

Duffield J. W.

The Radio Boys Under the Sea: or, The Hunt for Sunken Treasure



J. Duffield

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Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	8
CHAPTER III	11
CHAPTER IV	14
CHAPTER V	17
CHAPTER VI	19
CHAPTER VII	21
CHAPTER VIII	24
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	26

The Radio Boys Under the Sea; or, The Hunt for Sunken Treasure

CHAPTER I A DARING LEAP

Down the road came plunging a runaway horse, his eyes blazing and his mouth flecked with foam.

In the light buggy that rocked and bounced behind him, threatening at any moment to overturn, stood a young man, sawing at the reins with all his strength. But though he was stalwart and vigorous, his strength availed nothing against the power of the maddened brute.

The man's eyes glanced from side to side, as though he were planning to jump. But at the fearful rate at which he was going, a leap would almost certainly have meant broken bones or a broken neck. He seemed to abandon the thought, and put the last remnant of his overtaxed strength in one more frantic tug at the reins.

A little way up the road, coming in his direction, were three young men. They had evidently been on a fishing excursion, as was attested by their rods and a big string of finny trophies. They were laughing and chaffing each other, and evidently on the best of terms with themselves and with life.

The thunder of approaching hoofs made itself heard, and they looked at each other questioningly.

"That fellow seems to be in a hurry," remarked Phil Strong.

"He sure does," returned Dick Weston. "Mazeppa or Paul Revere had nothing on him."

"Just burning up the road and breaking all speed laws," commented Tom Hadley, the third of the trio.

They turned a bend in the road just then, and broke into exclamations of alarm, as they saw the horse tearing toward them.

"The man will be killed," shouted Tom, as they instinctively jumped to the side of the road, which at this point was comparatively narrow, bordered on one side by trees and on the other by underbrush, back of which a little brook purred along.

On came the frenzied brute, yielding not a particle to the strain on the reins.

Just as he came within ten feet of the group, Phil stiffened himself for a spring. The next instant he had launched himself in the air at the horse's bridle. His aim was good, and his right hand clenched the leather while his left gripped the mane.

He had leaped in the direction the horse was going, and this to some extent lessened the force of the shock. All the same it was terrific, and his muscles strained taut until it seemed as though they would burst. He held on however with a grip of iron, swinging himself up so as to escape the lashing hoofs and at the same time making the animal bear his whole weight.

The horse plunged wildly, shaking his head to get rid of his burden, but Phil held on with grim determination. His left hand slid from the mane down over the horse's nostrils which he compressed with all his strength.

Choking for breath the panic stricken animal reared and threw himself to one side, at the same time overturning the buggy. The driver was thrown out, striking on his head, while the horse was brought to his knees.

All this had happened in a few seconds. Paralyzed for a moment by the lightning quickness of Phil's action, Dick and Tom had quickly grasped the situation and rushed to his aid. Scarcely had the horse gone down than both were at the side of their comrade, helping him to hold down the frightened animal, who was making desperate efforts to get his feet.

They held him long enough for him to know that he had met his masters. Then they hastily unbuckled his harness and as the horse scrambled to his feet, Tom led him to a tree and tied him fast, while Phil and Dick hurried to the side of the injured driver, who still lay there limp and unconscious.

They were experts at first aid, and were greatly relieved as they ran their hands over him to find that no bones were broken. Blood was flowing from a gash in his head and running down over his face.

"Let's get him to the brook and bathe his head and face," suggested Phil, who was still panting from the effects of his tussle.

"Lucky if his skull isn't fractured," remarked Dick, as he lent a hand, seconded by Tom, who had by this time secured the horse and come to the help of his comrades.

Together they lifted the man and bore him through the underbrush to the bank of the brook. There they laid him down, and while one of them rubbed the wrists and hands, the others washed his head and face and dashed cold water on him in copious quantities. Phil carefully washed out the gash on the head into which the dust and grit of the road had been rubbed, and stripping enough linen from the sleeve of his shirt to make a bandage, carefully bound up the wound.

Before long the result of their administrations became apparent. There was a fluttering of the eyelids, and soon the man opened his eyes and looked wonderingly around. His glance fell on the boys, who were watching him anxiously.

He tried to speak, but his voice was thick and the words came with difficulty. Phil stopped him with a reassuring gesture.

"Don't try to talk yet, old man," he said. "You've had a nasty tumble but there are no bones broken and you'll be all right when you've rested up a little. Just take it easy for a few minutes and give your head a chance to clear."

The injured man relaxed and lay for a little while with his eyes closed, collecting his strength. And now for the first time the boys had a chance to take a good look at him.

He was a tall muscular man of athletic build, lean as a greyhound and with not an ounce of superfluous flesh upon him. His face was bronzed as that of an Indian and spoke of a life spent largely in the open. There was a smartness in the set of his shoulders that suggested military training. His nose was straight and his jaw firm. There were quizzical lines about his mouth that indicated the possession of a sense of humor. Altogether it was a likable face, and the boys as they watched him mentally classed him as a "regular fellow."

This impression was deepened when the man again opened his eyes. They were no longer clouded but clear and penetrating, eyes that looked directly at one, eyes that indicated a frank and straightforward character.

"I guess I've about got this thing straight now," the man remarked with a faint smile, as he raised himself on one elbow. "For a little while my head was buzzing like a flywheel. But I remember now trying to hold the horse in and one of you young fellows flinging yourself at the brute's head."

His eyes traveled over the boys and rested on Phil.

"You're the one that did it," he said.

"Oh," replied Phil deprecatingly, "I just happened to be the nearest when the horse came tearing along."

“It was a mighty plucky thing to do, I’ll tell the world,” said the stranger with gratitude and admiration in his voice. “There isn’t one fellow in a thousand that would have taken the chance. It was a gamble with death, all right. I can’t thank you enough. You probably saved my life.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” replied Phil, throwing the matter off lightly. “You might have stopped him yourself after a while. He couldn’t have run on forever. But how are you feeling now? Arms and legs all right?”

“Sore as the mischief but nothing broken,” was the reply, as he moved them about. “I see my head was cut,” he went on, as he raised his hand to the bandage.

“Rather deep cut,” remarked Dick, “but nothing to worry about as long as the skull wasn’t fractured.”

“Oh, that skull has had many a hard knock in its time,” the man said with a smile. “I guess it was pretty thick to begin with and it’s been toughened by what’s happened to it since.”

He raised himself to a sitting position and the boys helped to settle him comfortably with his back to a tree.

“I’m afraid I’m taking up your time and interfering with your plans,” he said apologetically, as he glanced from one to the other.

