America knew for a certainty that we would acquire these ships she would buy them herself.”

“To fight us with?” Takishima asked breathlessly.

“Who can say?” Inaba returned. “Whom can we trust? Even your old schoolmates have turned against you.”
Then if the information that we had decided to acquire China's ships were known in America, you believe that she would buy them ahead of us?" Takishima asked. "Is that your meaning? And afterward you think she might endeavor to force a war to despoil us of our Chinese territory?"

"I did not say so," Inaba answered promptly. "But we navy men must take no chances. His Majesty depends upon us. Let us hope that such a catastrophe will never occur." Captain Inaba picked up several papers from his desk and handed them to Takishima. "In these two telegrams is the key to the mystery. One is to the State Department in Washington—the other to the governor in Manila, both from the American ambassador. They are in cipher and quite beyond our powers to decipher. Their timeliness alone seems to divulge the possible context. I believe that they give the intelligence gained from the lost document. There is but one thing for us to do." Inaba's voice was low and earnest. "Hold these cablegrams, send out a sufficient force to man the Chinese ships, and take possession
of them on the high seas before the United States can do so!"

Takishima's eyes opened wide, while his heart beat faster. He glanced up and saw the calm face of the Minister of Marine in the doorway.

Admiral Kamikura and Captain Inaba had been in consultation for nearly an hour while Takishima in his own office awaited the outcome. The plan advanced by the bold Inaba seemed dangerous in the extreme. It might lead to war—to war with a country that he looked upon as partly his own. He had spent four happy years at the Naval Academy at Annapolis. He knew the American navy and admired it. The American people he had studied in all their phases.

"Their thoughts are not upon war, but history shows that when war comes they can fight as hard and as long as any people in the world," he exclaimed aloud.

Within the hour Inaba sent for him. The admiral had gone. The captain's face was grave, but his eyes were bright with excitement.

"I am sorry I cannot be at your lunch
party to-day," he said gravely. "I am off to Sasebo. Give my regards and sayonara to your sister, O Hama-san. I can tell you nothing more, Takishima," he added, seeing that a question trembled on the lad's lips.

Takishima bowed low, murmuring a wish that good luck attend him upon his mission; then the door closed behind him.
CHAPTER XIII

THE QUARREL

It was not a happy party that assembled in the old Count Takishima's spacious dining-hall. Phil and Sydney were anxious and uncomfortable; Lieutenant Takishima was preoccupied, while an atmosphere of depression hung over every one else at the feast. The meal was served in the Japanese fashion, the guests seated upon soft cushions on the mat-covered floor.

Takishima's father, an old Samurai and a count of the empire, received his guests with distinguished courtesy, bowing low and welcoming each arrival with the vaunted gallantry of Japan's ancient chivalry. Takishima's sister was wistfully silent. She had been told that Captain Inaba had gone away on duty for the Emperor, and was sad and disconsolate. O Chio-san and Helen Tillotson were the only ones who evinced a semblance of gaiety for the feast.

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Phil found himself next to Helen, and the girl did her utmost to draw him out of his fit of despondency.

The old-fashioned Samurai, whose two children had been educated in America, made heroic efforts to induce his son and daughter to interpret for him his expressions of welcome, but he soon gave it up as an impossible task and lapsed into silence.

It was not until Takishima's sister Hamasan had carried off the women guests to show Helen that part of the house reserved for women's eyes alone, and the old count also withdrew, that the midshipmen found themselves alone with their classmate.

In Takishima's bosom there rankled the thought placed there against his will by Captain Inaba's words, that these two friends had contemptibly betrayed him. While professing their friendship they had secretly taken and read an official letter sealed with the sacred seal of the Emperor. Furthermore, they had been guilty of writing a sensational story calculated to stir up the Emperor's subjects against Americans. And yet here they were his guests, under his father's roof. The
situation, to one brought up to cherish high ideals of honor, was intolerable. The sanctity of the home was his strongest heritage. An enemy was ever safe when under the family roof-tree. He decided that he would take them elsewhere. He could not be impolite in his own home. The laws of the host for centuries forbade an unkind word to be spoken to a guest.

"Miss Tillotson will be driven home by O Chio-san," Takishima said awkwardly, as he led the way through the garden toward the gate. The midshipmen followed in silence, glad to leave the heavy atmosphere; to be free of the impressive and studied politeness of their classmate. Both lads felt keenly the accusing sting in Takishima's manner.

"You must explain," Sydney whispered as the three took waiting jinrikishas and were quickly in motion on the smooth boulevard.

The three had not gone a half mile before a fourth rikisha came trotting up and the self-satisfied face of Robert Impey smiled from its raised hood.

"I was afraid I had missed you," he exclaimed. "Can I speak to you, lieutenant?"
he asked, motioning his sturdy coolie to steer up alongside of the rikisha of the Japanese naval officer.

Takishima bent his head to listen. The midshipmen kept their eyes and ears to the front while the low murmur of Impey's voice came to them indistinctly.

Shibu park was soon reached and the coolies having had their instructions entered the shady roadway leading to a tea house frequented by foreigners.

The four men were led into the garden by daintily gowned Japanese girl attendants and located under the foliage of a spreading oak at a table cunningly made from a clinging grape-vine. The two midshipmen were not, however, in the mood to notice the natural beauties of their surroundings.

Phil was inwardly annoyed at Impey's presence. He blamed him for his present predicament, and before him how was he to explain the intolerable situation?

"The audience of the American captain with His Majesty has been postponed," Impey said carelessly, noting with evident enjoyment the surprise and alarm in the faces of the Ameri-
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cans. Phil's heart almost stopped beating. What Captain Rodgers had feared had taken place! Takishima's lips trembled. With that power of restraint cultivated by the people of his race for centuries he succeeded in controlling his features. No other outward expression of the effect of Impey's words was evident.

"On the 'Shimbunshi's' bulletin-boards is a cable from America that the Chinese government has agreed to turn over its new navy to America." Impey strove to show unconcern, giving the startling news in his every-day voice. "The bulletin says that the President at a cabinet meeting this morning decided to buy the ships and had sent orders to the United States fleet in Manila to receive and man them."

Takishima trembled inwardly with rage against his former friends. Then Captain Inaba had failed to stop their cable to America. Now he looked upon them as his avowed enemies. Had they not spied upon his countrymen? Had they not stolen secret letters and divulged them? And that while protesting their love and friendship for him and his
country. Phil sat next him, his face pale and his eyes wide with excitement. Impey's part in this international tragedy was clearing before his eyes. This two-faced scoundrel had stood in with both parties, warning each that the other was striving to obtain the ships. With consummate cunning he had covered up his tracks. Each side believed in his loyalty. How he had obtained the secret letter Phil could not fathom, but that letter contained the information which, upon its being known in Washington where the ambassador had cabled it, had decided the United States government to take a step which was unparalleled in its history; a step taken only as a necessary measure just before the outbreak of a war. Phil gazed into Takishima's face. He was startled at the sudden gleam of hatred in the dark eyes of his friend.

"In Japan we cut open the carcasses of such traitors as you and feed them to the pigs," the Japanese lieutenant cried in a voice scarcely recognizable.

Both midshipmen jumped to their feet. Greater consternation could not have been caused by the explosion of a shell in their
midst. The slowly spoken direct words were too plain to be misunderstood. Impey sat by in silence, an outraged expression on his face. He raised his hand in the rôle of peacemaker. The two men of different races and traditions stood face to face; one self-controlled, disdainful, the pride of the old time Samurai, generations of them, looking out of unbending and unflinching eyes; the other angry, hurt, surprised into a stupid, stolid silence, stung to the quick by the vituperation in his erstwhile friend's voice.

"I—— Why, what do you mean?" Phil gasped, his face livid. He towered head and shoulders above his unflinching accuser.

Phil took a step forward, putting out his right hand impetuously. No idea of menace entered his mind. His one idea was to stay the torrent of abuse that he knew was undeserved, no matter how black the case looked against him. It cut him to the quick to be so severely arraigned. Takishima, his mind embittered by the convincing chain of evidence, saw only a threat in the attitude of the young giant. So quickly that the eye could not follow, the Japanese stooped under the
midshipman's outstretched hand, seizing Phil's wrist in an iron grip with his left hand, then catching the midshipman's right leg back of the knee with his right hand, suddenly straightened his sapling-like body and threw the astonished lad with great force over his head. Phil fell with a crash to the stone pavement and lay there completely stunned.

Sydney made a step forward, his blood boiling at this unprovoked jiu-jitsu attack, but Impey interposed his bulk, and calmer judgment prevailed as he realized the difference in size between himself and his one time friend.

“You little coward,” he hissed angrily as he raised Phil to his feet. There was blood on the lad's face from a cut on his head made by a sharp edge of a stone in the gravel walk. “You deserve a good thrashing for this.”

Takishima stood his ground. “I am prepared,” he said quietly. “I should think you'd both be ashamed to show your faces after your deceitful conduct.”

Phil steadied himself by the table, gazing stupidly at the small crowd of excited Japanese and foreigners that had collected about them. He had paid no attention to the words
"YOU DESERVE A GOOD THRASHING FOR THIS"
of Takishima’s defense. The midshipmen and Takishima were in uniform, and a great depression overcame Phil as he thought of the possible publicity of the affair. The attack had been so sudden and the blow on the head so stunning that for a second no thought of revenge came into his mind. Then his dazed eyes fell upon the unruffled little figure of his assailant, and a wild fury suddenly welled into his eyes. With a savage cry he shook off Sydney’s retaining hand and in one stride reached the object of his mad rage. No jiu-jitsu art was possible. The little naval man felt himself seized as if by two iron rods and raised above the ground. For the fraction of a second he was held poised, then as a great mastiff might chastise an obstreperous terrier, Phil shook him until every bone in his body rattled. The combined efforts of Sydney and Impey became necessary to save Takishima from serious injury.

Fortunately the affair was over before a large crowd could collect, and Impey managed to hurry them into their jinrikishas and drive quickly away.

A half hour later Phil and Sydney were
back in their room at the hotel, while Impey
had gone away with the Japanese naval man.
"Syd, I wouldn't have had that happen for
anything in the world." Phil was nearly in
tears as he threw himself on the bed.
"He'll undoubtedly challenge you," Syd-
ney replied gravely. "I saw it in his face;
it was so determined and quiet. If he does,
what will you do? You can't fight him!"
"I must!" Phil declared. "To these peo-
ple the code of honor is the same as it was
with us a hundred years ago."
"But if you do, it means disgrace and dis-
missal from the navy," Sydney protested.
"I laid myself open to it when I put my
hands on him," Phil insisted stubbornly.
"We can't fight in the American style, with
fists. I am twice his size. It's the only redress
he has. His code of honor demands a duel."
"That's child's talk, Phil, and you know
it," Sydney exclaimed heatedly. "I am not
going to stand by and let you ruin your career
on account of a foolish out-of-date code of
honor. Our articles for the government of
the navy forbid a duel, and the penalty is
dismissal. I'll go and see Taki."
"You won't do any such thing," Phil replied sternly. "We'll wait to hear from him. If he wants satisfaction I shall give it to him, and shall select small swords. I can shoot all around him with a revolver, but at the Academy we were equally matched with foils.

"I shall ask Impy to act as my second, much as I dislike and distrust him," he added.

"Impy for second! What are you talking about?" Sydney demanded. "I am your second if you are really going to be foolish enough to fight."

"Remember the articles of war, Syd." Phil smiled a ghastly smile. "'Who fights a duel or acts as a second in a duel.' You don't suppose I would let you jeopardize your career. Impy will do."

"I think a straight-jacket is what you need instead of a second," Sydney exclaimed in annoyance. "If I had you tightly strapped into one, I'd have you carried off to the ship and put in a cell until after she sailed.

"Come in," he added in answer to a knock. Captain Rodgers entered the room and closed the door behind him.

"I have just returned after a fruitless at-
tempt to break down the stubborn resistance of that wall of officialdom around a throne,” he said sadly as he unloosed the buttons on his tightly fitted special dress coat. “I talked with both the prime minister and the Minister of Marine. ‘They were very sorry, but His Majesty was quite too ill to see anybody, but an audience would be arranged at a very early date.’ I knew that His Majesty was probably at that minute riding his favorite horse within the palace grounds and they saw that I knew it was only a diplomatic way of saying: ‘We do not desire that you should see His Majesty.’

“They believe we are here to spy on them,” he added, after a moment’s pause. “Did you make it straight with your Japanese classmate?”

Phil swallowed hard and shook his head sorrowfully while Sydney came to his friend’s aid.

“We didn’t get a chance, but we shall this evening. We expect to meet him soon, don’t we, Phil?” he asked grimly.

“It may clear the atmosphere,” the captain said. “I don’t like the aspect of it. Have
you heard of the bulletin in front of the ‘Shimbunshi’ office? There were thousands of Japanese standing in front reading it when we drove past.”

The lads nodded in assent.

“That’s pretty quick work. The ambassador sent a cable this morning, and here we get action in the afternoon. If word went to Manila at the same time we may be getting our orders to sail at any moment. I’ve already cabled my failure to obtain an audience.” Captain Rodgers opened the door as he finished speaking.

“Come in, sir. What can we do for you?” he exclaimed in surprise as a dapper Japanese naval lieutenant stood at the threshold. Phil’s heart was beating wildly. Here was Takishima’s representative. The relations between the two countries would now be further strained when this unfortunate duel was made public.

“I desire to speak with Meester Perry and Meester Monroe,” the newcomer replied politely, bowing profusely.

“There they are,” Captain Rodgers returned, smiling and motioning him to enter.
"Good-bye. Keep out of trouble," he added banteringly as he bowed and left them with the Japanese lieutenant, no thought of the seriousness of the call entering his mind.

"I have come from Count Lieutenant Taki-shima with his card," the newcomer said importantly and in carefully studied English.

Sydney made a move to step forward, but Phil interrupted.

"Tell him I am at his service. The weapons will be small swords, time as soon as possible. He may name the place," he said quietly.

The lieutenant stood with puzzled face for a second translating and digesting the words.

"I will be here again, soon." He spoke hesitatingly, not sure of his meaning. The lads bowed in response to his ceremonious farewell.
CHAPTER XIV

THE YACHT "SYLVIA"

O'NEIL and Marley sat dejectedly in the luxuriously upholstered chairs of the yacht's cabin and gazed upon each other with a mixture of annoyance and humor. It was plain to their nautical eyes that the hatch above them which they had heard closed tightly and dogged, was the only means of exit. They were securely imprisoned.

"Bill, it's terrible to have such confiding natures," O'Neil exclaimed glumly. "We walked into this with our eyes wide open.

"Hello!" he added surprisingly, "they've stopped heaving in, and there goes the launch down again."

The sailormen's faces were at the nearest air ports and it was soon plain enough to O'Neil what had taken place on deck as he saw the lowered launch shove off from the yacht's side, and shoot swiftly shoreward.

"There's that villain Impey in her stern sheets. See him, Bill?" he cried out angrily.

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Marley’s unsophisticated face betrayed not a gleam of intelligence as to what this move might mean, so the boatswain’s mate turned from the air port, threw himself back in his chair and began to elucidate.

“They thought the Japs had pinched this letter from Mr. Impey last night, so they were leaving the country before they’d get jailed. This letter here was sealed, and Impey and Randall have opened it and read it. So they were proper scared. But now their minds are easy again. Do you see?” he ended, his voice becoming serious in tone. “We are the goats, and they’ll keep us here until we can’t do them any harm.”

“What did he mean about Japan seizing the Chinese ships?” Marley asked. That was the important thing in his mind. Everything else he classed as diplomatic Greek and he was determined not to understand it.

“You know that China has a new navy coming out,” O’Neil answered patiently; “the ships were built in Europe, and it looks to me that if Japan took these ships she would do it so as to lick us.”

“But ain’t we got nothing to say?” Marley
questioned perplexedly. "We ain't looking for a fight with Japan."

O'Neil smiled knowingly.

"No, but some of our wise guys think that we've got something that she wants; the Philippines, you see. And then there's this open door flimflam in China. It's a big question, Bill."

O'Neil, while he was educating his friend upon the intricate and unexplained steps that frequently in the past had led into wars nations apparently friendly, allowed his gaze to roam searchingly over the contents of the cabin. He noticed a door leading into what he supposed was a stateroom, and as he finished speaking he arose and tried the doorknob. It was unlocked, and the sailor pushed it open and cast a glance within.

"Wireless!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper. "There's a chance," he muttered jubilantly. "Somebody may be listening."

O'Neil surveyed the room minutely. He saw that the yacht's wireless set was of the same manufacture as the one installed on board the "Alaska." He thanked his luck for the practice he had taken in his leisure
moments under the guidance of the midshipmen in learning the operation of the outfit. He saw that everything was connected, and that the power of the yacht’s dynamos was there at his service upon the closing of the switch on the table before him. He glanced closely at the tuning device, and although he did not understand the theory of wave lengths, he remembered that the “Alaska’s” pointer was usually set at or near the figure four hundred. Quickly making this adjustment, he closed the switch and heard the hum of the alternating current motor generator transferring the direct current of the yacht to an alternating one of high frequency and tension.

