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By R. W. DALY

SEEKER OF THE DEEP

A man must be captain of his own deathless soul—or not skipper a Nantucket ship....

THE Yankee whaler *John K.*

Marston rocked against the camels of a filthy dock in the Whangpoo River, her captain dead from an attack of angina and her first mate losing a battle with the poisons of a ruptured appendix.

Walking instead of riding down Nanking Road, Henry Mallory neither had nor desired any connections with such a ship. Since he could not afford a rickshaw, he was ignored both by the patrons of Shanghai's exotic shops and by the Chinese who profited from business with the foreign devils. In the midst of the teeming British concession, Mallory felt alone, but stubbornly would not ease his isolation. History itself had gone against him—three short years before, General Lee had surrendered at Appomattox—Henry Mallory, formerly a lieutenant in the Confederate States Navy, had never hauled down his flag. His chin was high and his back was straight when he said to the clerk in his cousin's office. "Mr. Bentham, please." "Busy," the clerk replied with the indifference of a rising young man for another without any future.

"Please be seated." Mallory wistfully considered inculcating some manners in the clerk by honoring him with an exchange of pistol shots in a quiet glen beyond the city. This he could not do. Together with his past, he had jettisoned the code duello, because he had a compelling reason to be peaceful. The British government wished British subjects to command British ships, and Mallory was in the process of acquiring British citizenship. He could, however, train the weight of cold blue eyes upon the clerk, so that the man was relieved when a visitor left the inner office and Mallory went in.

"Morning, Henry," Claude Bentham said pleasantly, glancing up from his desk. "Be with you as soon as I finish a note." Bentham was one of the Englishmen building an empire for Queen Victoria by common sense, consideration and hard work. Loyal to his task, well established in his forties, he had been happy to extend a sympathetic hand to a young and useful American cousin uprooted by the inexplicable disturbance known as the Civil War. He often had an emergency use for officers qualified in sail.

"There is a ship in port, Henry, which could use you for a year. I will guarantee you a fee of five thousand."

Mallory leaned forward eagerly. "Then my papers have come through?" he asked. "I'm a British citizen?"

Bentham did not answer at once, pretending to study a ship's log. He did not understand his cousin's renunciation of America; his own code ran deeper than political loyalties.

"Not quite," he said at last. "But

my firm has a sixty per cent insurance interest in a whaler which had lost her captain and first mate. She proposes to hunt the Sea of Okhotsk. You, of course, know the waters."

Mallory grinned. Indeed, he did. He had served on the *Shenandoah* whose guns had nearly wiped out the Yankee whalers in the north Pacific. "I don't know anything about whaling."

"My firm isn't interested in that. The plates will tend to the work. You will be responsible for navigation only."

"Sign me on," Mallory smiled. He could live comfortably in Shanghai for much less than a thousand a year. In a year he would be a British subject. Every road had its turning.

Bentham soberly looked him in the eye. "The ship is the *John K. Marston*, registered out of Nantucket."

The bottom dropped out of Mallory's hopes. "A Yankee?"

"An American," Bentham said carefully. "About three hundred tons, four boats and a crew of thirty."

Mallory waved good-bye to his salvation with stiff dignity. "Thanks very much, Claude. I can't do it."

Bentham glanced down. "If not too inconvenient, Henry—as a favor to me—I'd like to ask you to reconsider."

Mallory looked as though he had been struck by a grapeshot. Pride was one thing but *noblesse oblige* was another. As a Rebel, he could spurn Yankee gold. As a gentleman, he could not refuse a favor asked by a man to whom he was greatly indebted. Bentham knew how Mallory felt and only genuine distress could inspire such a demand.

"Delighted to be of help to you,

Claude," Mallory said, with the gallantry of Pickett's Brigade fixing bayonets. "I'll show those rascals how things should be done."

"Good lad," Bentham murmured and his conscience shrieked.