“Not a bit of it,” Phil hastened to reassure him. “We’d just been on a fishing trip and were on our way home. We’ve got all the time there is, and we’re going to stick around until we see you safe to your home or hotel or wherever it is you want to go.”

“That’s mighty good of you,” said the stranger gratefully. “I was figuring on staying at Castleton over night.”

“That’s where we hail from,” replied Phil, “and as soon as you’ve rested a bit more we’ll harness up the horse and drive you over, I guess he’s had his fill of running away.”

“The old pirate was sure full of ambition,” laughed Tom. “He tore along – ”

He stopped suddenly, for at the word “pirate” the stranger had straightened up like a flash and clapped his hand convulsively to his breast.

CHAPTER II

BY LAND AND SEA

The sudden movement of the stranger rather startled the boys and piqued their curiosity. They looked at him and at each other inquiringly.

The man thrust his hand in the breast pocket of his coat and felt for something. That he had found it was evident from the look of profound relief that came into his face.

"Think you had lost your pocketbook in your tumble?" asked Phil with a smile.

"It wasn't money I was thinking of," was the reply. "Something that one of you said reminded me of some valuable papers that I had stowed away and that I wouldn't lose for a good deal. But they're just where I put them.

"My introduction to you young fellows was rather sudden," he went on, with a grin that displayed two rows of strong even teeth, "and this is about the first chance I've had to tell you what my name is and where I hail from. My name's Jack Benton, and I am, or was up to about three weeks ago, a member of the United States Marine Corps."

The boys acknowledged the introduction and gave him their names in return.

"So you're a Marine," remarked Phil with great interest. "That's a branch of the service that has always appealed to me more than any other. There's lots of adventure and you go everywhere and see everything."

"That's putting it pretty strong," laughed Benton, "but you're not so far out of the way at that. I've been in the service for about eight years, and there's scarcely a port of the world that I haven't been in at some time or other. I've seen all sorts of people and been mixed up in all kinds of adventures. There's plenty of hard work, but take it from me there's very little monotony in the life of a marine. The soldiers' work is on the land. The sailors' is on the sea. But the marines do their work on both land and sea."

"The Marine Corps did great work in the war," said Tom admiringly.

"They weren't so bad," replied Benton modestly. "People say they did pretty good work at Chateau-Thierry, and they weren't exactly absent when Belleau Wood was swept clear of the enemy. But then all our American boys did well in every branch of the service. Since the war things haven't been quite so lively with the marines, though we haven't had much chance to get rusty down in San Domingo. That's where I've been for the last two years, and it was there that my term of service expired about three weeks ago. It's only about a week since I landed in New York."

"You seem so fond of the service that after a little vacation I suppose you'll re-enlist," observed Dick.

Benton hesitated, and almost unconsciously his hand again rested on his breast pocket.

"I may and I may not," he said slowly and with a touch of embarrassment. "The service, as I said, is full of adventure, and adventure is the breath of life to me. But just at present I'm planning an adventure on my own hook, the biggest one of my life – so big in fact that if I told you about it you might think I was crazy. I – I –"

And while with the keenest interest they stand listening for the expected disclosure, it may be well for the benefit of those who have not read the preceding volumes of this series to tell more fully who the boys were and what had been their adventures up to the time this story opens.

Phil Strong was the son of the leading physician in Castleton, a thriving manufacturing town in the Middle West. Phil had been born and brought up there, and was a general favorite, especially with the young fellows of his own age. He was now in his nineteenth year, stalwart, six feet tall and as straight as an arrow, He was of fair complexion, brown-haired, and had merry blue eyes that could gleam with laughter or grow hard and cold as steel at anything or anyone that aroused

his indignation. He was a leader in athletic sports and a tower of strength on his baseball nine and football eleven. He was straightforward, fearless and truthful, a steadfast friend and a formidable enemy.

Dick Weston, his closest friend, was the son of the cashier of the Castleton bank. He was of about the same age as Phil, and from their earliest boyhood they had been the closest of chums. Dick was impulsive and oftener needed the brake than the spur. He had less initiative than Phil, but could always be depended on to back his friend to the limit. In any crisis requiring quick thinking, Phil acted like lightning, but Dick was usually a pretty close second.

Tom Hadley hailed from Chicago, which he believed to be the only town on earth – a conviction he was always ready to assert and maintain. He was of a different type physically from the others, being rotund and stocky, while they were tall and athletic. He was full of jokes and fun, and nobody could be long depressed when Tom was one of the party.

Another friend of all three was Steve Elwood, who at the time happened to be in New York, his native city. He felt about this very much as Tom did about Chicago, and arguments flew thick and fast when they got together. Steve was freckle-faced and red-headed, and had the hair-trigger temper that often goes with that combination. Like Kipling's Fuzzy-Wuzzy, he was full of "ot sand and ginger," and it was advisable to give him a clear track when once he got started. With it all, he was frank and generous, and devotedly attached to the three friends, with whom he had shared many perils.

A special link that drew the boys still closer together was their common interest in radio. That wonderful new science found no more fervent devotees than they. Almost all their spare moments were spent in increasing their knowledge of its countless marvels, and they had become expert in both receiving and sending. So absorbed did they become that they had gained the name of the "Radio Boys," and soon it became a matter of course for Castleton folk to refer to them in that way when they were mentioned together. They saw the possibilities of the science, and worked at it not merely as a pastime, but because they had about decided to make it their lifelong profession.

The boys were red-blooded, all-alive young Americans and full of love for adventure. How that zest led them into many perils; how by a curious combination of circumstances they found themselves embarked on the hazardous work of the Secret Service; how their work led them into the Everglades of Florida, where they encountered danger from beasts and reptiles and still more deadly criminals; how often they came within a hair's breadth of death and yet finally came out triumphant – these things are told in the first volume of this series, entitled: "The Radio Boys in the Secret Service; or Running Down the Counterfeiters."

Shortly after their return, the bank at Castleton was the victim of a daring holdup. Fifty thousand dollars were stolen and Dick's father, the cashier, was wounded. It was learned that "Muggs" Murray, the leader of the gang, had been seen in Texas. About the same time the Radio Boys, who were expert aviators, had an invitation to enter the flying service in connection with the Texas Rangers, who were patrolling the troubled Mexican border. The opportunity for more adventure, combined with the chance that they might get on the trail of the robber leader, proved too strong an allurements to be resisted, and they were soon in the thick of the fighting with guerillas along the Rio Grande. How narrowly they escaped death on the land and in the air; their thrilling rescue of prisoners held by the enemy; how Phil himself was taken captive and held for ransom and the part that radio played in his escape; how "Muggs" Murray was tracked and brought to justice can be seen in the second volume of this series, entitled: "The Radio Boys in the Flying Service; or, Held for Ransom by Mexican Bandits."