“Bill,” he exclaimed, “this little machine here may get us out of the brig before our term of confinement expires! They’ll cut the aerial as soon as they can after they hear the noise from the spark-gap. “What’ll I say?” he asked thoughtfully. “It’s got to be short and yet tell ’em enough.”

Suddenly his hand moved quickly, rhythmically, and the white arc across the air-gap sizzled and rasped. Then the boatswain’s mate suddenly threw out the sending circuit.
and listened eagerly through the telephone head-piece for an answer. Marley observed a satisfied smile on his face as he again threw in the sending circuit, and for several minutes the spark leaped and played under its glass case like a thing alive. The noise of the arc drowned out completely the click of the key. Then the metallic sound of the key suddenly was heard, showing that the aerial wire had been severed on deck, and O’Neil threw off his head-gear and slapped Marley a resounding blow across the shoulders.

"Bill, every ship in the harbor knows that there’s a mutiny on the ‘Sylvia,’" he laughed. "I was afraid the ‘Alaska’ wasn’t listening, so I made the ‘general call.’ Now when the first boat comes alongside, you and I have got to make as much noise as Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and Pawnee Bill’s Far East, in one."

The two sailors were not kept long in suspense. O’Neil from his point of vantage soon espied one of the "Alaska’s" steam cutters, full of armed men, standing down toward the yacht’s gangway, while he heard the excited and joyful voice of Marley from his station on the other side of the cabin.
"Here comes a Jap steam launch full of our little friends. I never was so glad to see any one not of my own race before."

O'Neil and Marley, like two men at a race-meet encouraging their favorite horses, called out loudly, cheering the two boats on. The steam launch from the "Alaska" passed close to his air port.

"We're the mutineers, sir," O'Neil cried out loudly across the ten feet of intervening water. "They're holding Marley and me prisoners here in the cabin."

Within a few minutes the hatchway was undogged and lifted and the two sailors came up blinking into the sunlight. They saw Randall and his friend closely guarded by both the Japanese and American rescue party, and O'Neil could not suppress an amused smile as he read real terror on their faces.

"You'll feel worse than that in a few minutes!" the boatswain's mate exclaimed hotly to the discomfited Randall. Then he put his hand into his shirt and pulled out the letter which had been the cause of all the trouble.

"Mr. Winston," O'Neil exclaimed, "here's a letter I found in the yacht's cabin. Bill
Marley and I have been chasing these fellows to get it since last night. When they found we had it, they locked us in the cabin.” O’Neil’s face was serious as he told the story, which was quite near the real facts. Randall’s jaw dropped, and he would have denied the sailor’s words, but that he saw by the intimidating faces of the Japanese sailors that his denial would fall upon deaf ears.

“This Japanese officer will know what it is; I can’t read the language,” the sailor added. “It was opened just as you see it when we found it. Wasn’t it, Bill?”

Marley’s face broke into a happy smile as he assured the assembled officers and men, who had been progressively arriving as quickly as the numerous boats could land at the two gangways, that every word spoken by O’Neil was the gospel truth.

Lieutenant Winston took the letter and handed it over to the Japanese lieutenant who had been the first to arrive. Winston’s face wore a solemn air of perplexity.

“What does all this mean, O’Neil?” he asked sternly.

“These varmints,” pointing to the now
trembling prisoners, "have been writing up all kinds of lies for a Japanese paper, and they were trying to make off with this letter."

The Japanese lieutenant's face wore a puzzled look; he tried in vain to follow the English of the sailor. Winston turned to him and in simpler language explained the situation.

"I'll take my men back to the ship," he ended, bowing, hand to his cap, while the Japanese officer insisted upon shaking both O'Neil and Marley by the hand and thanking them solemnly for their great service to his country.

"Don't mention it, sir," O'Neil replied. "I hope you'll give those white-livered guys there a hot line of Japanese argument. Where I come from there'd be a tar and feather party."

The Japanese lieutenant smiled again, much puzzled, apologizing that he could speak and understand so little English.

"That's good, sir," O'Neil said as he obeyed the signal to embark. "Just don't understand a word they say, for it won't be
true, anyway. What I've told you is the correct dope."

After the American launch had shoved off from the yacht and was standing back to the "Alaska" some hundreds or more yards away, Lieutenant Winstón turned an inquiring glance on the boatswain's mate.

"That must have been an important letter," he exclaimed, "by the way the officer pounced on it and stowed it away in his tunic pocket. Do you know what was in it?"

"Not first hand. No, sir," O'Neil replied soberly. "But that fellow Randall knows all about it, or I miss my guess."
CHAPTER XV

INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY

After the Japanese officer had taken his abrupt departure Phil looked despondent.

"This thing must not occur, Phil," Sydney cried out earnestly, laying his hand affectionately upon the shoulder of his classmate. "The whole miserable affair can and must be explained. To fight this duel would only heap fuel on the already smouldering fire of misunderstanding between the two countries. It is our duty," he urged, "to go to Taki and unmask this man Impey; don't you see by remaining passive we are aiding him in his designs, whatever they may be?"

Phil sat unmoved, apparently unheeding his friend's appeal.

"You haven't considered, Syd," he replied sadly. "These Japanese are not like our own people. I have done bodily injury to an officer of the Emperor of Japan in his sacred uniform. Until he kills me the shame cannot
be wiped out. So you see," he ended hopelessly, "I must fight; there is no other way."

"But," Sydney persisted unconvinced, "suppose we told him where you found the document and that you had the best of intentions and were going to give it to him, when you found it had been taken away from you. Couldn't you then apologize for your act, explaining that he misunderstood you entirely? Surely Taki will be influenced by his academy training to believe you are not afraid, but that your only wish is to aid the two governments to remain on peaceful terms."

Phil's answer was prevented by a knock on the door, and the man who they believed was at the bottom of their trouble came in.

The two midshipmen did not attempt to conceal that his presence was unwelcome; but unheeding the evident coldness of his reception, he sat down calmly in a vacant chair, regarding the Americans with a complacent smile on his face.

"I have done all I could to dissuade Lieutenant Takishima," Impey began. The midshipmen winced, for they fully believed that
his protestations of friendship for them were only feigned.

"But he insists upon the challenge. These Japanese are mediæval in their methods of thought. He even talked of hara-kiri. He said he would be forever disgraced. His soul revolted at the thought that violent hands had been laid upon him. You know how these fellows feel."

"I didn't ask for your good offices, Mr. Impey," Phil exclaimed in sudden anger. "I am fully able to look out for myself."

"As you please," Impey returned in a hurt voice, giving an expressive shrug to his massive shoulders. "Of course you have thought how the duel is going to influence affairs?"

"Your interest in our doings, Mr. Impey, for an outsider, seems to me quite extraordinary." Phil spoke in a quieter voice. "Perhaps if you would be good enough to explain a few points to us this duel which you profess to wish to avoid might be averted."

Impey's face flushed, while an uneasiness crept into his crafty eyes.

"Only the interest of friendship," he de-
clared quickly. "I have always had the con-
fidence of your ambassador."

"Maybe you wouldn't mind telling us," Phil asked, "how you came by the lost naval
document I found in the hand of one of the
secret service men who assaulted you in your
rooms last night." Impey regarded Phil in
much surprise.

"I can easily," he declared. His face had
suddenly cleared. "Was it you then who an-
swered my call for help? I heard your an-
swer just as I was losing consciousness."

Phil waved the question aside.

"It was found by a friend and given to
me," Impey continued after a pause. "I rec-
ognized it as an important paper, but at that
time I knew nothing of its character. I can
translate Japanese, and instead of going to the
prime minister's ball, I made a translation of
that letter. One of my friends, Randall, was
with me and had just gone out when I was
attacked. He discovered me afterward un-
conscious on the floor of my room."

Phil was about to interrupt with another
question, but Impey hastened on.

"You took it then from my assailants, but
how did it go to the sailors?” Impey asked. “They claim to have found it at the theatre, and they brought it on board my yacht at Yokohama, and they are there at this moment—my prisoners. In the interest of peace and for your good I have held them until I could come to you and privately explain the situation.”

For the fraction of a second there was silence. To Phil, Impey’s voice sounded insincere, yet everything pointed to its being the truth. Suddenly Sydney jumped to his feet, his eyes bright with amazement.

“Then why did Taki take the stand he did? He did not know our connection with this document?” he asked.

Impey’s face was wreathed in smiles.

“That is quite simple to explain. Captain Inaba believes that you, Mr. Perry, had the letter, for the sailors said they showed it to your Japanese steward and he was in Captain Inaba’s office this morning. I saw him come away from there myself.”

The two midshipmen exchanged rapid glances. Had they been mistaken in their estimate of Impey? Was he after all playing
square? Yet the conversation on the train was still unexplained.

"Were you on the special train that brought us to Tokyo yesterday?" Phil suddenly asked, while Impey, apparently unconscious of the intended trap being laid for him by the midshipman, nodded, his face still smiling.

"Then how can you explain as a friend of the Americans, and holding the confidence of the American ambassador, your action in assuring a Japanese companion that America was negotiating for the Chinese squadron when you know that it is untrue?" Phil's voice held a ring of triumph. He watched Impey's face intently, certain of surprising a guilty start, but he was doomed to disappointment. Instead the foreigner continued to placidly smile.

"I am afraid as detectives you are but a qualified success," Impey said in a patronizing voice. "You have unfortunately followed a blind trail. Everything I have done has been with Mr. Tillotson's fullest approval. In order to surprise their secret from them I intentionally made the Japanese officials believe that the United States was negotiating for the
ships of the new Chinese navy. That I was successful was shown by the contents of the lost letter."

The two lads stood nonplussed before the wily foreigner. Phil doubted that the ambassador would give his sanction to such a method. Impey's conduct was inexplicable to the midshipman. Instead of an enemy, as they had come to believe him, was he in reality a friend who had warned their government, through Mr. Tillotson, of an act which would harm the "balance of power" in the Far East?

Try as he would Phil felt it was difficult to regard Impey in this new rôle of friend. Down in the bottom of his heart, he yet mistrusted him.

"Then, as matters stand," Sydney exclaimed perplexedly, "Perry and I are believed to be responsible for the lost document, and we are supposed to have sent it to our ship by the two sailors. Your part in translating it and giving the contents to the ambassador is not known by the Japanese at all?"

Impey nodded, as he answered quickly:

"Captain Inaba knows that I held the
letter last night, but he still thinks I am working for him. My men from the yacht were returning on board, for I was on the point of taking a trip on her. They met your two sailors and the Japanese steward on the train. As easily happens in a foreign country, they became acquainted, and your sailors went by invitation on board the yacht. There they displayed this lost document, which my men knew at once was important. When I went on board, ready to sail, they told me of it, and I found they had imprisoned your sailors, fearing they might get in trouble ashore if they were arrested with this paper on their persons. I at once hastened back to Tokyo to tell you of it and that was the reason I followed you and Lieutenant Takishima. I pretended to have business with him to allay suspicion and I was endeavoring to find an opportunity to confide in one of you when the unfortunate trouble with the Japanese lieutenant occurred."

"And you say that Sago, our Japanese steward, has betrayed us by going to Captain Inaba with his information?" Phil exclaimed. "I have not the slightest doubt of it."
Impey’s voice was quite positive. “Captain Inaba is not now in Tokyo; he has gone on a secret and sudden mission. Lieutenant Takishima, your friend and classmate, deliberately and openly insulted you. Would you want more proof than that?”

“What is this secret mission?” both lads asked, their voices rising in excitement.

“It must be over this same troublesome question—the Chinese ships,” Impey replied readily. “In my opinion he has gone to intercept them and thus prevent the United States from seizing them first.”

“Then we can do nothing,” Phil exclaimed, deeply disappointed.

“I don’t see how you can prevent it,” Impey answered seriously, inwardly smiling at the changed attitude of the two midshipmen. “Japan is under a military government and controls the actions of every person within the empire. It is safe to believe that the United States government will have no news of this move until all danger of interruption from the war-ships in Manila Bay is passed. Therefore there will be no instructions to your captain, and without them he
would hardly dare attempt an act which might lead to war. He must stay in Yokohama harbor while Captain Inaba is hastening with a fast and doubtless powerful force to seize the Chinese ships."

"Suppose Japan does seize these ships," Sydney said quietly. "Where is the harm to us?"

"I see you have not been in the ambassador's confidence," Impey replied quickly. "China has given to the United States government a sphere of influence to balance those of Japan, Russia, Germany and the other countries of Europe. This sphere is immensely valuable and coveted by Japan, which has without China's permission begun a railroad connecting the coal and iron fields with the railroad won from Russia. Japan is now wealthy and lacks nothing but war-ships. With the addition of the new Chinese navy she will be in a position to push her railroad clear through into the American sphere, in fact, force America into the embarrassing position of refusing this valuable concession from China."

While Impey talked, the lads' eyes opened
wide in astonishment. They could not believe that such international dishonesty was possible.

"How do you know all this?" Sydney asked in bewilderment.

Impey shrugged his shoulders.

"I have been born and brought up in the Far East. To me the undercurrent of Oriental diplomacy is an open book."

"Does the ambassador know this?" Phil inquired seriously.

"Not all," Impey confided mysteriously. "I have told him a great deal, but not being a military man it would do no good to try to convince him of the danger in the naval supremacy of Japan after acquiring the Chinese ships."

"Captain Rodgers should be told this at once," Phil exclaimed, rising and taking Impey's arm. The lad's manner had now entirely changed. The startling news made him now regard Impey as a friend and ally, trusting him as completely as he would have mistrusted him an hour ago.

"I am very sorry that I have misjudged you." The lad's voice was apologetic.
“I am only glad that I have been able to convince you of the danger to your country,” Impey answered quickly, “but wait; no good can be gained by going to Captain Rodgers. As I said before, he cannot act without orders, and orders cannot come, as all cablegrams will be stopped by the imperial government until Captain Inaba has secured the Chinese ships.”

The midshipmen stared helplessly at Impey, an anxious question in their eyes.

“The yacht ‘Sylvia’ is our only hope,” Impey whispered in an impressive voice. “She is faster than a scout cruiser, and is coaled and ready to sail. With her we can steam south until we get the fleet at Manila by wireless, and then send them the news. That would allow the American admiral to sail, intercept the Chinese squadron before Captain Inaba could reach them, and take the Chinese ships under the American flag into Manila Bay.”

The midshipmen paled at the daring of the plan.

“The admiral in Manila would not dare act without direct orders from Washington,” Phil
cried earnestly, "and would Washington give such orders without knowing all?"

"There would not be time to wait for Washington to confirm the admiral's decision. He would have to act promptly, using his own discretion and take the consequences. I think you will find the admiral will act without a second's hesitation when he gets the wireless that we shall send him."

"But," Sydney exclaimed, "what right would our admiral have to seize the ships of a friendly country? If Japan chooses to set aside international etiquette and commit this act of piracy on the high seas, that is not sufficient warrant for us to do the same thing."

"But suppose the admiral held a written agreement signed by the Chinese highest authority, the Wai-Wu-Pu, turning over the ships to the protection of the United States?" Impey asked.

"But where is this agreement?" Phil exclaimed incredulously.

"In my pocket," Impey returned, smiling at the surprise on the lads' faces.

"That would clear the admiral in so far as China was concerned," Phil exclaimed, "but
he would want direct authority, signed by the Secretary of the Navy, for such an important step."

Impey shrugged his shoulders and gazed upon the midshipman pityingly.

"Your admiral of course must make his own choice of action, but I believe he would consider our news sufficient warrant to act," he replied, rising to his feet and holding out his hand in farewell.

The lads a half hour before would have purposely failed to see the friendly advance of one they had decided was their enemy, but now they grasped him by the arms and insisted upon a further explanation.

"It is not likely the Japanese authorities would allow the 'Syliva' to sail?" Phil questioned eagerly. "They are probably now watching all who go on board."

"There's your opportunity," Impey replied forcefully. "You are naval men, and have been educated to run risks. I offer you the yacht, and point out the only way to checkmate Captain Inaba's move."

"What will you do?" Phil asked eagerly.

"I cannot appear at all," Impey explained
quickly and impressively. "There's an English steamer sailing at midnight for Manila direct, or I shall go aboard the 'Alaska' for safety, leaving the yacht in your hands."

"We cannot leave our ship in that way!" Phil exclaimed. "Captain Rodgers must be told our plans, and I am sure he would refuse to let us go. If he thought the cause was urgent he would sail with the 'Alaska' and wireless the situation to Manila on the way south."

Impey's face became suddenly grave, and he drew closer to the midshipman, casting his eyes apprehensively toward the door.

"That is the gravest danger. The ambassador is the only other person who knows," he said in a low, impressive whisper. "The Japanese battle-ships have orders to prevent by force the sailing of the 'Alaska.' We do not dare give this alarming information to your captain. If he knew he would gladly fight his way out of Yokohama Bay. We bow to him as a naval man, but we are not willing to use his ready diplomacy. The yacht would cause no comment. The secret document will be delivered to the Japanese officials, and in
the night the 'Sylvia' can easily steal away. Your ambassador can without arousing suspi-
cion requisition your services from your cap-
tain, telling him that he needs you for secret
duty, and nothing more.