IF MALLORY thought that hanging up his cap in the cabin of a Yankee whaler was worse than walking into a plague-infested dungeon, the crew of the *Marston* reciprocated his sentiments. The mates were naturally embittered at losing their prospects of command, and the crew knew from waterfront gossip that he had been an officer of the *Shenandoah*.

The senior mate, a burly, sea-gaited, two-fisted Nantucket man named Clark wasted little time in defining their respective positions of authority.

"You pilot," he said bluntly, while Mallory was unpacking. "I'll fish."

Mallory was too startled to reply.

"You're cap'n in the eyes of the law only," Clark went on. "Don't press it. Anything you got to say to the crew, say to me first."

Mallory pulled a holstered Navy Colts from his bag. Opening the empty cylinder, he squinted obliquely into the heavy barrel.

"I'd like some sperm oil," he said quietly.

Clark looked at him for long moments before deciding that the Colts was an answer, but a mere revolver couldn't intimidate a Nantucket man.

"I'll speak plain. We didn't sign on with you. Sea lawyers put you aboard."

"Anything else?" Mallory asked,

unpacking a bullet mold.

The *Marston's* spokesman shrugged.

A wise man would have taken the hint. Mallory uncorked his temper.

"We may as well understand each other. If I'm captain in the eyes of the law, I'll be captain in fact until we return. So long as you speak on the business of whaling, I'll bow to your professional knowledge. In anything else, I'll hold you and the crew accountable according to the laws and customs of the sea."

A smile flickered on Clark's strong face. "We understand each other," he said.

Watching the mate turn and stolidly leave the cabin, Mallory at best foresaw a year of miserable loneliness, and regretted the honor of a gentleman.

When the whaler cast off her lines and dropped down to the open sea, he was prepared for a semblance of mutiny. Nothing happened. His orders were obeyed unenthusiastically but without question. The crew scarcely looked at him, automatically performing ship's routine in a way that gave him the uncomfortable realization that his presence was almost entirely unnecessary.

To all appearances, the *Marston* was a happy ship.

They were off Sakhalin before he figured that Clark didn't intend to jeopardize his prospects of permanent command when the whaler filled her casks, as long as her unreconstructed Reb didn't beg for trouble. As for the crew, each member had a proportionate part of the ship's earnings. To reduce the navigational

hazards of the Sea of Okhotsk was a sound procedure that affected them all, and disposed them to follow Clark's lead.

After losing the tension which had induced him to carry the Colts tucked out of sight in his waistband, Mallory faced the problem of living for a year under the *Stars and Stripes*. The whaler was Yankee from keel to truck, and the drawling voices of her crew were a constant reminder of the carpetbaggers rampant in the devastated South.

If cousin Claude had given him a second choice, Mallory would have been back at his down-at-heels hotel.

He was a lion marooned on a deserted island. A leader has to be accepted by his men, and apart from his acquaintance with northern waters, Mallory had no means for arousing such acceptance. To men born on the New England coast, good seamanship was no more remarkable than the ability to walk, and Mallory's experience had been largely in men-of-war, where huge crews had to be kept busy, and finicky changing or trimming sail kept idle hands out of mischief. Whalers didn't carry even a boy who didn't more than earn his keep. Sail was changed when necessary, and often not for a day at a time.

Mallory learned a lot one morning. He had been studying the deck. All hands were occupied without being supervised. Boat-steerers were drying out their long, tough manila lines or whetstoning lances. Seamen swarmed in the boats cradled on the cranes. The boatswain had a gang greasing running tackle or rigging the huge

cutting blocks. The cooper was shaping barrels and the blacksmith was hammering out new irons. Mallory had to be impressed by Yankees at work and they aimed to make the lesson stick.

“A bloooow!” suddenly wailed a masthead lookout.

The electric cry fizzled out against stolid resistance. No one on the *Marston's* deck even glanced up. Mallory stared at the taciturn crew until the sustained, unearthly shrieks from the masthead rasped on his judgment and drove him forward to Clark.

“Are you deaf?”

Clark squinted at the plume of mist inside the horizon, then tentatively felt the edge of his spade with a strong, calloused finger.