They had only been home a few weeks from this last experience when in this singular manner they had been brought in contact with Benton, this other soldier of fortune, who had declared that adventure was the breath of life to him. To all of them had come the impression that this was more than a chance meeting, and that in some way yet to be defined their future was to be bound up with

his. It was this feeling that made them await with such intentness the words that he had seemed on the point of speaking.

For a full minute Benton seemed to be debating with himself. Then caution seemed to gain the upper hand, and he looked at them with a whimsical smile that was half apologetic.

"I guess the thing will keep," he remarked, "and anyway I'm too groggy just now to tell you clearly just what I have in my mind. But I sure do want to see more of you fellows, if you'll let me."

"Sure thing," replied Phil heartily, and the others echoed him. "Just now I think the best thing you can do is to get to town, have a doctor look you over and then settle down for a good night's rest. Then tomorrow perhaps we can get together again. That is, if your business doesn't make it necessary to get away from Castleton in a hurry."

"Not at all," answered Benton, as he got a little unsteadily to his feet. "In fact, I think Castleton will be the end of my present trip, though I didn't think so when I started out this morning."

The remark was rather cryptic, but the boys forbore any further questioning and busied themselves with harnessing up the horse, which seemed by this time to be in a thoroughly subdued frame of mind.

There was not room for all in the buggy and it was arranged that Phil should drive with Benton to the town, while Dick and Tom should follow on foot.

On their way in, Phil stopped at the first doctor's office they came across and luckily found the physician in. He gave Benton a thorough examination and found that, outside of bruises and a general shaking up, there was nothing serious the matter with him. A day or two of rest was his only prescription.

Phil invited Benton to put up at his home as a guest, and assured him of a welcome. The latter, however, declined with thanks, feeling a little shy about his "bunged-up condition," as he expressed it, but promised to come up to Phil's house the following night. At his request, Phil drove him to a good hotel. Then he left the horse and buggy in the care of the hostler and turned toward home.

On his way there he fell in with Dick and Tom coming in with the string of fish that, in the pressure of more important things, Phil had almost forgotten.

Phil swung into step with them, and they plunged at once into a discussion of the exciting events of the afternoon.

"Queer, wasn't it," said Dick, as he paused for a moment in front of Phil's home before separating from his comrades, "how his hand flew to his breast at something Tom said?"

"It was odd," agreed Tom. "I remember that I spoke of the horse as an old pirate. Nothing particular in that. But at the word 'pirate' Benton jumped as though he were shot."

CHAPTER III

RADIO AND ITS WONDERS

"Oh well, probably it was only a coincidence," remarked Phil. "As for Benton himself he struck me as just about all right. The kind of fellow you'd like to have at your back in a scrap."

"That's the way I sized him up, too," agreed Dick.

"He sure has seen a lot of the world," observed Tom, "and he's got a pair of eyes that aren't likely to have overlooked anything. I'm keen to see him again and start him talking."

"Well, he's promised to run up to the house tomorrow night," said Phil. "Be sure to get over, Dick."

"I'll be there with bells on," promised Dick as they separated.

He kept his word, and on the following night all three were gathered about the table on which Phil kept his radio set, when the bell rang and Benton was ushered into the room.

The Radio Boys gave him a rousing welcome, and he on his part was unaffectedly glad to see them.

"How are you feeling?" asked Phil, as he drew up a chair for him.

"Fine as silk," replied Benton. "This old head of mine has stopped its buzzing, and outside a little soreness I'm as well as ever. It takes nothing less than an axe to kill us old leathernecks," he added with a grin.

"I see that you fellows are radio fans," he went on, as he settled himself comfortably and nodded his head in the direction of the apparatus on the table.

"Thirty-third degree," replied Phil. "Are you a member of the fraternity, too?"

"I'm crazy over it," said Benton, as he bent over to examine the set. "I see you've got all the latest wrinkles, super-regenerative circuit and all that. What's your range?"

"Easily over a thousand miles," replied Phil, "and probably a good deal more than that. On quiet nights we've frequently picked up the signals of the Eiffel Tower in Paris and the station at Nauen, Germany. We've talked as far as Texas, and any night we want to we can listen in on a radio broadcast from Newark, Pittsburgh, Detroit and Chicago. We keep watches regulated by the nightly signals from Arlington. It's a peach of a set all right."

"We wouldn't know how to do without radio in the Navy," remarked Benton. "Every ship is equipped with it now, and the captain on his bridge can talk as easily with the Department in Washington as though he were seated at a desk in the Secretary's room. Of course most of the work is done by the radio telegraph, but before long we'll be able to use the radio telephone just as well. I tell you it's a wonderful thing. No worrying your heart out now in a fog and mist and storm. You don't need to have the sun in order to get your bearings. You don't even need the lighthouses at night. Just get busy on your loop aerial and get in touch with shore stations and they'll tell you to a dot just what your latitude and longitude is. A blind man could navigate a ship nowadays. No one can figure how many vessels and how many lives have been saved by this blessed old radio."

"Right you are," agreed Phil. "I know that one time it saved mine. It's the youngest of all the sciences and yet it's made greater strides than any other in the history of the world. Every day something new develops, and it fairly makes you dizzy trying to keep up with it. It's revolutionized peace and it will revolutionize war."

"As a matter of fact," replied Benton, "it's going to make war practically impossible, because it would make it too terrible. A fleet of airplanes without a single man in them could fly over the cities of the enemy and drop high explosives that would destroy them all. The airplanes could be directed by radio many miles away. The same is true of battleships. Torpedoes could be sent

out from land and guided by radio directly against any ship it was desired to destroy. And all this without risk on the part of the attacking party.

"My ship was off the Virginia Capes last year," he went on, "when they were having that duel between airplanes and battleships, to test out which was the more effective. The old Iowa was picked out to be the victim of the plane attack. There wasn't a soul on board, and I tell you it seemed something uncanny to see how that big ship sailed along, turned, wheeled, zigzagged just as perfectly as if it had had its whole crew aboard. All the controls, rudder, propeller and steering devices were regulated by radio."

"It surely seems like a miracle," agreed Phil. "It's quite within the range of possibility that merchant ships after a while will be able to sail from America to Europe without a soul on board. The ship could send out signals every hour by which its path could be plotted by the shore operator over the entire route."

"And that's only a single feature of radio," put in Tom. "I see that in Italy and Germany they are locating ore and coal mines by means of radio. Radio waves are sent underground and by means of certain instruments the observer can notice the difference in the intensity of the sounds received, and so can chart out the position of ore and coal veins. The old-time prospector will soon be a thing of the past, as extinct as the dodo. Of course they have to have super-sensitive vacuum tubes, but the thing is being done every day. By the same means it will be possible to locate the position of buried treasures that have been carried down in sunken ships."