"I wish you could avoid this meeting with
Takishima," Impey added nervously. "If any-
thing should happen the opportunity would
be lost." He rose again from his chair and
moved toward the door. "I shall see the
ambassador at once, and endeavor to hurry
the plans along. He will send for you. Mean-
while," he urged, "do your best to propitiate
that fire-eating little Oriental."

The three shook hands, and the door closed
behind the conspirator.

Phil and Sydney gazed at each other in
blank amazement. Where was the key to
the problem? Who could be trusted?
CHAPTER XVI

THE DUEL

O'NEIL and his chum Marley had no more than gotten safely on board the "Alaska" than they were again obtaining permission to return to Tokyo.

"We have some dope on the situation, sir," O'Neil explained to the executive officer, "which Captain Rodgers should know at once."

Permission was readily obtained, and inside of an hour after their release from their enforced captivity, they were on the train for Tokyo.

"I knew we'd get the correct dope on that guy, Impey, before we got through, Bill," O'Neil exclaimed happily. "He and those quill-pushers of his have been manufacturing a war out of nothing. They've had us all going."

Marley smiled sympathetically, but hardly intelligently.
"You see, Bill," O'Neil added confidingly, "this gentleman confidence man has been selling green goods to both sides, and making each believe that the other fellow is putting up a game on him. Nations ain't like people," he explained; "people can go to each other and find out just where they stand with one another, face to face. The spies of two nations sometimes get together and sell each other out and send home false dope. When two nations are so different, like us and the Japanese, we have to hire foreign spies because each would soon get on to the other nation's spies, and then they wouldn't be any use. This man Impey is an international spy; he belongs to any one who'll pay him."

The two sailors took rikishas from the station in Tokyo, and drove hurriedly to the hotel. They hoped to find the midshipmen there, for O'Neil, true to his allegiance, was intent upon giving them his important news first. Then there was time, if the lads saw fit, to tell Captain Rodgers. In another fifteen minutes they were knocking at the door of the American Embassy, where they had found the lads had gone.
The man-of-war’s men encountered two very white and frightened women after they had been led into the hallway by the Japanese man servant.

The sailors, hat in hand, stood much embarrassed before Helen Tillotson and her Japanese girl friend. It was quite evident to O’Neil that both had been crying, and even in his embarrassment the boatswain’s mate realized that something near a tragedy had happened.

“Are you Mr. O’Neil, from the ‘Alaska’?” Helen cried eagerly, grasping the startled man’s sleeve. “Oh, I am so glad you’ve come; something terrible will happen if we don’t prevent it at once!”

“Not Mister O’Neil,” the boatswain’s mate corrected, while Marley suppressed a grin at the title, despite the apparent tragedy believed to be imminent, “just plain Jack O’Neil, at your service, miss.”

“Then you will help us,” Helen begged.

“Bill and I’ll follow you into the forbidden palace of the Mikado, miss, if you say the word.” O’Neil drew himself up proudly, while a broad Irish smile illumined his honest
face. "What's the trouble, may I ask, miss?"

"I hardly know," the young girl replied tearfully. "Mr. Perry and Lieutenant Takisima were such good friends, and now his sister O Hama-san has come to tell me they are to fight a duel this evening. Don't you see," she exclaimed, in an agony of fear, "that we must not let this terrible thing happen?"

"Fight a duel!" O'Neil gasped, while Marley twirled his hat in silent excitement. "When I seen them last they were as good friends as two fleas on a dog's tail; excuse the expression, miss."

"Yes, but since then something came between them," Helen explained breathlessly. "It was over some secret letter. It wasn't Mr. Perry's fault. He told me about it this morning. He found this letter and would have given it to the right owners, but it was taken from him, and now Lieutenant Takisima believes that his former friend has acted dishonestly."

"Bless your heart, miss," O'Neil exclaimed, eagerly, "Bill and I can explain that. We
found the paper. Mr. Perry lost it before he could give it to the lieutenant. We've turned it over to the Japanese naval officers in Yokohama."

With a glad cry, Helen Tillotson embraced her Japanese friend.

"You see, Hama," she said tearfully, "I knew that we should find a way. Now your brother will listen to reason."

"Where's this duel coming off?" O'Neil asked, becoming restive during what he considered was useless sentimentality.

"In Shibu Park," the Japanese girl replied quietly. "I wouldn't dare interfere without a strong reason. My brother is bound to vindicate his honor. If he has misjudged Mr. Perry's acts then the situation is changed. Come!" she commanded.

Helen Tillotson was too greatly relieved in her distressed mind to think on the words of her girl friend, and it was only a few minutes before sunset when the party arrived at the meeting place in Shibu Park. Leaving the carriage they followed Hama along the winding path, past many shaded temples to a low level stretch of grassy soil before a
large Buddhist shrine. Before they had emerged from the wooded path the sound of strife came faintly to their ears, and Helen's pale face blanched still whiter at the terrifying clash of steel upon steel.

O'Neil had pressed ahead, and as he reached the clearing the sight that met his gaze made his martial spirit rise within him, and he could barely refrain from giving a yell of delight as he watched the evenly matched contestants.

Phil towered above his small antagonist, while the two blades hissed and rasped one upon the other like things alive. Both faces were pale and set, and over Phil's cheek a trickle of blood showed where his opponent's steel had lightly touched. Sydney, for in spite of Phil's wish he had insisted upon acting as second, and a Japanese lieutenant stood, swords in hand, their eyes following every movement of their principals, to see that no unfair advantage was gained by either.

The young ladies stopped on the edge of the woods, enthralled by the sight. Deep down in the human heart, even in women, is an instinctive admiration for the fighting
man; for one brief second each gazed at her champion, an almost savage lust for victory, even through bloodshed, in her eyes. Then the primitive instinct faded and the American girl saw the Japanese officer's blade prick the breast of his opponent; she saw her boy friend give back a step, and with his sword strike up the other's blade, while a deep red flow of blood gushed from the wound so deftly made. She gave a distressed cry and fell into the arms of the calm little Japanese girl behind her; while unheeding the interruption at hand the two modern gladiators fought on.

"I hate to stop it, Bill," O'Neil exclaimed excitedly as Phil's serpent-like point pierced the sword arm of his skilful antagonist, "but they'll be hurting each other soon if we don't."

Before O'Neil could reach the side of the duelists, Phil's powerful blade had wrapped itself about the singing steel of his antagonist, and with a powerful stroke down and out, aided by Takishima's loss of power in his sword arm, sent his opponent's blade far across the grass. It struck the temple wall with a
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metallic thud, and lay shivering as if alive on the wide flag-stones.

"Neatly done, sir," O'Neil cried out in hearty admiration, as he ran to Phil's side and quietly but masterfully disarmed him.

Takishima stood his ground, unflinchingly, his arms folded on his breast.

"The game little bantam!" O'Neil exclaimed in a loud aside. "'Come and finish me' is what he means by that.

"You're excused," O'Neil cried in nervous hilarity; "nothing doing. Go put on your coat. Don't you see the ladies waiting to speak to you?"

The sailors and Sydney insisted upon leading their much bedraggled champion off to the friendly shelter of a near-by shrine, where O'Neil's ready resourcefulness quickly staunched the flow of blood in an ugly wound on Phil's breast.

"Only a flesh cut," Sydney exclaimed in relief after he had examined the wound and assisted O'Neil in applying a first-aid dressing.

Takishima and Lieutenant Tanu, his second, stood nonplussed at the sudden appearance of
what they looked upon as an unwarranted interruption.

"This is a nice hospitable way of entertaining your guests," O'Neil exclaimed almost angrily, as he glanced at the haughty faces of the Japanese officers. "Civilized people don't fight duels any more. I thought you prided yourself on being highly enlightened."

"Don't make it any worse than it is, O'Neil," Sydney commanded irritably. "Mr. Perry has given him satisfaction, and his life too, for that matter."

"I am afraid it's all my fault, Mr. Perry," O'Neil said soberly dropping his bantering manner. "Bill and I found a letter at the theatre. It was the one lost by the injured messenger. If we'd caught you at the hotel this morning we'd have given it to you and saved all this trouble."

"Where's the letter now?" Phil questioned anxiously, holding out his hand to O'Neil, half expecting to see the sailor produce it from his blouse.

"It's in the hands of the Japanese naval officers at Yokohama." O'Neil imparted the information, a spark of triumph in his eyes.
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“Our friend Mr. Impey and his cutthroats attempted to jail me and Bill here, and lay hands on the letter, but we fooled ’em, and when we were let loose, I gave the letter to the Japanese naval officer that came over in response to our call for help.”

The lads looked surprised and puzzled, but Takishima’s face as he listened wore an expression which was hard to interpret.

O’Neil quietly and in a few words outlined the yacht incident, not sparing the two men who had been aiding Impey to discredit America in the eyes of the Japanese.

“The man that brought our flag on the stage at the theatre last night was with them. I believe he’s a Filipino insurgent,” O’Neil added.

“Was this letter open,” Phil asked eagerly, “and did you show it to Sago?”

O’Neil nodded in the affirmative.

“The seal was broken when I got it, sir,” the sailor replied. “I asked Sago to translate it for us, and he didn’t tell the correct dope what was in it, but one of Mr. Impey’s men did.” The sailor looked up questioningly, jerking his head over toward the listening Japanese.
"I want them to hear," Phil exclaimed. "I want you to tell everything that has happened. We must clear up this terrible misunderstanding."

"They said it was an imperial order to take the Chinese ships, which would mean war between the United States and Japan," O'Neil explained. "When I realized that our having the letter might bring about ill feeling for the 'Alaska,' I put all the blame where it belonged, for they told me that Mr. Impey had translated the letter. I told the Japanese naval officer that we had taken the letter from the two men on the yacht. Probably those men are now prisoners on the Jap ships at Yokohama."

Phil stepped forward to where Takishima was standing, a much puzzled expression on the lieutenant's usually calm face.

"You see, Takishima," he said coldly, "I meant to be honest with you, and if I hadn't lost the letter, would have restored it last night. It seems Mr. Impey has fooled us both. He is no more my friend than he is yours."

"Then you did not order your sailors to secure the letter?" Takishima asked slowly.

"You have heard what O'Neil has said,"
Phil replied quietly, "and the 'Shimbunshi' letter found in my room was written by Impey's men also."

Takashima was on the point of inquiring further; the details of the perplexing tangle were as yet not clear in his mind, but Phil had turned away. He had caught a glimpse of a woman's gown, and in confusion gazed at Helen Tillotson standing near, supported by her Japanese friend. He was at her side in an instant.

"Why did you come?" he exclaimed sternly. "You must go at once. Sydney," he called, "please see that Miss Tillotson and Miss Hama get home safely."

But Helen was not to be treated so lightly. Her big blue eyes showed a hidden fear.

"Are you much hurt?" she asked solicitously, disregarding the stern command in his eyes.

"It is all a mistake," she added suddenly, appealing to Takashima. "Mr. Perry told me this morning how he lost the letter. He would have given it to you, and was much mortified at the thought of being considered dishonest. Make him acknowledge that he
was wrong in forcing this deplorable duel," she ended pleadingly to Hama at her side.

Very solemnly Takishima put out his hands to Phil, taking both of the midshipman's in his and wrung them impressively.

"Perry, if I were a true Samurai, I would take my life by hara-kiri, for I have cruelly misjudged and injured a good friend."

"You ought to both get down on your knees and thank these two young ladies," O'Neil exclaimed, interrupting the sentimental scene. "If it hadn't been for them you'd probably be cutting pieces out of each other yet."

Phil laughed uneasily, and took Helen's trembling hand impetuously.

"How did you know?" he asked her, as the party moved away toward the entrance to the park where their rikishas were waiting.

"Hama-san came and told me, but she said she feared her brother too much to interfere," the young girl confided as the pair walked down the gravel path. "She believed that you had betrayed and insulted him, and according to their code he was bound to kill you or be killed himself; but when your sail-
ors came and explained your innocence, which bore out what I had told her, she gladly led us to the spot."

"He would have killed me if he could," Phil said in a low voice, pressing Helen's hand thankfully. "I saw that in his eyes."

At the park entrance the party gathered in the growing darkness.

"Taki," Phil said, stepping up to his friend's side, and taking his outstretched hand, "now that you know that Impey has misled your government in supposing that the United States will seize the Chinese ships, cannot Captain Inaba be recalled by wireless, if he has indeed sailed? The situation would be much clearer if he were back in Japan."

Takishima's face showed marked surprise as he asked:

"How do you know that Captain Inaba has sailed, and what his mission is?"

"I don't," Phil replied quietly, smiling inwardly at Taki's betrayal, "but Impey told me he was sure he had gone to seize the ships."

"Whatever has been ordered by our Emperor cannot be altered," Takishima hastened to say, "but I hope that better understanding
between our countries will soon come after the part Impey has played becomes known to both governments."

"If your Emperor could be convinced that the United States had no intention of obtaining the Chinese ships," Phil asked eagerly, "would he have wanted to obtain them for Japan?"

"I am sure he would not," Takishima replied readily. "The price asked is enormous, much more than it would cost to build them in my own country."

The party was breaking up; most of them had climbed into their jinrikishas, and were waiting upon the two in absorbed conversation.

"We must talk over this again to-night," Phil exclaimed as he saw they were keeping the rest waiting. "I'll see you at our ambassador's."

Takishima nodded, and the next moment the entire party was in motion.

Phil was deep in silent meditation. He was thinking over a plan; one similar to that proposed by Impey, but with a vastly different purpose.
CHAPTER XVII

INDECISION

After seeing Helen Tillotson to the embassy, Phil and Sydney went direct to the hotel, for there was but scant time to dress and accompany Captain Rodgers to the state dinner, given that evening by the American ambassador to the visiting officers and their Japanese naval hosts.

Bursting with the important and exciting news, the two lads, heedless of Phil's appearance in his blood-stained uniform, went straightway to Captain Rodgers' room. There they found their commanding officer in the midst of his toilet, and they gave a gasp of surprise to see Sago, the steward, quietly aiding his master in his dressing.

"Come in," was Captain Rodgers' cheery answer to their inquiry through the half open door. "Why, what's the matter?" he cried out in alarm after one glance at Phil's blood-stained face.
Phil stood nonplussed before his captain. Sago turned pale under his parchment-like skin. Before the midshipman could speak, the steward attempted to excuse himself and withdraw, but Sydney barred his way and the two lads entered the room, closing the door behind them.

“What on earth has happened?” Captain Rodgers exclaimed sternly.

Phil saw his reflection in the glass, and the sight caused him to start in alarm. One side of his face was smeared with blood; his coat was open, and inside his white shirt there showed a red blot from the wound on his chest. He knew the hurts were not serious, but his appearance was ghastly.

“We’ve unraveled the whole plot!” Phil exclaimed, not heeding his captain’s inquiry. “Mr. Impey has deliberately misrepresented everything to us. He has fooled the Japanese too, and they have sent Captain Inaba, or at least Impey says so, and Taki corroborates it, to intercept and take the Chinese warships.”

Captain Rodgers threw an anxious glance in Sago’s direction. The steward had with-
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drawn to a corner of the room and was standing with his back to the Americans.

"Impey told us that Sago went to the Minister of War or to some one there and told that O'Neil had the missing secret document," Phil said quickly in answering his captain's unspoken question as to the propriety of speaking before the steward. "We can't blame him though, sir," he added generously. "After all, his blood is Japanese, and we had no right to the letter."

Sago's face beamed with gratitude as he turned toward the Americans.

"Sago very loyal to America, captain," the Japanese steward exclaimed earnestly, coming forward timidly. "Sago very much afraid when he see the letter. Captain Inaba my old friend. I tell him where is the letter. I very sorry to offend my captain."

Captain Rodgers looked puzzled. He glanced hastily at his watch. "Go and get yourselves ready," he ordered suddenly. "We've less than an hour. When I am dressed, I'll come in and you can tell me the whole story. I can't understand these fragmentary descriptions."

The lads quietly obeyed, and once in their
own room Sydney carefully washed and antiseptically dressed Phil's scars of battle. The midshipmen were struggling into their evening uniform when the captain appeared, looking very imposing in his gold lace and medals.

The lads began at the beginning and gave him minutely all the important information which they had learned since their arrival in Tokyo, and also a short account of their differences with Lieutenant Takishima which had ended so happily. Captain Rodgers took Phil seriously to task for breaking the anti-dueling rule, but he promised no further action.

"What can be the aim of this fellow Impey?" Captain Rodgers said quietly after he had admonished the lads in his severe stern official voice. "Who will benefit by a war between us and Japan?"

Captain Rodgers sat silent, thinking deeply while the midshipmen, assisted by the grateful Sago, finished their toilet.

"There's a European country mixed up in this somewhere," he said half to himself. "That country has a railroad in Manchuria,
and is building a new road toward the valuable mining districts of Shensi Province in China."

Phil and Sydney had stopped in their dressing, and were listening eagerly.