“Looks like a big 'un,” he said soberly. “Maybe a bowhead with three hundred barrels. Too bad we aren't ready.”

The stout-bladed spade in Clark's hands was a substitute for the Colts that had once been in Mallory's, and the gestures were identical. Mallory looked around. The mates engrossed in their irons tacitly backed up their senior. Mallory seethed at this evidence that when the chips were down, he wasn't captain after all, but only a supernumerary put aboard by some legal hocuspocus.

Glaring at Clark until he felt foolish, Mallory whirled and clumped aft. Shooting a look at the stony-faced helmsman studying the sails through an overhead hatch, he went on down the port companion ladder to the cabin. Fingers quivering in anger, he strapped on his pistol belt, determined

to have a showdown.



HE SAT down to steady his hands, for he couldn't afford to miss when he began shooting. Unlike the crew of a merchantman, the *Marston's* men were well armed with weapons that killed and cut up the hugest mammals in the world. The Colts' six slugs had to match a score of sharp-bladed missiles. He tried to plan his moves, visualizing the eruption of violence. So, by the time he was calm enough to use a gun, he had also bitterly recognized the futility of pitting himself against thirty men.

Like Lee at Appomattox, the Yankees hopelessly outnumbered him.

Reluctantly, he unbuckled the pistol belt and stretched out on his bunk. He was entirely helpless, as much a prisoner as though he had been captured by a Yankee cruiser during the war. Locking the revolver in his stout mahogany desk, he threw the key out a stern window. As it vanished in the swirling foam of the whaler's wake, he was damned if the Yankees would drive him at last to suicide.

Analyzing his situation, he concluded that idleness was his chief danger, and had his answer in a flash of inspiration. Every Reb or Yank officer and enlisted man was writing about his war experiences. Mallory would write about the cruise of the *Shenandoah*. And so, to ride out the stormy present, he plunged into the stormier past.

This actually kept him tolerably content for upwards of a month before recollection became a burden. Besides, by then, the *Marston* was killing

bowheads in the Sea of Okhotsk, endlessly boiling out their oil in huge water-insulated trypots. Competing with other whalers, working ever closer towards shoal water, the *Marston* needed her quasi-captain, and Mallory's hands were busy with charts and instruments.

The fishing was excellent. The cooper was scarcely able to keep ahead of the oil pouring into the cooling tank. With each blanket of blubber stripped like an apple peel from a whale, Mallory saw weeks clipped off the year he had dreaded. Once as many as four whales floated fin up, waiting to be brought under the cutting stage, where Clark and the mates operated accurately and swiftly with their long-handled spades.

With the stench of bubbling trypots and burning scraps of rendered blubber burning as fuel and reeking in his nostrils, Mallory fought nausea and kept constant fixes from landmarks as the *Marston* moved under shortened sail to keep her kills manageable alongside. His orders to the helm were promptly executed. No one interfered with his navigation. When he had to sleep, Clark took over and always woke him long before he had blinked the oily smoke from his reddened eyes.

Each night lighted by the fat-fed flames roaring about the tryworks, a haggard Mallory found himself numbed to peace within, and too tired to worry about himself. Imperceptibly, he became an essential part of a hard-working team. While the crew watched another whaler carelessly rip out her bottom, he kept the *Marston* safe, and when the survivors that the

Marston shared with the other ships in the vicinity morosely thanked him, no one disabused them of the illusion that he was the skipper.

At least, not immediately.

Abruptly, as whaling luck ran, the bow-heads vanished. One day, they swarmed like porpoise. The next, they were gone.

Low in the water, her casks tantalisingly nearly full, the *Marston* lazed under the summer sun, lookouts bleary-eyed, and her decks scrubbed almond white, as days became weeks.

Tensing with exasperation, the crew whiled away the time as Mallory cautiously took the whaler on a slow swing westward along the coast. Some gambled, some sprawled on the forecastle around the six-pounder smoothbore cannon the *Marston* carried as on-the-spot insurance against the pirates of the China Sea. Away from the lingering smell of whale oil, cool and comfortable in the winds sweeping from the Siberian wastes, these idlers swapped yarns or sang.