"What's that?" interrupted Benton with keen interest.

"Buried treasures," repeated Tom. "The principle is practically the same as in locating the coal veins. The difference in signals when the radio waves are coming from the ocean bed and those received when there is some big object on the bed like a ship will indicate the location of the object. Up to now it has been a matter of great difficulty to get the exact position of a sunken ship. A submarine would help some, but that can only be used where the water is comparatively shallow, for if the submarine went down too far it would be crushed by the increasing density of the water. But you can't crush radio waves. They go everywhere and through everything."

"Locating sunken ships," murmured Benton reflectively, almost as though he were talking to himself. "That sure is a new thing to me, though I try to keep pretty well up with things. I sure am glad to know it."

"Lost any ships lately?" asked Dick with a grin.

"Not exactly," replied Benton, "but I'm mighty interested in one that was lost a good long time ago."

"You're talking in riddles," laughed Phil. "Why not let us in on the story?"

Benton studied their faces for a full minute without replying. Then he straightened bolt upright in his chair as though he had reached a definite decision.

"I will," he said. "It's a queer story and perhaps you think I've gone loco before I get through with it. But first I want to ask a question. Are you fellows game for an adventure?"

The boys looked at one another and it was Phil that answered.

"Yes," he said, "if it's straight and legitimate and seems to us worth while. Of course we've got to know what it is first."

"That goes without saying," replied Benton. "It's perfectly straight, and I think I can prove to you that it is worth while. I don't disguise from you, however, that it's attended with great risks. But it also has great rewards if it is successful."

"We've taken risks before," laughed Phil.

"I know you have," answered Benton. "I was sure that I had sized you boys up right last night, and that's why I nearly told you then what I'm going to tell you now. But this thing means so much to me that I couldn't afford to act on first impressions. I don't mind telling you that I've

been making inquiries about town today, and everything that I've learned proves that my first impressions were right.

"I've heard about your work in running down the counterfeiting gang in Florida. And I've learned about your adventures with the Mexican bandits and the way you rounded up 'Muggs' Murray. Perhaps you don't know it, but the people in this town think that you're about the finest fellows on the footstool."

"You must take that with a grain of salt," said Phil deprecatingly. "Local pride and all that, you know. We've just got into a few scrapes and had the luck to come out of them with a whole hide. That about lets us out."

"I prefer to take their verdict," smiled Benton, "and I have further proof if I needed it in what happened yesterday afternoon. At any rate, I'm perfectly satisfied in my own mind that you're the fellows I want to share my plan if it appeals to you. You see I'm somewhat in the position of a man who thinks he has a gold mine but can't work it alone."

He took a package of papers from his pocket and laid them on the table.

Tom nudged Phil mischievously.

"Say 'pirate'" he said, "and see Benton jump."

Benton looked puzzled for a moment. Then he laughed.

"I catch on," he said. "Well, there's a pirate in this story all right, but he's been a long time dead. Now just one other little thing. If after I've told you my plan you don't want to go in with me on it, I want you to promise me on your word of honor that you won't mention the matter to a living soul."

CHAPTER IV

STRANGE HAPPENINGS

The Radio Boys solemnly gave the required promise, and listened with breathless attention to the story that Benton unfolded.

“As I told you yesterday,” he began, “my last term of service was in San Domingo. As you know, that borders on the Caribbean Sea, the old Spanish main that the buccaneers roved on for centuries. It’s a tropical country, and to my mind a God-forsaken place, whose chief products are tarantulas, spiders, centipedes and scorpions. Most of the people are blacks or half-breeds, and of course revolutions are happening there every little while. Their armies are only mobs that a squad of American policemen could put to flight, and the chief difference between generals and privates is that the former have shoes while the latter are barefooted.

“They had been having one of these little revolutions when for some reason Uncle Sam took a hand. You know he acts as a sort of policeman to keep those little West Indian countries in order when they get a little too gay and frisky. At any rate, we’ve had a little force of marines there for some years past, and it happened that I was sent down there with the last batch of leathernecks.

“It wasn’t much of a task to keep the bigger towns in order, but it was different when we were sent out to clean up some of the outlaw bands in the interior of the island. There were plenty of these, and we had to watch our step, for they were bloodthirsty rascals and if any of our boys happened to fall into their hands it was all up with him. It wasn’t merely death – that’s part of the game in the marine service – but torture. And those bandits certainly were experts when it came to making a man die slow and hard.”

Phil thought of Espato and his skill in the same gentle art.

“A couple of pals and myself,” went on Benton, “were pushing along one day in a desolate patch of the jungle way off from the beaten road when we heard shrieks coming from a cabin. We made a break for it, and found a bunch of bandits torturing an old Spaniard. He lived alone there, and somehow the idea had got out that he had money concealed about the place. The outlaws had felt so confident that they had everything their own way that they hadn’t set any watch and we took them by surprise. They had the old man bound on his bed, and were burning him with hot irons to make him tell them where his money was hidden. We burst in on them while they were in the very midst of their infernal work, killed two of them and put the rest to flight.

“The old man was pretty well done for. It didn’t seem practicable to get him in his condition to the nearest military post which was some distance away. So I sent the other fellows to report, and I stayed to nurse the old fellow. I didn’t think he’d last out the next twenty-four hours, but he had surprising vitality for a man of his years and it was nearly a week before he passed away. He needed constant attention, and I was kept pretty well on the jump day and night.

“During that time I learned, of course, a good deal of his history. Part of it he told me, and part of it I picked up from what he kept babbling from time to time when he was delirious. It seemed that he had never married and that he had no relative that he knew of in the world. He had lived there for years, doing a little farming on his garden patch and getting barely enough to keep body and soul together. As for money, he didn’t have any. That was where the bandits would have had their troubles for their pains.

“One morning I could see that death was pretty near, and the old man knew it too. He called me to him, thanked me over and over for what I had been able to do for him and then told me that he was going to give me something that would make me rich. I thought his mind was wandering again, but he pointed out a place under the flooring of the cabin and asked me to dig down a couple

of feet. I did it to humor him, and fished out an old tin box. I brought it to him and he took out the papers that I have just laid on the table.”

The boys looked with the keenest interest at the package of papers that were mildewed and yellowed by time.