"When the Chinese prince was in America, our bankers closed a loan to the Chinese government of many millions of dollars; for this an American syndicate received a concession from Peking to build a railroad from Amay through Shensi Province. This road will be an outlet for the richest coal, iron, copper and silver mines in China." Captain Rodgers again stopped and tapped the floor with his foot, a favorite habit when he was thinking deeply.

"A war between the United States and Japan, if Japan were victorious on the sea, would make void this concession. This European country is building without a concession from China, in violation of China's right to say who shall exploit her resources. Japan victorious, America could not build the railroad; the vast riches of Shensi Province would pass over the railroad of this European country."
"What country?" Phil asked, unable to control his curiosity longer.

Captain Rodgers smiled knowingly and shrugged his epauletted shoulders.

"If the United States were victorious," he continued, without answering Phil's question, "then there would be another part of China which Japan would be forced to evacuate, and this European country would be equally well off. Yes," the captain added, as though convinced, "that must be the correct diagnosis."

The midshipmen had drunk in every word of their captain's able summing up, and now gazed at him eager to hear more.

"Then who is Impey?" they asked almost in a breath.

"He must be that country's agent," Captain Rodgers replied quickly, "and probably agent also for the shipbuilding firms who built the Chinese navy and are now wondering where they will get their money, for China is in the throes of internal strife. If these ships are bought by Japan or the United States a very fancy figure would of necessity be paid.

"Sago," Captain Rodgers added, and the
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steward bowed low in answer, "remember the United States wishes to be Japan's friend. Her interests and Japan's are not really in conflict. It is these interested third parties who are forcing us to be unfriendly and maybe to fight."

Sago bowed again and drew in his breath sharply in sign of agreement.

"Will you tell me just what was in that letter?" the captain asked.

Sago hesitated several minutes, while the three American officers waited patiently, no sign of intimidation in their attitude toward the uncertain Japanese.

"It said the United States ships in Manila will be ordered to seize the Chinese ships. That United States make law to keep all Japanese out of America and the Philippine Islands. That United States want to capture Formosa. That United States and some European countries want to make Japan give up Manchuria. It then say Japan must quick buy Chinese ships and America would be afraid to make war because Japan then be too strong." Sago spoke jerkily and slowly, selecting his words carefully while he trans-
lated, in his mind, the characters of the secret letter.

"And all of that misinformation came to the Japanese through Mr. Impey and his agents!" Captain Rodgers exclaimed angrily. "What a wonderful imagination Impey must have! And so the Japanese have rushed away to take the Chinese ships to prevent their falling into our hands. How easily an intelligent nation's suspicions can be aroused. The Japanese diplomats believed that letter was an accurate summing up of the situation, and in reality America has not raised a hand to acquire these vessels.

"To whom was this letter addressed and by whom signed?" Captain Rodgers asked earnestly of the steward, who seemed now only too anxious to give all the information possible.

"Addressed to the advisers of the Emperor and signed by the chief officers of naval and military services," Sago answered unhesitatingly.

"Captain Inaba is their right hand man!" Phil exclaimed. "He probably composed the letter, and Taki said he knew the contents."
"Only half of the secret has been unraveled," Captain Rodgers said thoughtfully. "Impey took his garbled story of the letter to our ambassador. He probably also went to Captain Inaba with the tale that the letter was in the hands of our sailors; Captain Inaba has gone to seize the Chinese ships before our fleet in Manila can intercept them. Impey gave you this information and Taki-shima has confirmed it."

Captain Rodgers was silent for a few moments, then a slight smile curved the corners of his mouth.

"Our ambassador sent a cable to the State Department giving the information which Impey brought him," he said slowly and thoughtfully. "The 'Shimbunshi' claims to have received a cable saying our government had determined to take the Chinese ships. I believe the cable was pure fabrication—Impey's imagination. Still," he ended abruptly, "I am puzzled to explain all of his actions. At times he impressed me as being honest."

Phil smiled in a satisfied way. Had he not suspected him from the first?
"The situation is a very grave one," Captain Rodgers said to the lads, after they were in the carriage and driving rapidly through the streets, illuminated in honor of their visit, on their way to the American Embassy. "When two nations mistrust each other's actions, the seizing of the war-ships of a neutral and weak power like China is very certain to precipitate a condition which will be a step toward war."

Phil and Sydney nodded their heads in silent understanding.

"And I am afraid that the ambassador and I are quite powerless to change the situation," he continued thoughtfully. "The only way possible would be to induce the Japanese government to refrain from this seizure."

"Takashima said that was now impossible," Phil exclaimed in much perturbation, for he had not believed the mere seizure of the Chinese ships by Japan would lead to war.

Further conversation was cut short as their carriage rolled up through the smooth drive-way to the door of the American Embassy. The lads caught glimpses of much gold lace as they followed their captain into the brightly
lighted hallway, where their capes and hats were handed over to numerous attentive servants.

Once in the large reception room, dazzled by the handsomely gowned women and the glitter of Japan's chivalry, both military and naval, the situation dwindled in importance. Impey was there, and Phil caught his eye almost immediately upon entering the room. The lad's face flushed and there was anger in his heart as the part Impey was playing came again into his mind.

At dinner Phil was deeply gratified to find himself between Helen and Takishima.

"Is what I heard about Mr. Impey true?" the former asked Phil in a low voice amid the loud hum of conversation about them. "Has he intentionally misrepresented the condition of affairs to father?"

Phil nodded. "Worse than that," the lad whispered impressively. "He is responsible for all those articles in the 'Shimbunshi' slandering Americans. He has fooled both the Japanese and ourselves, and has brought the two countries precious near to a war.

"You wouldn't think it by looking about
this table, would you?" he added in grim humor.

The entire Japanese cabinet and the highest of its naval and military officers, with the officers of the "Alaska," were seated there in friendly conversation, as if no thought of the horrors that might come had entered their minds. Within a week, if Impey's plans were successful, these same people might be pitted against each other in a terrible naval battle.

"Does father know this?" the girl asked anxiously. "I thought of telling him what I had overheard at that unfortunate affair between you and Lieutenant Takishima, but I was afraid I had not heard aright, and I was too much agitated afterward to ask you to explain."

"I shall tell him to-night," Phil replied, "unless Captain Rodgers does. I have told our captain everything except——" Phil stopped abruptly while Helen raised her eyes to his face in inquiry.

"Except what?" she asked quickly.

"Oh, nothing," Phil began, and then after a second's thought he changed his mind. Why should he not tell? Every one near
them was busy talking and no one could possibly overhear. "Impey said that he had an order signed by the Wai-Wu-Pu, to turn over the Chinese squadron to the Americans, and wanted me to take his yacht, the 'Sylvia,' and beat the Japanese ships south. You know that we think they have gone with Captain Inaba to seize the Chinese squadron off Singapore Straits."

"Why don't you tell that to father?" she asked.

"Impey assured us that your father already knew of this letter from the Wai-Wu-Pu," Phil returned.

Before the girl could answer, her neighbor on the other side claimed her attention, much to Phil's chagrin, and he unconsciously frowned in the direction of Lieutenant Winston, the intruder.

"Our friend Impey has been watching you very closely, Perry," Takishima said in a low voice as Phil turned away from Helen's averted face.

"Watching us both, I imagine," he replied. "A much colored account of our little misunderstanding this afternoon will probably
figure prominently in the ‘Shimbunshi’ to- 
morrow,’” he added in concern.

“I’ve seen to that,” Takishima assured him. 
“The ‘Shimbunshi’ has been suppressed by 
the prime minister’s order. And all cable-
grams from the country are being censored, 
and nothing can be sent in cipher.”

“I wish you could persuade your minister 
to recall Captain Inaba,” Phil urged earnestly. 
“Captain Rodgers believes that if he seizes the 
ships a war may still be the outcome.”

After the dinner was over Phil and Sydney 
maneuvered to have a quiet talk with Taki-
shima. A bold plan, the seed of which had 
been sown in Phil’s mind by Impey’s pro-
posal to use the yacht, had occurred to the 
midshipman. Phil was not sure the “Sylvia” 
would be allowed to leave Yokohama harbor, 
but a word from the Japanese lieutenant would 
be enough.

Helen was taken into the conspiracy, and 
with the three classmates quietly stole away 
to a sun parlor in the back of the legation.

“No one will find us here,” Helen whis-
pered breathlessly, her face showing keen 
excitement.
Phil, remembering Takishima's promise to be open and frank with him, began by asking the question that seemed to be the most important to clear up.

"Have your war-ships been given orders to prevent the sailing of the 'Alaska'?

Takishima's eyes opened in mild surprise.

"How could you believe that Japan would be so impolite?" he replied. "Who is responsible for such a rumor?"

"Impey, of course," Phil returned, smilingly, "the source of all our misinformation.

"But," Phil persisted, "if the 'Alaska' should leave now and send a wireless to the American fleet in Manila to take the Chinese ships, Captain Inaba's mission would fail."

Takishima was thoughtful.

"We should not stop the 'Alaska,'" he said decidedly. "What steps our Minister of Marine would take afterward I cannot say, but of course you know we would take all steps possible to insure Captain Inaba's success."

"If you were sure America did not want the Chinese ships, your minister would be willing to have Captain Inaba fail, wouldn't he?" Phil asked.
"Yes, certainly," Takishima answered without a moment's hesitation.

"Impey, as the agent of the builders of these ships, desires them to go to either the United States or Japan.

"That is Captain Rodgers' opinion," Phil continued. "The ships were built for China, but as yet not paid for. Impey declares he has in his pocket an order from the Chinese council for the throne, the great Wai-Wu-Pu, to turn the ships over to the American government. If he were not the agent how could he get such an order?"

Takishima shook his head in sign of mystery.

"Cannot we manage to prevent either nation from getting them?" the midshipman asked excitedly. "Then all would be settled amicably."

"How could we do the impossible?" Takishima asked, his dark eyes sparkling.

"Get this order from Impey. Use the 'Sylvia' and take the Chinese ships into Manila Bay," Phil replied quickly. "Our admiral would look out for them and convey them back to China."
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Takishima drew himself up stiffly.
"What do you mean?" he gasped. "That I should betray my country, and deliver the ships into your admiral's hands?"

Phil in his earnestness had certainly made a blunder.

"Phil means to put the Chinese ships out of the reach of both nations," Sydney hastened to explain, and Phil nodded gratefully.

"I can't see how that can be done," Takishima replied, after several minutes' thought. "I am very sorry, but as a Japanese naval officer I cannot take any action that would defeat the aim of the Emperor. His Majesty has made his decision; that decision cannot be changed."

"Then you refuse to help us to avert this war!" Phil exclaimed.

"There is nothing else honorable for me to do," Takishima answered.
CHAPTER XVIII

A BOLD PLAN

The midshipmen returned to their hotel in despair at the outcome of their plans to save a delicate situation.

They had been in their room but a few minutes before there was a knock on their door and Robert Impey entered.

Both lads looked up in annoyed surprise, for they had studiously avoided him at the embassy and had showed in their manner that the kindly feeling which they had entertained for him earlier had received a distinct check.

The foreigner refused to be put aside by this evident coolness, but sat down in a vacant chair, gazing boldly at his accusers.

"I see you have dug up the corpse," he said, an ugly smile on his face.

"Yes," Phil hastened to reply, "we've learned of your two-faced dealings, and will
be greatly obliged if you close the door from
the outside."

"Softly, Mr. Perry," Impey returned boldly.
"I can be of use to you yet, and at the same
time serve my own ends. You see," he
added, "I can now be entirely honest with
you, because you have found out my se-
crets."

"We can never trust you," Sydney ex-
claimed. "I think, Phil, it's best for us to
have nothing to do with this man."

"I have but a short time to tell you what
you can do, if you will agree, because I fear a
warrant will be out for my arrest before mid-
night, but by then I hope to be on board the
'Alaska.'"

Phil waved his hand patiently for Impey to
continue.

"Here's the order from the Wai-Wu-Pu.
It's in Chinese, and will be honored by the
Chinese admiral." Impey drew an official
document from his pocket and placed it on
the table before him. "The 'Sylvia' is there
with steam up and bunkers full of coal. She
is faster than anything in Japan but a torpedo
boat, or destroyer. If you slip out during the
night you can get safely away, and no one will guess her mission."

Phil heard Captain Rodgers’ step in the hall and then heard his door close. Excusing himself hastily and bidding Sydney to detain Impey, he knocked and went into the captain’s room.

"Pardon my abruptness, sir," he exclaimed, "but there is a serious matter which I want you to decide for us to-night." Then he detailed calmly but quickly everything that had been learned since their consultation in the afternoon.

"If you will give Mr. Monroe and me indefinite leave, I believe we can without international complications prevent the Japanese from seizing the Chinese ships."

Captain Rodgers’ eyes opened in astonishment.

"I can’t tell you, sir, just how it can be done, but we shall go in the yacht ‘Sylvia,’" he added eagerly.

"Bless me!" Captain Rodgers exclaimed. "I’ll take the chance. Go by all means, and you had best take O’Neil with you; he’s a handy man to have in such an expedition."
He and Marley were waiting to see you on the driveway as I came in. Take both of them, and don’t get us farther involved in this international muddle than we are already.”

Phil thanked his captain and shook his hand warmly.

“I have warned the ambassador about Impey,” Captain Rodgers added. “It seems he has been completely taken in by the man.

“I have wired the President of the United States asking to be allowed to give his letter to the Minister of State. I was instructed, as you know, to deliver it only into the hands of the Emperor. I am sure if that letter were read by the Japanese government that Captain Inaba would be recalled by wireless.”

After leaving the captain’s room Phil went at once to where O’Neil and Marley were waiting. Taking the boatswain’s mate aside, he gave him hurried but detailed instructions.

“You can depend on us, sir,” O’Neil answered, quite calmly. “We’ll all be on board the yacht when you arrive. It looks like ugly weather, sir;” he added glancing aloft at the scudding clouds. “The Japs won’t be keeping much of a watch to-night.”
Phil went back to his room, much pleased with his success.

"You said that this would serve your end too?" Phil asked Impey, as he arose to go after giving the midshipman a letter to the captain of the yacht, and the official document that would turn over the Chinese ships to the American navy.

"The United States is a better paymaster than Japan," Impey replied again seating himself coolly, "and we'd rather have your country to deal with in China than the Japanese. Whichever nation gets the ships, war will be certain, and if the United States is successful Japan will cease to be a factor in the Orient."

Impey arose again to go while the midshipmen regarded him in blank surprise. They could not help admiring the man's self-possession.

"I shall not offer to shake hands," he said with a cynical smile of satisfaction at the success of his proposal. "We need not consider ourselves under the slightest obligation to each other. The expenses of the yacht will be paid by my syndicate through the captain
of the 'Sylvia.' And now I wish you success as I wish it for myself."

The door closed after him while Phil and Sydney sat gazing stupidly at each other.

"Well, of all the cast-iron nerves," Sydney exclaimed, after he had collected his scattered wits. "Did you hear him speak of his syndicate?"

"Captain Rodgers judged the man rightly this afternoon," Phil replied gravely. "He represents moneyed interests in Europe which are anxious to see the United States and Japan clash in a struggle which would leave both nations prostrated both physically and financially, and then the European vultures could come and pick the bones."

Sydney had already commenced to pack up his clothes into his valises and Phil quickly followed.

"No time should be lost, Phil," Sydney exclaimed. "I'll go and order the carriage and get the porter."

An hour later the two lads bade farewell to the ambassador and his daughter. Phil told him of their mission and the ambassador listened with open admiration at the daring of the plan.
"The situation is very acute," Mr. Tillotson said soberly. "The yellow journals in America are arousing the country to war. They insist that in refusing the audience to Captain Rodgers with the Emperor, our country has been grossly insulted, and this has been reported throughout the land. The studied secrecy of Japan has quite upset America. They don't know what to believe. If you are successful I hope our countrymen may again find their heads."

"Is this all in the Japanese papers?" Phil asked.

"No mention is made in any paper in Japan. The people have been kept in ignorance of the sudden wave of dislike that has gone over the continent of America, but I have my information this time from a reliable source, no less a person than the prime minister himself, who has received the information from America. He called to tell me of the censorship, and that for the present all cipher messages would be held up. He was greatly surprised that the refusal of the audience was known in America since all messages were stopped. I tried to persuade
him to recall Captain Inaba, assuring him that the United States did not desire to have the Chinese battle-ships, but my efforts were in vain."

"Was he surprised to know that you had been informed of Captain Inaba’s mission?" Phil asked.

"He said nothing to show his surprise," the ambassador answered gravely, "and I can never read the faces of these Japanese diplomats. They seem to be able to hide all emotion; but he knows of Impey’s treachery."

Phil was grateful to Sydney for engaging the ambassador in conversation while he said good-bye to Helen. The night was warm, and the two walked slowly along the gravel path within the embassy enclosure.

He told her of their mission, but scoffed at any idea of danger.