“He put those in my hands,” continued Benton, “and told me they were mine. Said they had been handed down in his family for generations. It seems that the old man himself had had dreams of following up the clues that were contained in them. But it would take capital and he never had one dollar that he could lay on another. And he had been afraid to trust his secret to anyone else for fear that he would be either cheated or perhaps killed by those he might choose as partners. And so the years had dragged on and he had come at last to his deathbed without ever having derived any benefit from them. Now he gave them to me, and the only condition he attached was that if I got any benefit from them I would have a candle burned in some church for the repose of his soul.”

Benton paused for a moment. No one spoke. They were envisaging the scene of that forlorn old life coming to so pitiable an end in the depths of the San Domingo forest.

“Of course, I promised,” Benton went on, “and as a matter of fact I saw to that matter of the candle as soon as I got back to the city. I didn’t attach any importance to the old man’s revelations. I’d have thought the whole thing was simply a sick man’s ravings if it hadn’t been for the papers. They at least were real, something that could be seen and handled. Probably they wouldn’t amount to anything, but they promised at least to be a bit of interesting reading when I got back to the barracks.

“I buried the old man near his cabin and then hiked back to the nearest post. I was kept pretty busy for some time, and the papers remained stowed away in my kit bag.

“After a while, our squad was relieved from the interior work and sent back to the capital for a breathing spell and the mere routine duty called for. One day when I was off duty and time was hanging a little heavy on my hands, I thought of the papers and fished them out. They had to be handled with care, as some of them were nearly falling to pieces.

“I soon found however that they didn’t do me much good, for they were written in Spanish. Of course, in knocking about those countries I had picked up a good deal of the lingo, enough to get by with in ordinary conversation. But that didn’t help me so much when it came to reading about unfamiliar things, especially in the Spanish of two hundred years ago.

“And just here is where I made a mistake. There was a half breed that did odd jobs about the post, a fellow named Ramirez. He happened to be passing through the barracks just then on an errand for one of the officers, and I called him and asked him to translate one of the papers for me.

“He agreed, after bargaining that I should give him an American quarter for the job, which I did. He commenced to read. I listened for a while, and then I began to sit up and take notice. Believe me that by this time he was taking notice too. His hands were trembling, his voice was shaky and his eyes – he had about the wickedest pair of eyes I ever saw in a human head – were fairly shining with greediness.

“I snatched the paper back from him. He begged like a cripple to let him go on with it. Offered to give me back my quarter and do it for nothing. But by that time I was wise to the mistake I had made and told him to go along and roll his hoop. His eyes were like those of a rattlesnake when he realized I was in earnest.

“After I had finally got rid of him, I did some tall thinking. I got a dictionary and a grammar and settled down to learn the language. I took some lessons also from the old padre of the church in which I had burned the candle. He was delighted at my sudden interest in what he called his ‘beautiful mother tongue,’ and did all he could to help me along. So in the course of time I was able to get the sense of these papers. Some of the words are blurred and some have been wiped out by time, but what I couldn’t read I could at least make a very fair guess at.

“Before I had received the papers I had fully made up my mind to re-enlist, for as I told you before I was in love with the service. But after I had read them I began to count the days before my present term should expire. I had made up my mind that I was going to take a chance. I might fail, but if I did there was the good old service waiting for me at any time. And if I succeeded, there wouldn’t be need of worrying about anything for the rest of my life.

“And now,” he continued, as he knocked the ash from his cigar and glanced at the faces of his spellbound auditors, “that about brings me up to the present time. Oh yes, there’s one thing more – about that Ramirez.

“That fellow dogged me like my shadow for the rest of the time I was in San Domingo. He kept turning up at the most unexpected places. I got tired of it at last and told him to keep out of my way or he’d be sorry for it. One night when we were camping out, I woke up to find someone rifling my kit in my tent. I jumped up and tackled him, but he got away after knifing me in the arm.”

He rolled up his sleeve and showed a deep scar just above the elbow.

“That’s the memento he left me,” he remarked grimly. “In the darkness I couldn’t be sure, but I thought I recognized Ramirez. The first thing I did after getting a light and binding up my arm was to look for the papers. Luckily they were at the bottom of my kit and the thief hadn’t got to them when I woke up. Another thing that makes me think it was Ramirez is that the rascal disappeared from his usual haunts after that and I’ve never seen anything of him since. But it goes to show,” he added with that whimsical smile of his, “that I’m not the only one who attaches some importance to these papers.

“Now let’s see how they strike you,” he continued, drawing his chair closer to the table, while the Radio Boys crowded eagerly about him.

CHAPTER V

MAROONED

There were many separate papers in the package that Benton spread out before the fascinated eyes of the boys. Only one or two larger sheets seemed like a consecutive narrative. Others were mere scraps of paper that looked as though they had been picked up in lieu of something better for the writer to put his thoughts upon.

Bitter thoughts most of them were, thoughts of vengeance, imprecations upon the authors of alleged wrongs from which the writer had suffered, chants of hate that seemed as though they might have blistered the paper on which they were written. As the boys handled carefully those yellowed sheets of paper, so brittle from time that they were almost falling apart, so yellowed that in many cases the writing was almost illegible, the years rolled away and before them rose up the picture of that solitary figure on an island in the Caribbean eating his heart out with rage and hate and finding his only solace in setting down from day to day his prayers for vengeance on the souls of those who had brought him to that pass.

Benton had arranged them as nearly as might be in chronological order and kept up a running series of comments and explanations as he went along.

“You can see,” he said, “that the writing isn’t merely a scrawl. It was the work of a man with considerable education. I’ve gathered from the story as I went through it that he was the son of a well to do family in one of the colonies that bordered on the Caribbean Sea about two centuries ago. Those were wild and reckless days in that quarter of the world, with the buccaneers roaming up and down the Spanish Main, sinking ships and once in a while attacking the towns on the coast and robbing them of their treasures. This fellow was probably the black sheep of some respectable family who went to the bad and ran away and joined the pirates. Probably he was just as bad as any of the rest of them, though to read his story you’d think that he was a poor persecuted man and that all the wrong was on the side of his shipmates.

“You know that in those days the pirates had a code of laws of their own. They were some of the vilest wretches that ever went unhung and flouted all the laws of the civilized nations of the world. They were Ishmaels, their hands against every man’s and every man’s hands against them. But even they had to have some laws of their own, or the Brotherhood, as they called their choice collection of scoundrels, would have gone to pieces.

“Now one of the laws that they laid most store by was that whenever a ship or a town was looted, none of the pirates should hold out any particular bit of treasure that he might come across. Everything was to be brought and placed in a great pile at the foot of the mast on the pirate ship and then a division was made, so much to the captain, so much to the mates, so much to each member of the crew.

“The punishment for any member of the crew who was caught violating this law was that he should be marooned. That meant that he was to be taken to some one of the many little desolate islands that stud the Caribbean, put ashore with about enough provisions to last him a month and then left to shift for himself.

“In most cases that amounted to a sentence of death. Either the man would starve after his provisions were exhausted, or even if he succeeded for a time in dragging out a miserable existence he would go mad from loneliness and hopelessness. It was one of the punishments most dreaded by the pirates of the Brotherhood.

“Well, marooning was what happened to Santos, the pirate whose writing is on these papers. Likely enough he deserved it, though he says he didn’t. You can see what he says here.”

Benton picked up one of the sheets and read:

“I swear by the Holy Virgin that at the taking of the galleon Ciudad de Rodrigo I rendered to the common mass every doubloon and jewel that I had taken from the passengers before they were made to walk the plank. But Cerillos the captain – may his soul be accursed – hated me because he feared that I might some day supplant him, and brought it about that a crucifix with gems upon it was found in my sea chest. But I swear that I knew it not.”

“You see,” resumed Benton, as he laid down the paper, “he claims that he was the victim of what in these days we would call a ‘frame-up.’ Maybe he was and maybe he wasn’t. You know that most criminals when they go to the electric chair proclaim that they are innocent.

“However that may be, they seemed to have the goods on the old boy, and he was taken to this island, where he was put ashore and left to live or die as fate might decree.

“Where that island was is a most important matter, and on that we haven’t any too much information. There are scores, probably hundreds of them in the Caribbean. Some of them are mere rocks a few acres in extent. Others cover a good many square miles. This one where Santos was marooned was one of the larger ones, and there was enough in the way of fruits and cocoanuts together with what fish he could catch to keep him alive.

“Now the only clue we have,” Benton continued, picking up a frayed piece of paper, “to the location of the island is this rough sketch that Santos drew. You can see for yourself that it’s like a rough quadrangle in shape.”

The boys bent over and scanned with eyes shining with excitement the rude outline. There were wavy lines to indicate the water, and a blacker mass which was evidently intended for the island itself. On this were peaks rising to a considerable height, and the effect of the skyline was something like the teeth of a saw. There were figures on the map almost illegible, but by the aid of a magnifying glass which Phil took from a drawer they could make out what seemed to be the figures “14” and “81.”

“That’s probably the latitude and longitude,” exclaimed Dick, while Phil made a dive for an atlas.

“So I figured it,” replied Benton. “Probably the old boy made more or less of a guess at it, but in a rough way it’s likely to be correct. It isn’t probable that he had any instruments with him, but if what he says of the captain’s jealousy is correct it indicates that he was an important figure in the crew and probably had some knowledge of navigation. If he had had any ambition to supplant the captain, he’d have to know something about latitude and longitude.”

By this time Phil had found the page in the atlas referring to the West Indies, and was running his finger down it.

“Latitude 14, longitude 81,” he repeated. “Here it is in the Caribbean somewhere on a line between Jamaica and Honduras.”

“That’s correct,” assented Benton. “And there’s one very important point connected with that special location. You know that the Caribbean varies greatly in depth. In places it’s thousands of feet deep. In others there are hundreds of miles where the water is very shallow, where what seem to be great plateaus rise from the bed of the sea to within a hundred or two hundred feet of the surface. Now one of these shallow basins is that which lies between Jamaica and Honduras. Then too, the old pirate mentions in one part of this diary of his that when the vessel from which he was marooned was approaching the island, soundings were taken by the captain. That was because he knew he was in shallow waters and feared he might run aground.

“Now bear this fact in mind,” Benton adjured them impressively, “for on it hangs the whole story.”

CHAPTER VI

THE SUNKEN TREASURE

Phil put away the atlas and the boys redoubled their attention.

“It’s a thing to be noticed all through these papers,” Benton went on, “that the old pirate’s prayers for vengeance were on the *souls* of his enemies. That was because their bodies had passed beyond the reach of vengeance. For within a couple of hours after his comrades had marooned him, Santos had the satisfaction of seeing the pirate ship, the *Sea Rover*, as it was named, go down in a hurricane with all hands on board.

“Just listen to this:

“God be praised,” he read, “for what mine eyes this day have seen. For scarce had Cerillos sailed, after he had landed me on this accursed island and jeered at me as I sat in my misery on the beach, than a hurricane sprang up, one of the fiercest and most sudden that I have ever known in all my voyaging on the Main. It caught him unaware, and before ever he could furl sail the ship careened and went down less than a mile from shore. Never a man escaped, though for days after bodies floated to the beach. Among them was that of Cerillos, which I spat and stamped upon. How I danced! How I shouted! How I cheered! The devil had got his own. May their souls roast in flames for all eternity!”

“The old boy was certainly a good hater,” remarked Phil.

“He sure was,” laughed Benton, “and he never got over it. Ravings like that are scattered all through the papers. But only second to that is the old fellow’s regret that so much treasure should have been swallowed up by the sea. He rejoiced in the fate of the crew but would have liked to save the ship, for from what he says it seems to have been a floating mint. And he isn’t speaking from guesswork either, for he had been on it all through its last voyage and knew what it contained. See what he says here:

“It irketh me sore,” the writing ran, “to think that all that noble treasure lieth at the bottom of the sea. For never had we taken such goodly prizes as on that last scouring of the Main. There was the plate on the galleon *Santa Maria* that we cut out of the squadron off the Isle of Oruba, and the gold louis from the *Cité de Marseilles* that cost us so dear in blood and the treasure that came from the sacking of Port au Prince – doubloons and pieces of eight that it might take a man a day to reckon. Yet now it is nought or as good as nought, though had I a lugger and a dozen lusty fellows at my back I might e’en yet run my fingers through it. For it lieth not far from shore, and the waters be so shallow that had the mast not snapped they might yet be seen.”

Then followed wild imprecations on the fate that had doomed him to be marooned on that desolate island, while just beyond his reach were riches almost beyond the dreams of avarice.

Other parts of the writings were in calmer mood and abounded in plans that he purposed carrying out for the recovery of the treasure, if he were ever rescued. But as time passed on, he seemed to have abandoned hope, and it was evident that his mind was giving way, for certain scraps of paper were full of incoherent exclamations and vague maunderings.

When Benton came to the last of them and gathered them up the room was so silent that the boys could almost hear the beating of their hearts. Their thoughts were in a tumult.

Benton was the first to break the silence.

“There’s just one thing to be added,” he said. “The old Spaniard who gave me these papers told me that the family tradition, as it had come down to him, was that his ancestor had finally been rescued, but only when his mind was almost gone. But he still had sense enough to guard jealously these papers, which he bequeathed to his son with injunctions to go and find the treasure. Nothing

however had ever come of it, I suppose from time to time some of the family had vague notions of doing something about it, but they never materialized.