"The whole thing depends upon our getting away without being discovered," he told her excitedly. "You see, Taki knows that we would like to prevent Captain Inaba’s mission being successful, and the yacht is being watched by the Japanese battle-ships."
"I wish I were a man," Helen exclaimed, glancing proudly at Phil.
"What would you do?" he asked smiling happily.
"I'd go with you instead of staying behind and worrying," she replied decidedly.
"We shall not be gone long," he said hurriedly, trying to appear unconcerned,
"and when we return I hope there will be no more cause for worry. Japan and the United States will become firmer friends than ever.
"Good-bye, Helen," he added, her hand in his. "It's beastly to have to leave Japan just when we were having such a good time."

He was conscious of her ready sympathy and of a wistful look in her eyes as she bade him good-bye.

Then the door opened, and the ambassador and Sydney stood upon the threshold.
"I was just coming for you," Sydney exclaimed. "Phil has no idea of time, you know," he added pointedly to the ambassador, who chuckled at the discomfiture of the pair.
"The Chinese ambassador was here this morning, and gave me this letter. He is very much disappointed at the thought of his friend Admiral Ting losing his command." Mr. Tillotson as he spoke placed in Phil's hand a large official document. The lad saw it was heavy and glanced inquiringly at the ambassador.

"The letter is inside, in its own envelope. My explanatory letter is there also. If you are in danger of capture destroy it, for it might cause much unpleasantness. Of course," the ambassador added, "the Chinese ambassador knows nothing of the later developments in the case—only what I have told him, that America would like to be sure that the Chinese navy remains in China's keeping."

Phil placed the letter carefully within his pocket, and took the outstretched hand of Mr. Tillotson.

"I hope to welcome you back within a fortnight," the latter said in an attempt to appear cheerful. "We shall miss you very much," he added.

And then the carriage was off. The mid-
shipmen waved their hands until the horses turned out through the gate, and the two figures became hidden behind the high wall of the enclosure.

It was nearly midnight before they arrived in Yokohama, but the ever-faithful O’Neil was awaiting them at the landing.

“Mr. Impey is waiting there in the launch,” the boatswain’s mate explained. “He’s dressed in one of my uniforms. The Japanese policemen are close on his trail. He seems very anxious to get to the ‘Alaska,’” he added.

The midshipmen allowed O’Neil to relieve them of their valises, and entered the “Alaska’s” steam launch. They could hardly suppress a smile as they saw the discomfited Impey disguised in the uniform of an American sailorman.

“To the ‘Sylvia’ first,” Phil ordered, after they had cleared the dock, and the launch, pitching lightly in the rising sea, steamed rapidly out toward the lights of the anchored ships.

“I want you to come aboard and explain to your captain,” Phil said quietly as they reached the gangway of the yacht.
They followed Impey up the ladder, while O'Neil and Marley, with the valises, brought up the rear.

The storm predicted by O'Neil seemed about to be realized. The wind was steadily increasing, and a shower of rain came swiftly out of the night, shutting the launch off completely from the surrounding vessels.

Phil laid his hand impulsively upon Impey's arm to detain him.

"You must go with us," he declared. "We cannot appear in this except as passengers. We are all armed, you see," he added, his revolver, which O'Neil had brought him, shining in his hand. "We are in deadly earnest, Mr. Impey," advancing his gun so that the yacht owner could see it, "and your two conspirators are both with us."

Impey started perceptibly, and a look of fear came into his eyes, but the boldness of the midshipmen reassured him. With such men in command the expedition could hardly fail, and at all events he would be safely out of the reach of Japanese law.

"We must sail at once!" Phil exclaimed, glancing into the heavy mist which had shut
down over the bay. His hand still clasped Impey’s arm.

“As you will, then,” the latter replied.

The lads followed Impey to the bridge, where Captain Bailey, the yacht’s sailing-master, was awaiting orders.

“These gentlemen will give you instructions, captain,” Impey ordered in a nervous voice, glancing at the dim hull of a Japanese ship scarcely a stone’s throw away.

“Get under way as quietly as possible,” Phil said eagerly. “Don’t start to heave the anchor chain in until the next rain squall. We want all speed possible.” And steer for the entrance to the bay.”

Captain Bailey gave a silent nod of understanding, showing no apparent surprise at the dress of his employer or at the order directing him to take instructions from these two young naval men. His salary was large, and he thoroughly understood that he was expected to ask no questions.

While the midshipmen waited anxiously on the bridge, a sudden rain squall enveloped them. They heard, through the roar of the wind, a dull clanking of chain and immedi-
ately afterward a tremor shook the lightly-built yacht as the anchor let go its grip upon the harbor mud, and the triple engines were sent ahead at full speed. Phil peered through the driving rain in the direction where he knew the Japanese battle-ships were anchored. He could see their lights flickering dimly, and hoped that O’Neil was correct, and that a strict watch was not being kept. With rapidly beating hearts the two lads watched the lights dissolve in the darkness, while the little yacht cut swiftly through the troubled waters, throwing a shower of salty spray all about them.

“They haven’t seen us yet,” Sydney exclaimed in a much relieved whisper, and they were about to leave the bridge and seek shelter in the comfortable cabin below when from the gloom behind them a bright shaft of light appeared, and a dull boom of a gun awoke the echoes within the harbor.

“Keep going, captain,” Phil commanded hoarsely, “even if they try to sink us.”

“You can trust to me, young man,” Captain Bailey returned gruffly. “I am not anxious to sleep in a Japanese jail.”
The search-light made all possible effort to pierce the murky atmosphere, but failed dismally, and as they watched it, the bright light suddenly went out.

But as the midshipmen, drenched to the skin, were seeking shelter below, Sydney laid an excited hand on Phil's arm.

"Look there!" he said, and as he spoke, a rocket of warning soared high above the anchored war-ships.
CHAPTER XIX

ON THE HIGH SEAS

Around the table in the saloon cabin were an incongruous group as the two midshipmen entered. Phil smiled at the sight of Impey in his sailor uniform. There were two strange faces beside O'Neil and Marley; the latter men had risen respectfully upon the entrance of the lads.

"Mr. Impey's friends," O'Neil introduced them with a wave of his hand toward Wells and Randall.

Phil inclined his head, while the men thus unceremoniously presented looked half ashamed at being so designated.

"We're all in for it," Phil said bravely. "We were discovered by the Japanese battleships and will surely be chased by a torpedo boat. If we are overtaken before we clear the bay we'll be brought back to Yokohama.

"To us that will mean only a failure to thwart the aims of the Japanese," he added,
"but for Mr. Impey and his friends something more serious will be in store."

Impey's face appeared pale and worried.

"They can do nothing to me," he exclaimed, striving to show a bold front. "They can deport me, but I am quite ready to leave Japan."

"Do you know the penalty, under the Japanese law, for breaking the Emperor's seal?" Phil asked cruelly. "It's five years in prison. How the Japanese lieutenant came to permit your two assistants to remain here, I can't understand, unless they thought they'd be within easy reach. I shall take great pleasure in testifying against the lot of you, unless," he added, "you stand by us and do all in your power to help us elude the vessel that soon will be in chase of us."

The midshipman waited quietly for an answer.

"You can count on Wells and me," Randall returned promptly. "I am in no mood to be introduced to a Japanese prison and a rice diet. If I can shake off the dust of this country nothing less than a Broadway beefsteak will suit me."
Wells nodded his head and raised a hand in agreement with his companion's views. Phil's eyes were on Impey.

"I can't see why you wanted me to go with you," Impey said finally, in a petulant voice. "I offered you the yacht and gave you the permit from the Chinese cabinet. Of what further assistance can I be?"

Phil smiled mysteriously.

"I didn't see the sense of taking only a paper permit when the living permit in the person of the agent for the builders of the ships was available," he replied pointedly. "However, if you all will agree to obey me implicitly in everything and ask no questions, we shall elude the Japanese. If you don't agree, then down you go under lock and key in one of the cabins."

Impey's lip quivered irritably as he reluctantly gave an assent to Phil's proposal. His subtle mind was attempting to solve what the midshipmen's intentions might be. Nothing less, he decided, than to checkmate Captain Inaba and win the Chinese ships for the United States fleet—the course he himself had already outlined.
The "Sylvia" was now tearing through the troubled waters of the bay at almost railroad speed. Her three turbine shafts were revolving at a far greater speed than they ever had before. The Chinese crew in the fire-room were told that their own lives depended upon the outcome of the race—that their old enemies the Japanese were chasing them. Their Oriental minds could not grasp the lack of logic in the warning. They knew that they had been hired for hazardous work, and were being paid a larger salary than they could get anywhere else in the Orient.

"I think we can all safely turn in," Phil suggested, after O'Neil had returned from a tour of inspection with a report that everything was going finely, and that it was too thick to see more than a mile astern. "If they send a destroyer after us, it can't overtake us until the morning. It will be a race of wits," he added, "and not of speed, if a destroyer once gets us in sight, so sleep is what we need to clear our minds."

The yacht had staterooms for the entire party, and Phil after a short conversation with Captain Bailey, who stuck manfully to the
bridge, where he said he would remain all night and would call “all hands” if necessary, lay down in his clothes with a blanket drawn over him and was almost immediately asleep.

It seemed that he had only dozed when a sharp discharge as of a gun awakened him. Quickly jumping up he ran out on deck. A bright flashing search-light was visible on the port beam, and Phil's heart was in his mouth as he saw a flash of fire and heard the whistle of a shell.

"The forts," he cried in alarm. "They have been notified to stop us." He glanced anxiously at the weather. The rain had ceased, and the wind had fallen light, but the air was misty and warmer. The "Sylvia" was rushing by the nearest fort at the speed of an express train. The search-light was now shining on the black hull, and flash after flash told that the fort was in earnest. Phil found his way to the bridge, passing an excited group of frightened Chinese crewmen on his way.

"They're hitting pretty close, sir," O'Neil exclaimed as a hissing shell threw a shower of
salty spray over the speeding yacht. The boatswain’s mate spoke in a low tone to Captain Bailey, and then quickly disappeared from the bridge, followed by the faithful Marley.

It seemed to the two midshipmen, now standing side by side, entirely exposed to the terrific cannonading, that the next minute must be the yacht’s last. Then, as if by command, the firing ceased, but the search-lights, now three in number, illuminated the “Sylvia’s” trim hull from bow to stern. The fort had drawn aft to the quarter and the range was ever increasing. The point of greatest danger was passed. But what was the meaning of the sudden cessation of fire?

A cry from Sydney caused Phil to glance astern, expecting yet dreading to see the low olive green hull of a destroyer loom out of the night.

“What is it?” he cried in alarm.

Sydney silently pointed; there at the peak floated a large American flag. Then that alone had caused the Japanese to stop their cannonade! Phil was about to order it down, but quicker almost than it takes to tell it the
fort disappeared in the mist and the flag fluttered down to the deck.

"That flag certainly talks, Bill," O'Neil said as the two men walked quietly back to the bridge.

"Do you realize what you've done?" Phil exclaimed after O'Neil had informed them that he had hoisted the colors. "You've advertised that American naval officers are running this yacht. With the present tension between Japan and the United States that flag made the Japanese army officers in the forts hesitate. They thought it might mean war, so they stopped firing."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Perry," O'Neil returned quickly, "but if I hadn't hoisted it, or hoisted any other flag, we would have all been swimming for the shore by this time."

"It will only be a matter of hours now before destroyers will be hunting us from every naval port in Japan," Phil said disappointedly, as he started again for his cabin and more sleep.

The morning dawned gray and cheerless. The "Sylvia" was steadily steaming to the southward. Great drifts of fog were frequently
encountered through which the yacht plunged to emerge again into the semi-misty atmosphere surrounding it.

"We heard them talking last night, sir," O'Neil announced after breakfast. "I was listening in the wireless room almost all night. Bill Marley and I took down some of the messages, but we can't read Japanese," he added.

"The Japanese navy uses our letters, but doubtless their messages are in cipher," Phil returned as he took the penciled records from O'Neil, glancing at them carelessly. Impey stood near by apparently much interested. The lad handed the papers to him, a questioning look in his face.

"I can't read them," Impey said after a minute's study. "Hello, here's one not in cipher," he exclaimed, scanning a sheet more closely.

The midshipmen waited impatiently. Phil could barely suppress a doubting smile as there came into his thoughts the garbled manner in which Impey had given the ambassador the contents of the lost document. Could they depend now upon his rendering
of this mysterious aerial message? Impey again scanned the paper, apparently in deep thought.

"My knowledge of Japanese is limited," he said finally, his eyes still on the paper. "But roughly this message directs that all vessels in this vicinity search for us and hold us."

Phil nodded his head. There was no harm in believing that.

Steadily the yacht reeled off the miles over a sea that was becoming smoother now every hour. The air had become heavier and the rifts of fog were being encountered more frequently.

"It's only a forlorn hope, Syd," Phil exclaimed sorrowfully as the two leaned over the after rail, their eyes on the horizon to the north. "We are probably making twenty-three knots an hour, but a destroyer is good for at least thirty. I am afraid we were too hasty in our plans."

Sydney was silent. Far astern above the low fog a dark smudge had caught his eye.

"Smoke!" he cried out dejectedly. "If the fog would only shut in to stay!"
Phil called for a spy-glass, and looked long and eagerly at the dark mass hanging above a distant fog bank. The sailors and Impey, seeing that something was in the wind, had joined the lads, and all eyes were peering at the dreaded signs of a chasing vessel.

They were not left long in doubt. From out of the mass of fog bank a dark speck suddenly became visible, and before their eyes it grew until a four funneled destroyer stood clearly outlined. A white line of foam at its bow told of its great speed, and it was heading directly for the yacht.

"There's an end to all our hopes," Phil exclaimed sadly. "We can't fight her, for we have no guns, and if we fought and lost they could treat us as pirates and swing us at the yard-arm."

A flash from the bow of the destroyer followed by a hissing splash astern told of the newcomer's invitation to "heave to" and "be spoken."

"O'Neil, tell Captain Bailey to stop and wait," Phil ordered dejectedly. "We can't afford to run risks. These Japanese know how to shoot, I am told."
The "Sylvia" very soon lay dead in the water, steam pouring from her escape pipes, while a gangway was quickly rigged and the midshipmen stood ready to meet the officer who they knew would soon pay them a visit.

The destroyer drew rapidly up on the motionless vessel, and was soon stopped alongside, rolling deeply in the swell, scarcely a hundred yards away. Phil with rapidly beating heart saw a small dinghy dropped from the destroyer's boat davit and, with an officer in the stern sheets, pull quickly alongside the yacht's gangway.

His face fell as he saw the officer was no other than Lieutenant Takishima. Here were more complications. Takishima knew only too accurately the midshipmen's plans, for had they not invited him to share them?

The midshipmen were in civilian's clothes, and Takishima with a studied official manner looked past them seeking some one in authority to whom he might address himself.

"I am sorry to inconvenience you," he said, his eyes on Impey, the one whom he took to be in authority. "My orders are to convey you back to Yokohama. You sailed
without clearing from the port authorities, and you refused to stop when challenged by the forts."

"We are on the high seas," Impey replied quickly. "You have no right to detain us. By the law of nations except in time of war that flag protects us from such a high-handed proceeding." He pointed to the British ensign, which had been run up to the gaff when the destroyer was first sighted.

Takishima glanced aloft and a sphinx-like smile appeared upon his upturned face.

"Last night you flew a different one," he said calmly. "Are you under the protection of both governments? Maybe between times you carry the black flag of a pirate."

Impey bit his lips, at loss for an answer.

"Just a mistake," he replied hesitatingly.

Phil had from a distance observed his Japanese friend. After he had ignored the midshipmen's presence and addressed himself to Impey, the lad had backed away, but kept just within ear-shot. He saw that Takishima was armed with a revolver, and knew that each man of the waiting boat's crew also was armed. The destroyer had now ranged close
alongside, and he could read the interest in the faces of its crew, so close was it. The mist was beginning slowly to shut down; a warm south wind had sprung up, and in contact with the cold sea-water was giving up its moisture in fog. O'Neil stood at the gangway, the boat-line in his hand to which the small boat was holding. There seemed no possible loophole of escape.

"I shall put some of our sailors on board," Takishima said, turning toward the gangway, and then for the first time addressing Phil.

"Will you come back with me to the destroyer 'Hatsuke'? I can land you somewhere, and you and your friends can return to Yokohama by train without publicity."

Tears of mortification stood in Phil's eyes. His plans had miscarried. He bowed his acknowledgment to Takishima for his consideration. In being landed he and his companions would escape the disgrace of returning in the seized "Sylvia."

Takishima raised his voice and hailed the "Hatsuke." An answer quickly came back, and the water was churned to foam as the destroyer shot ahead, turning with port helm.
Phil understood that Takishima had ordered the officer in command to come alongside the yacht in order to transfer passengers. While all eyes watched the graceful lines of the fleet craft, suddenly, as if a curtain had been dropped, the "Hatsuke" dissolved from sight. Acting upon an impulse as daring as it was sudden, Phil grasped the duplicate engine telegraph near the mainmast, and rang up full speed ahead. No word was spoken, but as the yacht forged ahead, O'Neil threw overboard the life-line to which Takishima's boat was made fast. The men in the boat gazed up in startled surprise, but O'Neil waved his hand in the direction the destroyer had disappeared, and almost at once the boat had drifted astern and out of sight in the fog.