“Now to sum the thing up. It seems to me perfectly clear that these things actually happened. The papers on their face bear evidence of their truth. This old pirate lived and sinned and cursed and suffered and died on an island somewhere about latitude 14, longitude 81 in the Caribbean Sea. He saw the sinking of the *Sea Rover* a little way off from the island. The ship was laden with a large amount of treasure. The waters where it sank were comparatively shallow.

“There’s the story, and the only living people that know anything about it are gathered at this moment in this room.”

“Except perhaps Ramirez,” put in Phil reflectively.

“Oh yes, Ramirez,” corrected Benton with a slight start. “But he just got a hint of it. He hasn’t the papers and he’s probably forgotten most of what he did read. He’s just a worthless, ignorant half breed anyway. I think we can dismiss him from our calculations.”

“I’ve told you now all I know. What about it?”

“Let’s go!” cried Phil.

“I’m with you,” exclaimed Dick.

“Count me in,” added Tom.

Benton jumped to his feet.

“Hurrah!” he cried, as he shook hands with each in turn. “I knew I wasn’t making a mistake. You’re all wool and a yard wide-fellows after my own heart – a red-blooded bunch of young Americans who are not afraid to take a chance!”

CHAPTER VII

A HAZARDOUS VENTURE

“And now,” said Benton, after the excitement had somewhat subsided, glancing at his watch, “I’ve kept you fellows up till the wee sma’ hours, and I guess we’ve had enough for one night. We’ll sleep over it and get together to-morrow and see how things look in the cold grey dawn of the morning after.

“Mind,” he continued, as he gathered up his papers and made ready to depart, “I don’t want to sweep you fellows off your feet. There are a whole lot of things to be considered, and while I’m tickled to death by the way you feel about it, I don’t hold you to the decision that you’ve made tonight. I take that just as the statement of your personal attitude toward the matter. If on thinking it over more carefully you should change your minds, I’d be horribly disappointed, but I wouldn’t feel a bit sore. In other words, I want the decision to be not a matter of momentary enthusiasm but of cool judgment, after you’ve considered all the pros and cons.”

“It’s bully of you to feel that way about it,” responded Phil warmly, “but we’ve got used to making rather quick decisions, and so far we’ve won out. Besides our decision wasn’t made at the minute you asked for it. It had been forming in our minds all the time we were going through those papers. Of course we’ll have to talk with our folks about it, but we’ve persuaded them before to let us have our way in these matters, and I guess we can again. At any rate if we don’t, it won’t be for lack of trying.”

“One other thing,” broke in Dick. “There’s a pal of ours named Steve Elwood. Just at present he’s in New York. He’s no end of a good fellow, and I’m sure he’d like to go along with us. Would you have any objection?”

“Not if he’s like the rest of you and you will vouch for him,” replied Benton with a smile. “We’re rather shorthanded as it is, and five won’t be too many.”

“We’ll vouch for him, all right,” said Phil, and the others seconded him enthusiastically. “He was with us in Florida and Mexico, and he just eats up danger.”

“That’s the kind we want,” replied Benton. “Go to it then and get in touch with him as soon as you can. So long, fellows. See you tomorrow, and we’ll get busy on the question of ways and means.”

There was very little sleep for any of the Radio Boys that night. They had been too stirred up by the vista opened up by their interview with Benton. And when toward morning they dropped off into a troubled slumber, their dreams were a jumble of pirate ships and lonely islands and tumbling waters and coins that gleamed and shimmered in tropical sunlight.

But the morning saw no slackening in their resolution of the night before. A strong appeal had been made to their imagination and their love of adventure, and that appeal persisted.

Naturally, the appeal was much less strong to the members of their families, when with considerable mental misgivings the boys opened up the subject to them, after having enjoined them to strict secrecy as far as outsiders were concerned.

There was a chorus of expostulations and objections, to all of which the boys made answer as best they could. But the strongest arguments lay in the way they had come through the perilous adventures they had previously undergone. Their folks had to admit that in these they had shown qualities of coolness and good judgment, in addition to courage, that had extricated them from all their difficulties. Why was it not reasonable to believe that the same qualities would stand them in good stead in their present venture?

In the end, Phil and Dick prevailed, as they had felt sure that they would, although the consent was a grudging one. Tom had a harder task, as his father was in Chicago, and their talk had to be

over the radio, concerning which the elder Hadley was as ardent a “fan” as the son himself. They had a code of their own, but naturally even with that the talk had to be a guarded one, and dealt with the matter in a much more general way than would have been the case in a personal talk, where Tom could have brought his big guns to bear. The result was that Tom got a qualified consent, which was not to be regarded as final however, until the elder Hadley had received full details in a letter which Tom was to write to him at once.

“So far, so good,” remarked Tom, at the end of the struggle, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow. “Now I’ll have to give my natural eloquence a chance and spread it all over my letter. Just wait till you see that letter. It’s going to be a cuckoo. But I haven’t any doubt as to how it will turn out. Dad’s a good sport, and he’s taken chances himself all his life. I’ll bet he’d like to be in on this himself.”

Phil in the meantime had been writing to Steve, laying the matter before him, and enjoining him by all that was good to let him have an answer in twenty-four hours.

“Humph!” sniffed Dick, as he glanced over Phil’s shoulder. “Twenty-four hours! He’ll telegraph an answer in five minutes after he reads the letter. I know Steve.”

“I guess you’re about right,” smiled Phil. “You’ve got the old boy pretty well sized up.”

There was so much to do that day that the time passed as though on wings, and in the evening, in accordance with arrangements made over the telephone, Benton came up again to get their final word on the matter.

“No need to ask though,” he remarked, when the first greetings were over. “I can see that there are no cold feet in this crowd.”

“Warm as toast,” laughed Phil. “There was considerable chilliness about the pedal extremities of our folks though. We had to talk until we were hoarse. We carried our point though, and as far as Dick and I are concerned the matter’s a go. Tom’s been talking over the radio and the thing’s still in the air, but Tom considers it as good as settled. I’ve written to Steve too, and we expect to get an answer tomorrow by telegraph.”

“Some speed boys,” smiled Benton, “but that’s the way to go at it. Either it’s worth nothing at all, or it’s worth every ounce of speed and energy we can put in it. What were some of the objections that your folks put up?”

“Well, there were a good many of them,” replied Phil. “First of course was the danger. They conjured up all sorts of horrible things, sudden tropical storms, drowning, sharks and things like that. Then too, they thought that it was in the nature of a wild goose chase. If the ship had been sunken recently, they’d have thought we had more of a chance. But two centuries ago seems a long while. They thought the ship might have broken up, sunk in the sand, wholly disappeared.”