Takishima was completely taken by surprise. His hand went quickly to his revolver, but Sydney's iron grip on his wrist prevented him from drawing it from its holster, while Phil's revolver peered into his angered face.

"It's our turn now, Taki; be game!" Phil exclaimed. "This gun isn't loaded, and I wouldn't shoot you if it were. It's only a figure of speech; but if you try to draw I'll
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wrestle you for your gun, and I am a lot bigger than you are and have a few friends to help me.”

Takishima wrenched himself angrily away, and the next minute his brightly polished revolver was held at Phil’s head, and it was only too plain from the light in his eyes that he would not hesitate to use it.
CHAPTER XX

THE "HATSUKE"

But suddenly, without a word being said, Takishima slowly lowered his gun and placed it back in its holster, and then hastily left the group, walking silently aft.

"Look out he doesn't commit suicide or jump overboard, Syd!" Phil exclaimed with a sigh of relief, as he made his way swiftly to the bridge.

"Which way are you going?" he inquired anxiously.

"Pretty nearly straight back," Captain Bailey replied quickly. "She'll look for us farther along on our old course. If the fog holds for another hour she'll never see us again. I am going to run close down inside the islands, and when we see the northern island of the Philippines then we can shape our course wherever you like."

The midshipman nodded approvingly. Captain Bailey knew what he was about. Phil
talked a short time longer, telling of how they had turned the tables on the unsuspecting Japanese lieutenant, and then went aft to look up Takishima and endeavor to console him. He came upon him sitting disconsolate in a chair abaft the mainmast; Sydney stood near, but from appearances there had been no communication between the two former friends. Phil was on the point of joining them when he saw that O'Neil and Marley were waiting to speak to him, so he stopped.

"What's the trouble, O'Neil?" he asked anxiously. "No strike below, I hope; if there is we'll all have to go down and shovel coal. If we are caught now we can be truly called pirates. Did you ever want to be a pirate, Marley?" he asked jestingly.

The sailor turned red and stammered out something which Phil did not see the necessity of understanding whether his answer were yes or no.

"Bill and I have been thinking, sir, how we might improve on the looks of this here yacht," O'Neil answered importantly.
Phil caught the idea at once.
"Bully for you, O'Neil!" he exclaimed ad-
miringly. "You can do anything except cut down her speed; but what do you propose?"

The sailor cast his eye knowingly about him.

"Well, sir," he replied thoughtfully, "she's black now; a coat of white paint wouldn't be amiss, and a little fancy painting on the smokestacks and mast might hide the fact that she's a yacht. All this bright brass can be painted too. If you say the word," he added, "me and Bill with those pen-pushers of Mr. Impey's can start in at once."

"Go right ahead," Phil said offhand. "I am sure Mr. Impey is willing, and if he happens not to be we won't ask him."

O'Neil saluted, and he and Marley went off to find material and men to help carry out his designs, while Phil continued on down the deck to where Takishima was seated.

He laid his hand affectionately upon the lieutenant's shoulder.

"I can't tell you, Taki, how sorry I am that we had to play this trick on you," he said in a low earnest voice, "but it's better that we should be simply not friends than real enemies."

Takashima raised a haggard face to that of
the midshipman. Phil saw that his humiliation was great, and his heart smote him.

"I shall be the laughing stock of our navy," Takishima complained bitterly. "I have disgraced the Emperor's uniform. My father will disown me when he hears."

"Taki," Phil exclaimed earnestly, "if my plans are successful, you will receive the thanks of your Emperor and retain the admiration of your brother officers in the navy, for we shall show them how terribly they have blundered in misunderstanding the friendly intentions of my country."

But Takishima's mortification was too fresh to be appeased by such an optimistic view of his present predicament. Following the midshipmen to Yokohama, he had witnessed their escape in the yacht. He had been sent on his own request upon this important mission—to overtake and bring back the yacht which he knew would endeavor to thwart Captain Inaba's purpose. He had not taken proper precautions. He had discounted the daring of his former classmates and they had turned the trick upon him and were carrying him away against his will while the fast "Hatsuke"
was somewhere in the fog, searching vainly for the swiftly escaping yacht.

"If you had not come on board," Phil continued earnestly, "it was my intention to communicate with our admiral in Manila; tell him of Captain Inaba's mission and await his instructions as to where we should meet him, for I am sure he would endeavor to prevent the Chinese squadron from being seized. By Japan's holding up all cablegrams from Captain Rodgers and our ambassador and refusing to deliver those arriving for them, Washington must now suspect that your country intends to take some action which might jeopardize the balance of power in the Orient. Impey has kept the Washington authorities informed through his agents in the United States. My wireless message will clear up the situation, and our admiral will at once put to sea to seize the Chinese ships himself to prevent their falling into other hands.

"That is Impey's desire, and the reason why he has given us the yacht. He and those for whom he is only an agent do not desire to see Japan grow stronger. They wish to destroy her influence in Manchuria and in all China;"
to seal up her natural energies in the island kingdom. America is vastly rich in resources, and for many years to come will not care to more than break ground in China. Meanwhile those who pretend to be your friends are striving to blind Japan into believing that America covets her territory and power in the far East, and thus tempt her to waste her energies and wealth in a fruitless war with my country.”

Takishima had listened impatiently at first, but as Phil drove home one self-evident truth after another, the young naval man at length listened eagerly, understanding growing in his troubled face.

“Perry, I believe my country has been fooled,” he exclaimed suddenly. “We have listened to a voice that we should have known can never be disinterested. Do you know,” he asked earnestly, “who in Japan has been urging us to obtain the Chinese ships?”

“Impey, of course,” Phil answered.

“Yes, but his urging has been done in a different way,” Takishima continued. “He has furnished the stories of what the United States was doing and at the same time has
subtly advised us to buy the ships if we really wanted them. He has been the auctioneer, knocking them down to the highest bidder."

"To both bidders," Phil corrected with a grim smile.

"The man who is back of it in Japan," Takishima went on, not noticing the interruption, "is Baron Kosuba, the owner and president of the Koko Kisen Khaisha, the biggest steamship company in Japan. It is he who has advanced the securities in payment for the Chinese ships, and it was he who persuaded the Minister of State to refuse the Emperor's audience to your captain."

"He must have had some very good reasons," Phil declared, "to wish to precipitate a war."

Takishima shrugged his shoulders.

"Perry, we trained military and naval men are but infants in diplomacy compared to these multi-millionaires. Gold was Baron Kosuba's reason, and to him that was sufficient. What does he care for the sufferings of the people? A war in which Japan was victorious would mean that we would be masters of the Pacific, and the Koko Kisen Khaisha
would send her steamers everywhere. It would mean millions of dollars to the baron.

"But what do you now propose to do?" Takishima asked eagerly, after several minutes of silence, while the two gazed out upon the thick enveloping fog.

Phil shook his head.

"I can't tell you now, Taki," he replied in a very friendly tone. "It's too far off yet. We've many dangers to pass before we can be in touch with Manila; but," he suddenly asked earnestly, "will you give me your word as a Japanese fighting man that you will not do us damage of any kind?"

Takishima started perceptibly, while the color mounted to his sallow cheeks. He had been, even at that moment, revolving in his mind how he could bring the yacht's mission to a disastrous end. It was in his thoughts to endeavor to sink her by opening some sea valve, even though he lost his own life in so doing.

Phil's keen eye noted the hesitancy in Takishima's face.

"If not, Taki, as much as I would regret
it," he said calmly, "we would lock you in your stateroom and put a sentry over it to prevent your getting out."

Takishima remained in deep thought for several minutes.

"I cannot give you my word," he said finally. "I might not be able to keep it."

"I am sorry," was all Phil said as he walked away to give the disagreeable orders for Takishima's confinement.

During the next two days the two American sailors with Randall and Wells and all the Chinese deck hands were busy changing the outside appearance of the yacht. When it was all finished the two midshipmen surveyed the effect in wonder; the "Sylvia" had been quite obliterated, and in her place there was a white gunboat. The shape of the deck houses had been concealed with painted canvas, with cleverly painted open gun ports and guns protruding. Fighting tops had been built on the masts and the top of the lofty spars had been sacrificed. In every respect, even to the bow and stern guns which they had discovered hidden away in the hold of the vessel, the "Sylvia" was now the
counterpart of one of the small gunboats owned by many nations for tropical service. The lads were loud in their praise for the sailors' handicraft, and Bill Marley received his share with his usual silent smile of pleasure.

Takishima, after refusing the offer made to him, went to his stateroom, and Phil, true to his word, after again endeavoring to extract a promise from the obdurate Japanese, turned the key in the lock and gave it over to the keeping of Marley, who was to be the jailer.

Impey kept to himself. The midshipmen did not encourage more friendly relations, and he was apparently man of the world enough to see that they did not desire him at their councils.

The fog still held, and the "Sylvia" was making her best speed through the almost calm water. Phil and Sydney had thrown themselves down in steamer chairs on the after-deck, while O'Neil and Impey's assistants were casually conversing near by but out of ear-shot.

"Captain Inaba and his ships must be nearly down to Formosa by this time," Phil
said thoughtfully. "And if so he will soon be trying to get the Chinese squadron by wireless."

"By to-morrow night if the Chinese ships are near Singapore, he might possibly get them," Sydney replied after a few minutes of thought upon the distances. "To-morrow we shall be within talking distance of the shore stations in Luzon."

Phil nodded his agreement with his companion's calculations.

"But if I can be sure that I am far enough ahead of Captain Inaba," Phil declared earnestly, "I shall not try to call up our admiral, but steer for Singapore Straits direct."

Sydney looked up in astonishment.

"I have been thinking over this plan for some time, Syd," he continued quickly. "You see, if we wire our admiral and he starts out with the fleet he might run afoul of Captain Inaba."

"But how can you be sure as to where Captain Inaba and the Japanese fleet are?" Sydney asked, much mystified.

"Only by running some risks, endeavoring to sight them and count the ships, and find
out the speed they are making," Phil replied; "and if by bad luck we are chased by a vessel faster than we are, then maybe O'Neil's work may help us to make them think that we are only a harmless gunboat, after all."

Sydney opened his eyes in astonishment. "That certainly sounds like a very dangerous plan," he said, shaking his head doubtfully, "but go on."

"If we are sure to arrive ahead of the Japanese fleet, then," Phil hurried on, "I shall find Admiral Ting and his ships, show him the letter from the Wai-Wu-Pu and this letter the ambassador gave us. After he reads those he should be willing to follow us and elude Captain Inaba's vessels."

"Where then will you take him?" Sydney asked, for he saw that Manila could not be in Phil's plan.

"If we convoyed them to Manila we would put the American admiral into a very embarrassing position," Phil continued. "I have thought over it for a long time, Syd, and I don't see why it is not possible. If we can do it we would make a tremendous hit, a scoop, as the newspapers say." Phil stopped, gazing
attentively into the fog while Sydney waited breathlessly for him to continue.

"Go on, Phil," Sydney demanded impatiently. "What is your plan?"

But Phil did not have an opportunity to answer. A great black shape suddenly appeared out of the fog on their starboard hand. Every one was on his feet in an instant; the emergency was so sudden and entirely unexpected. The loud bellow of a whistle sounded across the water. For a moment Phil's heart was in his throat. It looked as if the monster steamer would ram the frail yacht amidships. Only the "Sylvia's" great speed saved her, and the big merchantman passed close under the yacht's stern, and disappeared as suddenly into the fog.

"O'Neil, come down into the wireless room," Phil called, a tremor of nervousness still in his voice.

The sailor quickly obeyed, and together they went down to the little room where O'Neil and Marley had sent out their remarkable message for help.

"See if you can get that steamer," Phil exclaimed, "and ask them if they sighted any
steamers to-day or yesterday. She has come from Hongkong, probably, and is on her way to Yokohama. Don't tell them who we are, of course," he added quickly; "say we're Japanese."

O'Neil nodded his head and at once began to make the "call," periodically throwing out the sending switch and listening through the wireless head-piece.

"Got her, sir," he whispered, clicking his key rapidly as he sent the message.

Then he again threw out the sending key, and drawing a pencil from his pocket, began to write rapidly, the words coming in on the aerial in dots and dashes. The two midshipmen, for Sydney had joined them, glanced excitedly over the sailor's shoulder.

"Royal mail steamer, 'Bombay,' from London, via Singapore and Hongkong. What ship is that?"

"Japanese gunboat 'Neko,'" Phil exclaimed quickly, after reading the received message; "and now ask if she has sighted anything."

"I did ask her, and that's her answer," O'Neil replied, throwing in his sending cir-
cuit and spelling out what Phil had given him. "You see, sir, these fellows want to know to whom they are giving information."

"Passed Chinese squadron at Colombo one week ago. Saw great deal of smoke yesterday to the northward. Has war been declared yet?"

"Don't seem to be necessary to ask with whom," Sydney exclaimed. "Apparently our affairs are being talked of out in the world."

"What shall I answer?" O'Neil asked.

"Tell them yes, and that Turkey has won the first victory on the sea," Phil directed calmly, a twinkle in his eyes. "They make me tired!" he exclaimed angrily. "It looks as if they were only too anxious to see Japan and the United States at each other's throats."

O'Neil sent the message with a gleeful smile on his face and then quickly penciled the answer:

"Please repeat. Why Turkey? You don't mean the United States, do you?"

"Say 'hardly,' and then 'good-bye,' and let them guess until they reach Yokohama," Phil said savagely.
"I'll change our course about a point," he said thoughtfully. "By to-morrow, if it's clear, we should see the smoke of the Japanese fleet."
CHAPTER XXI

THE JAPANESE FLEET

Phil held a conference with Captain Bailey, and much against that mariner's idea of caution, the "Sylvia's" bow was turned farther to the westward.

"You're taking big chances," the captain of the yacht volunteered, "but that's not my affair. I've my orders from Mr. Impey to go where you tell me."

Impey had not failed to notice the change of course, and very soon afterward approached Phil as he came aft from the bridge, meanwhile having consulted Captain Bailey and seen the course laid down on the chart.

"You are losing valuable time," he exclaimed peevishly. "You should get in communication with Manila as soon as possible."

Phil shrugged his shoulders provokingly, while Impey flushed, his eyes flashing in his annoyance.

"Mr. Impey, remember your word given us
not to interfere with the movements of this yacht," the midshipman replied coldly. "There are other staterooms below capable of being locked, and Marley can attend to two gentlemen under restraint as easily as one."

Impey saw the fruitlessness of further argument and subsided with not very good grace.

After supper that evening the fog cleared away and a breeze sprang up from the northward. The yacht kept up its rapid pace and the midshipmen decided that a watch should be kept by one of them at all times in order to see that nothing was done either to change the course or run the yacht into unnecessary danger. O'Neill was called and the plan of watches was told him, Marley continuing upon his duty of guarding Lieutenant Takeda.

"We must keep our eyes open for the Japanese ships," Phil explained, "and yet not get too close to them. We are running without lights and should see them sooner than they will us, for they are not expecting us, while we are seeking them. They know that we have eluded the destroyer sent after us, but not knowing the high speed of the yacht, prob-
ably think that we are much to the northward and eastward.

"O'Neil, you take the watch until twelve o'clock. The compass course set is S. by W. I don't trust Impey's influence over Captain Bailey; so watch the steering. If anything is sighted call us all at once," he said, turning to the boatswain's mate.

"Can we depend upon these men, Wells and Randall, in case of an attempt by Impey to regain the control of the yacht?" Phil added questioningly.

"They ain't very strong on Impey just now," the boatswain's mate replied. "I told them of his intention of getting asylum on the 'Alaska' and they felt sore to think he would have left them here to be pinched by the Japanese, which would have happened certain enough if it hadn't been that we broke away before they could stop us. All the same, sir, I didn't give either of them a gun, and I've collected all the loose firearms in the ship, and have 'em locked up tight."

"We'll watch them," Phil said decidedly. "There'll be lots they won't approve of before we are through with this adventure."
All three listened eagerly, for they saw in Phil's face that he was about to unfold his plan.

"There's a bay in the northwest coast of Paragua Island," he continued. "If we can pilot the Chinese ships safely in there and anchor them we can hold the attention of the world on us without their knowing where on earth we are.

"I don't know how long it will be necessary to keep the location of the ships secret," he added. "That will depend upon the persuasive powers of Ambassador Tillotson and Captain Rodgers, armed with the President's letter, which I feel sure is the key that will unlock the door of this misunderstanding."

Sydney regarded his companion admiringly.

"I guessed as much," he cried joyfully, "when you were interrupted by the sight of the steamer a short time ago. Phil, you are a schemer. It's the very thing; if it will only be possible," he added as the risks which must be taken first crossed his mind. He remembered this bay. It was large enough inside to anchor a fleet of battle-ships.

O'Neil quietly nodded his head—silent
eloquence which meant much from the sailor. Marley opened his mouth wider, as if by so doing the complications might more readily be heard and elucidated.

"Of course if we find the Japanese vessels are farther south than it seems safe for them to be, then we cannot run this risk, and must wire Manila," Phil explained earnestly.