“There’s something of course in that,” Benton admitted. “And yet treasure has been brought up from the ships of the Spanish Armada that sank over three hundred years ago. What has happened once may happen again. As for the danger, of course there is some. But nothing venture nothing have, and if we are successful the rewards will be great enough to compensate for the risk.”

“Just what we argued,” replied Phil. “And then who can tell where danger lies? A man may sail the seas for forty years without a scratch, and then come home to be drowned in a cistern. After all, life itself is just taking a chance.”

“Right you are,” put in Dick. “If this venture goes through, we’ll have pulled off a big thing. But even suppose it doesn’t go through. We’ll have seen a new part of the world, will have had lots of fun and adventure and the game will have been worth the candle.”

“And just think what it means if we put it over,” added Tom. “Just think of pulling up those ducats and doubloons and louis d’or and all the rest of them from the bottom of the sea. It seems a shame to have all that money doing no one any good, when it might be put into circulation.”

“Old ocean sure is greedy,” replied Benton. “Think of the hundreds of millions, probably billions, that have been engulfed at some time or other. Probably ten millions went down on the

Lusitania, the *Titanic* and the *Arabic*. Then there's the *Laurentic* that went down in 1917 with from ten to fifteen millions on board. They've already brought up about three millions of that though. Then there was the fleet of Spanish ships that sank in the harbor of Vigo, Spain, in 1702 carrying down \$37,000,000. There's the *San Pedro de Alcantara* that sank in Margarita Channel near Caracas in 1812 with \$32,000,000 in gold doubloons on board. You've read perhaps of the American ship *Phantom* that was wrecked in 1862 with \$10,000,000 in California gold. The *George Sand* sank in the China Sea in 1863 carrying down \$13,000,000 in bullion. And those are only a few of the hundreds of ships that have carried down hundreds of thousands or millions. There's probably enough gold under the waves to make a solid golden pathway a good many feet wide over the whole of the ocean bed."

"Well, here's hoping that there'll be less of it under water when we get through," laughed Tom.

"Let's hope so," smiled Benton, "but now let's shift for a little while to another metal and get right down to brass tacks."

CHAPTER VIII

COUNTING THE COST

"The first thing to be done," continued Benton, as they all gathered about the table, "is to figure on the cost of the expedition. In this, as in everything else, we need the 'sinews of war.' We've got to lay in supplies, purchase a diving suit, charter a sailing vessel after we reach San Domingo and lots of other things. It can't be done under five thousand dollars and we'd better figure on ten. How about it?"

"That's all right," answered Phil promptly. "We've talked it over among ourselves and estimated that it would be somewhere between those two amounts. A year ago it might have stumped us a bit, but the reward we got from the bank for the capture of Muggs Murray and the generous way in which Uncle Sam treated us after we had helped to run down the counterfeiters has put us on Easy Street."

"Good," said Benton. "I have a little wad of my own stowed away, and we'll go in on an even basis. There are five of us – that is, if your friend Elwood comes in with us – and that will make from one to two thousand each that we will have to put up. And of course it is understood that we share alike in all the profits of the expedition."

"Seems to me that you ought to have a larger share than the rest of us," objected Phil. "You're the one that got the papers, without which there wouldn't be any trip at all."

"Not a bit of it," protested Benton. "The papers wouldn't do me any good unless I had fellows like you to help me realize on them. No, it's got to be 'hoss and hoss,' share and share alike. That is," he added, with his whimsical smile, "if there's anything to be shared. We're counting our chickens before they are hatched."

"I suppose the first leg of our journey will be from here to some of the West India Islands," said Dick.

"Yes," answered Benton. "I figure that we'd better go from here to New York by rail, and then by one of the regular steamers to San Domingo. When we reach there, it will be up to us to charter a small fast sailing vessel in which we can cruise around in the Caribbean while we're trying to locate the old pirate's island. We'll drop down to the neighborhood of latitude 14, longitude 81, keeping our eyes open for any island whose skyline looks like the teeth of a saw."

"How about navigating the sloop?" asked Phil.

"Leave that to me," responded Benton. "I thought one time before I joined the marines of going into the merchant service and studied for the position of mate. I got my papers too and can handle a ship with the best of them. But the marine service appealed to me more strongly because of the greater chances of adventure, and so I passed the other up. But I haven't let myself get rusty, and I've had a lot of practical experience. I'm as much at home on a boat as I am in the barracks. But how about you young fellows? Know anything about sailing?"

"Not on the ocean," replied Phil, "but we've done considerable cruising on the Great Lakes, which are the next thing to the sea itself. We know enough about ropes and sails to understand orders and to obey them promptly. If you'll act as captain, we think we can qualify as crew, especially on as small a boat as we expect to handle."

"That's dandy," replied Benton, "and when we get down to San Domingo we'll do a lot of cruising just off shore so that you can get thoroughly familiar with your work before cutting loose for the big adventure. That removes a lot of worry from my mind, for I'd hate like thunder to have to ship a crew from the kind of material you find in a West Indian port. They're smart enough sailors, but as a rule a bad lot to have on any trip, let alone an expedition that's looking for treasure."

“Now as to supplies. We’ve got to take along guns, revolvers and plenty of ammunition. Then we’ll need dynamite and blasting powder – ”

“I don’t see exactly where that comes in,” remarked Tom.

“For use in getting to the treasure,” explained Benton. “Granted that we locate the ship, it’s altogether unlikely that we’d be able to get through the hatches. They’d in all likelihood be crusted with barnacles or covered with silt and sea growths that would make it impossible for the diver to get into the hold unaided. But he could plant a charge of dynamite, and then after he’d been drawn up the charge could be fired by means of an electric spark from a battery in the boat above. That would tear a big hole in the deck and give the diver a chance to get in.

“Speaking of the diver,” Benton went on, “brings us to one of the most important things of all, and that is the diving suit. We can’t afford to get any but the best, for the man that goes down in it literally takes his life in his hands. The work though is less dangerous than it used to be because of the improvements that have been made.

“For instance, in the old-fashioned suits the fresh air was served to the diver from the surface of the water through a tube and the pressure within the suit was increased to equal the pressure outside of it. But the more modern suit that I have in mind eliminates the necessity of the air tube. The diver carries his own oxygen with him in a tank that is fitted into a steel shell that is a part of the suit. Beside the oxygen tank is another tank containing caustic soda which absorbs the carbon dioxide given out by the expelled breath of the diver. A valve operates to deliver a certain amount every hour of oxygen properly mixed with nitrogen.

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