The night slipped by quietly. The sea, stirred to life by the gentle trade wind, caused the yacht to roll easily but did not lessen her speed.

"In weather like this she's as fast as a Cunarder," Phil exclaimed to Sydney, as they prepared to go below to their cabins.

The next morning Phil was awakened by a loud knock on his door and O'Neil's excited face appeared at the threshold.

"They're somewhere about." The boatswain's mate imparted his information hurriedly. "I've been trying to tune down to them on the wireless all morning, since four o'clock, and I've just found 'em."

"Where are they—near?" Phil asked anxiously, jumping out of his bunk and hastily dressing.
“I can’t say to that, sir, but if they are only talking to each other they are not far away. If they are talking to some one at a distance, they may not be near us at all.” O’Neil closed the door after delivering himself of his message, to return to the wireless room, while Phil finished dressing and was soon on deck.

The air was balmy and warm, while myriads of flying fish could be seen sailing gracefully over the swelling sea in their mad haste to escape from this hurrying monster.

“Ah! there you are,” Sydney called from the bridge, spy-glass in hand.

Phil hurriedly joined him.

“There appears to be a big bank of smoke over there,” he exclaimed, pointing to the western horizon, “and a curl of smoke on our starboard bow.”

Phil took the glass and gazed eagerly for several minutes in both directions.

“That’s a scout,” he said confidently, “and if it is, the fleet is where the other smoke is. I wish I dared go over and investigate,” he added, “but we’d be between them and might fall into a trap.”

Sydney nodded his head.
“Look,” he exclaimed, catching Phil’s arm. “I can see a lot of columns of smoke there.”

Sure enough, the strangers were firing up their boilers. Small black balls of inky smoke seemed to roll up above the horizon to the westward and spread out in mushroom shape above, joined by tiny, hardly discernible stems.

“There are at least twenty-five ships there if there’s one,” Sydney cried, relieving Phil of the spy-glass and looking himself long and eagerly. “It’s pretty nearly the whole Japanese fleet.”

The curl of smoke ahead became more distinct as the yacht overhauled it through her greater speed.

“There’s more smoke on the port bow,” Captain Bailey announced nervously. He did not seem to be happy in the position of his vessel. “The two vessels seem to be drawing in toward each other, too,” he added, taking bearings over the deck compass. “It doesn’t look good to me.”

Phil’s pulse beat faster. He saw that the two vessels, undoubtedly scouts sent ahead of the main fleet, were not over eight miles apart. To go in between them meant that they would
"THERE ARE AT LEAST TWENTY-FIVE SHIPS"
pass with the yacht within range of their largest guns. A lucky shot through the engines or boilers of the "Sylvia" would spoil everything.

"I think it wiser to keep away, sir," O'Neil said respectfully but earnestly. The sailor was standing at the lad's elbow, his strong face showing marked anxiety. It was plain to see that the boatswain's mate believed that Phil was being too rash.

Phil once more carefully scanned the horizon ahead to make sure that there were no other than the two sail already sighted which he had made up his mind were scouts ahead of the main fleet.

"Bring the western vessel on the port bow, captain," he ordered quietly. "You're right, O'Neil, it's a dangerous game to be too rash. If those are real scouts, they're good for twenty-five knots, and can catch us easily. They have probably already seen our smoke."

"Why not turn to the eastward and run for it?" Sydney suggested anxiously.

Phil did not answer; he was examining the chart, laying the parallel rulers between the "Sylvia's" plotted position and Hongkong. He carried it to the compass card printed on
the chart and read the course—S. W. from their present position to Hongkong.

"Let her go S. W. magnetic, captain," he ordered calmly. "That will bring us up to the north cape of Formosa, and then we'll run down close to the China coast and get smoother water."

"What is this idiotic proceeding!" The exclamation in Impey's voice, now choked with passion and fear, made the midshipmen turn apprehensively. "You'll have us all killed. Turn her out to sea and let's get out of this as soon as possible," he cried in alarmed earnestness, throwing the timid Chinaman from the wheel and attempting to put the wheel hard over to run out to the eastward.

O'Neil's hand held the spokes rigidly, while he looked appealingly for orders to forcibly eject the intruder.

"Hold her steady, Captain Bailey," Phil ordered decidedly. "Mr. Impey," he added calmly, "I hope you won't make it necessary for us to use force to restrain you on your own yacht. My mind is made up, and even if we are to be captured, I'm determined to carry the plan out to the end."
"Slow to twelve knots, Captain Bailey," Phil commanded quietly. "We must endeavor to appear to be only what we resemble, an English gunboat bound for Hongkong. Our twenty-two knots speed might excite suspicion."

"It's suicidal!" Impey exclaimed. "Can't you see that if that is the Japanese fleet, it will send a ship to look us over, and when it comes near enough the deception must be discovered."

Impey's words struck both Sydney and O'Neil as being quite sensible. They looked to Phil to see the effect upon him of Impey's words, but the lad appeared outwardly unmoved.

"If we should turn away now," Phil said stolidly, "we would arouse their suspicion and would be chased, and if those vessels on the bow are twenty-five knot cruiser battleships or scout cruisers we would be soon overtaken. If we hold our course between the two scouts and the main body of the fleet, and allay suspicion by using our wireless, maybe the Japanese will not believe it necessary to pay us a closer visit."
Phil's companions were deep in thought, weighing the plausibility of the two plans, while Phil continued to gaze to the westward through the yacht captain's binoculars.

"That's a bank of fog over there, captain, isn't it?" he asked calmly, for he had taken this into account when he had altered the course.

Captain Bailey looked long and earnestly, finally nodding his head.

"The Formosa Channel is usually thick," he replied. "There's fog there not fifteen miles away, and thick, too."

"Mr. Perry's got the right dope," O'Neil exclaimed in admiration. "Shall I go down, sir, and call them up by wireless?" he asked Phil.

Phil nodded, handing the glasses to Sydney, who also studied the distant fog bank.

"Yes, O'Neil. Remember this time we are the British gunboat 'Barracouta' from a cruise bound for Hongkong."

One of the two scouts appeared to have stopped. Its masts and the top of its smokestacks lifted slowly above the horizon, while the other's smoke gradually dissolved and
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disappeared. The fleet was soon all in sight, as yet nearly fifteen miles away, but the lofty spars, smoke-stacks and turrets were visible in the field of the high power spy-glass.

The midshipmen's blood flowed quickly through their young veins as they looked upon this martial display. As the yacht's course crossed the track of the oncoming fleet, the grim battle-ships could be distinguished to be steaming in two long columns; the dots of black hovering near the fleet the lads knew could be nothing else but the guarding destroyers. The cruiser to the southward appeared motionless, apparently undecided what to do, while the other scout had kept its course and soon passed beyond the horizon.

Marley came hurriedly on deck with a paper which he placed in Phil's hand.

"What ship is that, and where are you bound?" he read in O'Neil's handwriting.

A few moments afterward another was brought forward by the sailor.

"Steer close to me; I wish to communicate," Phil read with sinking heart. He passed the paper to Sydney to read. Impey's alert eye
read the quick look of anxiety in the midshipmen's faces.

"Your blood's on your own heads," he cried out angrily, and then suddenly left the deck. Into his thoughts had come a plan that might save his precious neck.

The lads were terribly cast down by this half-expected order from the Japanese scout. Phil had hoped that his ruse would avail and that the scout would be satisfied after a survey at long range that the stranger was only a cruising British gunboat, and would then go on its way to the southward. The Japanese, even if they had heard of the escape of the yacht, would hardly expect that it could have steamed to such a distance south in such a short time.

Then an unpleasant thought upset all this reasoning. The destroyer which had chased and caught them only to be eluded in the fog must have discovered that the "Sylvia's" speed was greater than that of an ordinary yacht. At what distance would their disguise be discovered and the true character of the vessel be seen?

After Impey had left the bridge he went at
once to his cabin and locked the door; then
taking a key from a drawer in his desk, he
unlocked another door leading into the next
stateroom, and entered.

“Lieutenant,” he whispered, thoroughly
frightened at the contemplation of what
would become of him if he were captured,
“the yacht is certain to fall into the hands
of your fleet. It is now in sight, and a
scout or armored cruiser has ordered us to
approach. She will soon discover our real
identity.”

Takishima’s dejected countenance broke into
a smile of great relief, but Impey was too im-
patient to allow him to dwell long upon this
happy ending to his keen disappointment and
failure.

“Your fleet cannot obtain the Chinese
ships! That was possible only by intercept-
ing them before they arrived at Singapore.
The Chinese admiral’s orders were to wait at
Singapore, and under no circumstances to
issue forth without an order from the Wai-
Wu-Pu. Your admiral cannot seize the ships
in a neutral British port. England would
not allow it.”
Takishima gazed earnestly at the anxious man. He saw that he was in an agony of terror.

"If you will promise to allow me to land safely at Singapore," Impey continued, "I will guarantee that the Chinese ships receive orders to sail. The Japanese fleet can then intercept the squadron after it has passed through the Singapore Straits into the China Sea."

"And if I do not make this promise," Takishima asked eagerly, "the Chinese ships will remain at anchor in Singapore?"

"The Chinese squadron is due in Singapore in three days," Impey explained anxiously. "To-day is the 16th; that will be the 19th. It is nearly fourteen hundred miles. Your fleet will need over four days to arrive there. Meanwhile the destination of the Japanese fleet must become known, and America will order her fleet in Manila Bay to proceed to Singapore. Once there, the exchange can be made even in a neutral port, because China has given her consent, which she refused to give to Japan."

Takishima was puzzled. Would Captain
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Inaba have set forth with so little chance of success?

"I cannot make a promise until I am sure you will be true to your word," the lieutenant said coldly. "How may we be sure that you can persuade the Chinese admiral to sail?"

"I have prepared myself for just such an emergency," Impey replied, proud of his duplicity even in his anxiety over his predicament. He drew out from his inner pocket a large envelope, a duplicate of the one he had given Phil. "Here is an order from the Wai-Wu-Pu to the Chinese admiral to turn his ships over to the Japanese fleet."

Takishima stretched out his hand eagerly, for he recognized distinctly the great yellow seal of the Dragon Kingdom, but Impey backed away, the document clutched tightly in his hand.

"Your promise first; the word of a Samurai," he cried earnestly, "and the paper is yours."

Before Takishima could reply a shiver passed through the frail vessel, and both men saw at once that the engines, which had been
only turning over slowly, had suddenly been set to full speed. Impey, forgetting the promise he had been so anxious to obtain from the Japanese naval officer, suddenly hastened to the deck, and gazed about him. His eyes encountered a wall of fog into which the yacht had entered. Off on the port bow he heard a deep throated whistle, apparently from the scout cruiser. His pulse beat high at this sudden and joyful deliverance. He forgot the young Japanese and the duplicate letter to the Chinese admiral.
CHAPTER XXII

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT

Phil and Sydney were on deck early in the morning. The fog had continued during the afternoon and night, and Captain Bailey had skilfully shaped the "Sylvia's" course through the Formosa Channel. The night had been uneventful; no vessel had been sighted. The Americans continued their watches on deck, still distrusting a conspiracy between Impey and his friends to get control of the yacht.

But one incident had marred the happiness of their miraculous escape from the Japanese scouts. Takishima had been found in the wireless room by O'Neil and Marley, attempting to wreck the plant, and before he had been discovered and marched back docilely to his stateroom, he had managed to put the wireless of the yacht temporarily out of commission. With the able assistance of Randall, who was luckily a skilful electrician and whose aid was enthusiastically given, the wireless
gear would soon again be in working order. The avenue of escape from Takishima's cabin through Impey's was thereafter sealed by removing Impey to a cabin at the other end of the saloon.

"We're now off Hongkong," Phil exclaimed as he saw the penciled position on the chart. "In two days we shall be nearing Singapore, and then for the success or failure of our plans."

Sydney's face beamed with pleasure, but a cloud crossed it as he thought of poor, dejected, disappointed Takishima in his cabin below.

"I wish we might win Taki over," he said charitably. "He takes defeat so bitterly."

Phil remained silently thoughtful.

"I believe I see the way," he replied after a lapse of a few minutes. "When he sees that his fleet has failed and that there is no chance for our seizure, then he may be more amenable to common sense. The Japanese fighting class represented now in the army and navy, the Samurai of old, have a very lofty sense of honor. Taki would without a personal thought sink or blow up this vessel if he believed by so doing he could aid his
government in its plans. That is why it was necessary to constrain him. If we had not discovered him in the wireless room yesterday just after the fog shut down, the thing upon which our plan principally depends would have been wrecked beyond repair; for during only a few minutes his destructive work was marvelous, and he knew the most important things to destroy. Fortunately there were spare parts in the storeroom and Randall, who seems to be an all around handy man, is doing wonders to repair the damage. Hereafter Taki must be watched more closely.

"From now on we must keep a watch on Impey, too," Phil continued, a happy smile on his face. "He asked me only a moment ago if I thought we could call up Manila yet. He counts on our wirelessing the admiral and expects he will sail at once to an appointed rendezvous, and that we will then intercept the Chinese ships and lead them to this rendezvous. He asked me if that was not my plan. When he knows our real intention he will be mad enough to attempt anything."

"And what did you say?" Sydney asked, catching Phil's joyful spirit.
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"I said how clever he was to have guessed it; and then added I hoped we should have the wireless working very soon."

The day passed pleasantly enough on board the yacht; the fog had cleared away, eaten up by the sun, long before noon. A few curls of smoke had been sighted, but no vessel crossed their track close enough to show even the top of its funnel.

O'Neil and Marley had formed a strong liking for Randall, who had shown himself willing to atone for past misdeeds.

"You see, O'Neil," he had exclaimed in the strictest confidence while they were both working to repair the damage caused by Taki-shima's few minutes of liberty, "when a fellow gets down on his luck in a foreign country, his sense of right and wrong suffers a blight. He can't recognize the difference until it's pointed out to him. I thought it was fine to vilify my country and country-men, baiting the Japanese bull, as it were. I got good pay for it, and it all went home to my mother." Here he lowered his voice, and a wistful look came into his eyes. "She didn't know that the money was tainted, and be-
sides,” he added softly, “there wasn’t any money coming from anywhere else, and she was very much in need of it.”

O’Neil put out a strong, honest hand and placed it on Randall’s shoulder.

“It ain’t for the likes of me to blame you, son,” he said, an imperceptible trace of moisture in his eye that made him wink. “I don’t say you didn’t do wrong, for you did, and you knew it, but when a man is sorry and honestly says so, and besides has a lonely mother to take care of, then I’m for saying no more about it.”

Randall derived no small comfort from the sailor’s words.

“By the way,” the boatswain’s mate suddenly asked, “where’s that Filipino who nearly caused a free fight in the theatre?”

Randall grinned.

“Turned up missing the night we sailed,” he replied. “I think he swam ashore. There was some talk of going to Manila, and I believe he’s wanted there by the government for some crime, an outlaw probably; he looks the part.”

“Who instigated the theatre row?” O’Neil asked.
"Our chief, Impey. That man can do anything he tries to do," Randall began, when O’Neill interrupted.

"Anything deceitful and underhanded, you mean," the sailor exclaimed, with fire in his eyes. "I’d give a month’s pay to be allowed to throttle him."

"There, that’s finished," Randall exclaimed as he rose from the tuning device. He put on the head-gear and listened earnestly, moving the pointer back and forward in an endeavor to detect something which would tell him that the receiving circuit was complete. He pushed the buzzer with his finger and remained silent for several minutes afterward. "Just a faint tinkle," he said finally. "Some one’s talking in Hongkong, probably, but it’s too faint to read."

O’Neill went to report that all was in shape, while Randall locked up the room and put the key in his pocket.

The "Sylvia" was now near the latitude of Manila, and the lads and O’Neill could hardly resist the temptation to call up the admiral’s ship. Impey hung about them all evening, frequently asking them when they
intended giving the admiral a report on the condition of affairs, for at midnight Manila would be only two hundred and fifty miles to the eastward, well within the sending range of the "Sylvia's" wireless. But the lads would not enlighten him, and at last he became desperate.

"I might as well inform you now as any time," Phil exclaimed after many appeals, "that I am not going to tell the admiral until the Chinese squadron is anchored where neither nation can find it."

Impey could not believe his ears. Had the lad gone mad? What was his meaning?

"The Chinese squadron," Phil added, "is going to sink metaphorically into the earth until all misunderstandings are over, and then like the Phoenix it will rise from its ashes and go to China, where it belongs."

"But China doesn't want it. She fears it on account of the internal disorders, and is anxious to be rid of the ships and their cost," Impey exclaimed.

"Well, she'll have to keep it until she can find some one anxious to buy," Phil replied, tantalizingly calm despite the nervous irrita-
bility of his listener. "The United States doesn't really want it, and Japan doesn't, either; so why force a sale on a nation that is unwilling to buy?"

Impey threw up his hands in angry disgust. "Do you mean that you have gone back on your compact with me?" he cried in much heat. "After taking my yacht, offered you for this purpose?"

"Mr. Impey," Phil answered calmly, "I have made you no promise. There is no agreement between you and me; there could be none. You offered the yacht; you outlined a plan. I listened only. On the other hand," he added, his voice rising in his earnestness, "you promised that you would not interfere with my plans, and you have broken your word. Remember there is a key to your cabin, and as I said before, Marley can look out for two prisoners as readily as one."

The spy saw that it would only do himself harm to follow further his quarrel with Phil. The lad was obdurate. Impey saw all his work in Japan, stretching over a year, going for naught. It was bitter to contemplate the result, but there seemed no visible relief.
The two days following were entirely uneventful. As Singapore was approached a feeling of dread came over both lads. Suppose, after all, the Chinese squadron should evade them. The "Sylvia" had been unsuccessful in its attempts to talk with them by wireless.

"If their wireless gear is working, they won't answer," O'Neil told Phil the evening of the fifth day out, while they were approaching Singapore Straits.

It was just breaking day when the white clustered buildings of the city of Singapore loomed up out of the tropical darkness. As day slowly drew on, the vast shipping in the harbor took shape. The lads and O'Neil eagerly watched while the harbor, like a bud opening to the sun, became slowly revealed to their eager eyes.

"There's not a man-of-war there!" Phil exclaimed in keen disappointment. "What had we best do—wait here, or intercept them farther down the Straits of Malacca?"

"Excuse me, sir, for making a suggestion," O'Neil said quietly in Phil's ear. "I think Mr. Impey would be safer locked up. I don't"
like his actions. He approached both Randall and Wells in a roundabout way to sound them out if they'd help him, and he's been very thick with the dago engineer. It ain't hard to get a hot bearing on these turbines, I hear. Stop the oil flow and it burns up in five minutes."

Phil did not hesitate in his decision a moment. He had been awaiting only a corroboration of his own belief as to what should be done with Impey. A disablement at this time would be disastrous. The Chinese squadron might be delayed some days, and meanwhile Japan's port scouts might appear at any time. Phil had more than feared that they might already be on the scene, awaiting in the straits.

"Will you attend to it, O'Neil," Phil said at once, "and look into the engineer's intentions, too?"

Phil held O'Neil in high regard for his ability in handling men. He would soon find out if the engineer were worthy of trust, and if not, O'Neil had a way of intimidation that seemed to take with the rascals he encountered.
The "Sylvia" sped by Singapore and out into the Straits of Malacca. The Americans were eating their noon meal when the joyful news was received that the Chinese squadron was in sight ahead.

The midshipmen, as they stood on the bridge of the yacht, gazing in admiration at these mighty fortresses with their small watchdog destroyers hovering solicitously near, could not repress a thrill of wonder and relief; wonder at their majesty and power, and relief that this priceless prize was not to be the cause of a useless struggle at arms by two friendly nations.

The "Sylvia" approached the Chinese squadron at an incredible speed, and it was only a short time after the Americans had reached the deck before the yacht had gone by the squadron whose dragon flags waved proudly in the bright tropical sunshine, and had turned and glided up to the side of the leading ship.

Signals by the international code had been exchanged, and the Chinese flag-ships had stopped to communicate with the yacht.

A boat was quickly lowered from the
A UNITED STATES MIDSHIPMAN

"Sylvia" and lay manned at the gangway.

Phil, before entering the boat, went to Taki-
shima's cabin. He told the crestfallen lieuten-
ant his entire plan and appealed to his fair-
ness to join him and Sydney in this humane
enterprise. But Takishima remained un-
shaken.

"Perry," he exclaimed earnestly, "my
father is a Samurai, and if he had failed as I
have, he would have committed hara-kiri ere
this; but the modern spirit has made me a
coward. Three times I have taken my short
dagger to end my worthless life, but each time
I have tricked myself into believing that yet I
might serve my Emperor. Now all hope is
over."

Phil showed a grave face as he heard these
solemn words, and before Takishima could
read his intentions had snatched up the sharp
dirk from the bunk.

"You must leave me my honor," his old
classmate cried, reaching out appealingly for
his dagger, which Phil had quickly passed to
the faithful Marley outside.

Phil was in a fever of dread lest the super-
sensitive Japanese should put an end to his life, and asked O'Neil to guard him, and then entering the waiting boat he, Sydney and Impey were soon on their way to visit Admiral Ting, the Chinese commander of the squadron. Impey had been released and taken along, for Phil believed that there might be some question raised in regard to the authenticity of the letter from the Wai-Wu-Pu.

They were cordially received at the gangway of the flag-ship by Admiral Ting himself, and escorted to his cabin.

Phil promptly handed him the letter from the Wai-Wu-Pu and as he read in silence, the midshipmen were prepared to see a look of surprised annoyance on his face.

"I knew when we sailed from Suez that my ships were for sale," he said bitterly, raising his eyes from the letter, "and if China cannot retain these magnificent ships, you will believe me sincere when I say that I am glad that America will own them." Admiral Ting spoke in perfect English. "There seems nothing for me to do but obey this order. It is from the highest authority of my country and commands me to place myself immediately upon its
receipt under the protection of the Americans."

Impey's presence had been quite overlooked by the midshipmen. The document was not challenged. There had been therefore no reason to have brought him. How much simpler and certainly with less annoyance if he had been sent to the "Alaska" as he had desired. Now the midshipmen were to seriously regret their blunder.

"Admiral Ting, will you also read this letter?" Impey said, his voice triumphant, while he glared at the discomfited lads, for they at once saw the documents were identical in appearance.

Admiral Ting received the second letter and the surprise the lads had looked for now was only too evident in his face as he read its contents.

"What does this mean? This commands me to place myself under the protection of the Japanese," he exclaimed, much mystified.

The midshipmen were dumbfounded. A silence had fallen and each looked to the other for an explanation, but none was forthcoming.

"I have another letter," Phil said in a hope-
less voice. "Our ambassador gave it to me before we sailed from Japan. It's from your ambassador there."

Admiral Ting broke the seal and read.

"But this cannot be called an order," he said quietly. "It is only advice from an old and trusted friend. He advises me to put myself under the protection of the American fleet in Manila until Japan and the United States can adjust their differences. Unhappily my country is now harassed by a threatened civil war, and the Peking government fears that those opposing the dynasty may seize my ships. They little know our loyalty," he added with tears in his eyes. "They do not trust us."

Phil felt the success of his plans was fast slipping away. Impey appeared jubilant.

"That is what I would advise, admiral," Impey said in an oily voice. "The American admiral will be glad to protect you."

Phil was hot and cold in turns. To go now to Manila with the ships might mean war, and also there was strong probability of their falling into the hands of the Japanese fleet on the way.
CHAPTER XXIII

BY WIRELESS

Phil gazed at Sydney for an inspiration. How could he persuade this clever Chinaman? For he read his intelligence in his face. Why not confide to him his entire plan? The possibility of keeping these ships, of which the lad saw he was proud to the point of conceit, might be a potent factor.

"As I have here two conflicting letters from the Wai-Wu-Pu," Admiral Ting said, after a painful silence, "my duty is quite plain. I must use my own discretion."

"Admiral Ting," Phil exclaimed suddenly, finding his voice at last, "if you will hear my plan, I can save your ships for China and defeat the aims of this scheming rascal." Phil's face was flushed as he pointed an accusing finger at Impey. "There is a harbor on the coast of Paragua in the Philippine Islands. The entrance is narrow, but with sufficient water for a battle-ship, and inside, your ships can anchor securely and be invisible from the
outside.” The lad’s voice was eager and earnest and made a visible impression on the Chinaman.

“I know the channel, having been there on a small gunboat and made a survey of the bay; I can pilot you in. There we can make terms with the world by wireless without either of the disputing countries discovering our whereabouts.”

“Your Excellency,” Impey exclaimed with a harsh laugh, “you must see that this is the talk of a romantic boy. It is unlikely that there is any such place, and from my knowledge of the coast of Paragua Island, I would advise you not to risk your ships. It is a rocky and dangerous coast, and the charts are worse than useless.”

Phil would have answered Impey’s sally by a denial, but Admiral Ting’s answer made it unnecessary.

“Mr. Perry, I will follow you,” he said quietly, rising from his chair and escorting them to the gangway, where their boat was waiting. “If we are successful you will have won the thanks of three nations and the applause of the civilized world.”
"And the dislike of a denationalized rascal," Phil added with joy in his voice and a triumphant glance at the discomfited Impey as they passed down the gangway into the waiting boat.

With the "Sylvia" leading, the Chinese squadron steamed through the Singapore Straits and out into the China Sea. All the world soon knew that the coveted squadron had passed the city of Singapore, for it was cabled from there to every country. Then it disappeared as completely as if it had been swallowed up by the sea; days passed, and no news came of its arrival in any port.

It was the great mystery of the hour. The newspapers strained every effort and spared no expense to discover its whereabouts but without success.

The "Sylvia" had steered northwest, heading directly for the unknown bay on the coast of the Island of Paragua. A close watch was kept both during the day and night for the smoke of other vessels, but the course taken was so far out of the regular track of steamers plying between ports in the Orient that luckily none were sighted. The mid-
shipmen desired that no eye should discover the position and destination of the squadron for fear that it would inform the world and cause searching war-ships to be sent to bring them back to civilization.

On the third day, after leaving Singapore, the high, densely-wooded coast of Paragua Island loomed before them, and before sunset the entire Chinese squadron had been piloted to a safe anchorage inside Malampaya Sound. Once inside, as Phil had said, the ships were as if at anchor in an inland lake. The sea was not visible and there were no signs of life ashore. The beach of the bay was lined with dense and impenetrable mangrove bushes, and back of that was the primeval forest.

"We are as completely cut off from the outside world as if we had landed on the planet Mars," Phil exclaimed gleefully as he and Sydney returned from the Chinese flagship to the yacht. "Now we must possess our souls in patience; it would not do to communicate yet."

Phil read the inquiry in Sydney's face, so he continued to explain.

"We were seen passing Singapore three
days ago, and if we used our wireless now to let the world know we are still on the earth, those with an analytical mind could figure out just how far from Singapore we must have come, and then a search might prove disastrous to our plans. The situation is one our rich newspapers would delight to unravel; they would spare no expense to find us by chartering if need be every steamship in the Orient and sending them out to hunt us down."

Sydney nodded in ready understanding of the soundness of his friend’s reasoning.

The wireless apparatus of the Chinese ships, by Admiral Ting’s orders, had been completely dismantled to be sure that no accident could mar the midshipmen’s plans. Phil had feared that some enemy might exist among the ships who could during the watches of the night send out to the many listening stations bordering the China Sea, the much sought intelligence as to the location of the Chinese squadron.

The wireless of the “Sylvia”-alone was in working order, and the two sailormen and the midshipmen took turns both by day and
night in the little wireless room. Every message heard through the telephone receiver was written down and read.

From these mysterious messages grasped from the boundless air the lads heard of the consternation throughout the world. "Where is the Chinese squadron?" was on every lip. They learned that the Japanese fleet had arrived at Singapore, where the ships had coaled from their colliers, and after a few days of indecision had sailed again, steering to the northward.

The United States fleet had remained quietly at anchor in Manila Bay.

Takishima, during these long days of waiting, had been allowed his freedom, and as the days passed, the sadness slowly gave way to cheerfulness and amusement at the ludicrous situation. Impey, with all his villainy, had openly congratulated the midshipmen upon their masterful control of the situation.

"It's worth losing to have witnessed it," he exclaimed as he read the messages faithfully recorded by the sailormen in the wireless room. Over a week dragged slowly by, and the anxious wait told on the midshipmen.
The Chinese admiral came on board the yacht daily, and the more the lads came to know him the more they respected and liked him. He was the type of the Oriental that was fast being born out of that kingdom of antiquity, unfettered by the prejudices of conservatism. A new and enlightened China had been his purpose.

"Here's what we've been waiting for," O'Neil called out at last from the wireless room, his voice joyful and triumphant, while Phil met the boatswain's mate in the salon waving a paper on which had been roughly penciled a message just intercepted.

"Manila was sending it to our admiral; he is somewhere in the southern islands of the Philippines," the sailor exclaimed, handing Phil the paper. "He's looking for us, I guess," he added with a grin.

The lad received it, his hand trembling with excitement, and read aloud the words with a fast beating heart.

"The United States and Japan have concluded a treaty of better understanding over affairs in the Far East. Each has disclaimed
any intention of acquiring the lost Chinese squadron."

The paper fluttered from Phil's hand to the deck and a faintness suddenly came over him. But on his young face a great joy was written as he aroused himself and actually hugged the astonished O'Neil.

Sydney and Marley stood by, their faces wreathed in happy smiles.

"Signal this to the Chinese admiral at once, Syd," Phil cried joyfully, "and come on, O'Neil; we'll call up our admiral and solve the mystery of the Chinese squadron."

Two days afterward the new Chinese navy, with their dragon banners fluttering in the breeze, steamed toward their own country. Admiral Ting wrung the midshipmen's hands warmly in parting, and heaped upon them many handsome gifts from artistic China, declaring that his Emperor would decorate them with the "Order of the Dragon" for their great service to the Dragon Kingdom.

It was with hearts full of joy that they turned the bow of the "Sylvia" northward with Yokohama as their destination. Impey and his co-conspirators had been sent away on
the Chinese ships. Randall and Wells were truly penitent, and told O'Neil that hereafter they would live honest lives. Impey was game to the last, only remarking as he was bidden a cold good-bye by the Americans that "one couldn't always win."

Poor, disconsolate Takishima! He alone was the one thorn in the midshipmen's happiness.

On the way north the lads sent a long cipher message to the "Alaska," telling of Takishima's loyalty in his Emperor's cause. The message was to Captain Inaba as the friend of all concerned.

The following morning Phil and Sydney entered Takishima's cabin. The lieutenant was sitting with his head in his hands, while on his face was an expression of great sadness.

"Here's a message for you, Taki," Phil said, his voice trembling with joy.

Takishima took the paper from Phil's hand and cast his eyes listlessly over the first line. Then his face relaxed and he drew himself up smartly, reading now quickly and eagerly the words before him.
IN JAPAN

"To Lieutenant Takishima,
"via U. S. S. 'Alaska.'

"His Majesty our Emperor has commanded me to inform you that your zeal, patriotism and good judgment under trying circumstances, which have come to his august notice, have caused him to honor you with the 'Order of the Rising Sun of the First Class' and appoint you one of His Majesty's naval aides. I take pleasure in congratulating you on your high good fortune.

"Kamikura,
"Minister of Marine."

Then for several minutes after he had finished, his head remained sunk on his breast and his eyes on the floor. Phil had laid his hand affectionately on his shoulder, while in his eyes was a slight trace of manly tears. Takishima turned and both lads saw the joy in his face.

"I don't deserve it," he said humbly, "and I owe His Majesty's clemency to you, I feel sure."

"To your own high sense of honor and patriotism to your Emperor," Phil answered earnestly.

It was fortunate that the day after the
“Sylvia’s” arrival in Yokohama, the “Alaska” was to return to Manila to rejoin the fleet, which was under orders to return to the United States. If the “Alaska” had stayed longer it is sure that the midshipmen’s heads would have been completely turned by the many honors heaped upon them.

On the night before sailing there was given a large dinner by Admiral Kamikura, the memory of which remained long in Phil’s mind.

His neighbors at the table were Helen and Takishima, and the atmosphere was electric with good fellowship. No cloud marred the clear sky of understanding.

After the dinner there was a small party collected at the embassy to bid farewell to the ambassador and his daughter, and to them the midshipmen told the full story of the cruise of the “Sylvia.”

“It wasn’t until the Japanese fleet had arrived in Singapore and reported no trace of the Chinese squadron that we were sure that you had been successful,” Captain Rodgers explained after Phil had recounted the adventure.
IN JAPAN

"And then in five days more, and meanwhile nothing had been heard from the 'phantom fleet,' as it was called in the American newspapers," he continued, "we heard that the Japanese fleet had returned to Japan."

"Then the Minister of Marine came to me," the ambassador took up the thread of the story where Captain Rodgers had left off, "and asked if Captain Rodgers and I still desired the audience with the Emperor.

"I assured him above all things it was desired, and the next day the audience was an accomplished fact and the new treaty the outcome."

The ambassador beamed down upon the attentive midshipmen.

"It's a great pity our government will not allow our officials to accept foreign orders," he added. "I am sure if it did, the 'Alaska' would sail away from Japan loaded down with them."

O'Neil and Bill Marley had returned to the armored cruiser but had been allowed to return to Tokyo to attend a dinner given to O'Neil by his old friend "Billy" Williams.
The crowds that gathered about the little restaurant to catch a glimpse of the two noted sailors was one of the biggest advertisements "Billy" Williams ever had.

But all things must have an end, and the happy party at the ambassador's could be no exception. Good-byes were said and the carriages were waiting.

Phil found himself alone with Helen only for the fraction of a minute, but in that time among other favors he had been given a certain gold locket that he valued more than any foreign decoration that might have been bestowed upon him.

Takashima and Captain Inaba met the party at the railroad station and escorted them to a special train, and as they pulled out from the long platform the midshipmen's last glimpse was of their two friends, hats in hand above their heads, crying loudly "Banzai"—ten thousand years of happiness!

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