Engrossed in the intricacies of getting a fix in high latitudes from sun sights, Mallory did not immediately react to a tune floating back from the forecastle above the crash and fall of choppy waves slapping the whaler's sturdy side. Then, suddenly, the refrain stabbed him. He snapped his pencil point, looked up, trapped the helmsman in an unguarded grin, and stalked forward without thinking.

The virile rhythms of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* trailed away. Seamen sat up, exchanged sheepish, guilty glances at their unthinking insult, but, as Nantucket men,

wouldn't say the song had slipped out, the way songs do when men are bored.

Staring at each in turn, Mallory in two short words ripped the grudging toleration that the bygone weeks had woven. "You damn yankees!" he said, with the concentrated venom of broken hopes. Then, turning a proud, straight back on the suddenly rigid faces, he went to his cabin, to whirl with doubled fists as Clark followed him down the ladder.



CLARK didn't give him a chance to explode. "I've been lookin' at the chart," he said in his usual voice. "Seems to me there might be good fishing around the point in Shantar Bay."

"There isn't any channel."

"I know," Clark said quietly, "but the boats could get in." He hesitated for a moment that could have been significant. "Seems to me the men need some exercise."

Staring at the round-faced, husky first mate, Mallory decided he was mistaken in thinking the gesture was friendly. Clark lived and dreamed about nothing except whales.

"Well?"

"You anchor as close to the point as you think safe. I'm going in for two days."

Mallory nodded, the anger cooling within him in the face of a new thought. Only a handful of men would be left aboard the whaler. He'd have comparative peace in which to get a fresh grip on the five thousand dollars that made his future.

"Very well," he said. "I'll see to your boat charts."

The following dawn, Mallory was on deck to observe the launching of the

whaleboats and the oddly subdued men who scrambled into them. The crew had seen just enough of the Sea of Okhotsk to respect the squalls and fogs that rolled out of a clear sky, and their lightly constructed craft were too packed with gear to be comfortable for a long period. As the mates rigged spreads of canvas to carry them over to the forbidding headlands whose devious underwater shelves were unknown, Mallory wished them the best possible luck.

The sooner the *Marston*'s bottomless casks were topped off, the sooner he could live like a gentleman. Standing in the shrouds until the boats turned the point, he put the leadsmen in the chains and carefully felt for good holding ground safely close to the rocky shoals.

By noon, with two anchors down, he had nothing to do except sit and watch the empty, glinting water and the bleak, distant shore, while his crew of survivors doubtfully obeyed his orders to clean ship. Having only a few familiar faces left aboard, Mallory nearly forgot the insult of the previous day.

This insult proved to be minor.

Shortly after dinner, a lookout reported smoke on the seaward horizon. Assuming the newcomer was a whaler trying out blubber, Mallory indifferently squinted at the smoke and settled back to resume a well-earned nap. He dreamed he was again in the *Shenandoah*, Jeff Davis in Richmond and the tattered divisions of Lee still at their game of mauling the well-equipped Yankees who pressed them too close. It was a good dream, punctured by an all too

familiar thunderclap that brought him up in the deck chair.

A mile or so away, a wisping ball of black faded over the newcomer's bow. She was a small war-steamer, flying the flag of Imperial Russia. As the spray from a solid shot fountained and fell, Mallory at last knew the feelings of the Yankees who had been stunned by the *Shenandoah*.

"Could we be at war, sir?" the blacksmith asked uncertainly.

"We're in Russian waters," Mallory replied. "I'll see what they want."

The steamer dropped a boat to carry over a stocky, middle-aged officer who identified himself as Mitchman Menchikov. Mallory was requested to bring his ship's papers to His Imperial Majesty's seven-gun steamer *Nunivak*. Baffled but composed, well aware of the respect to be paid to such a summons, Mallory complied.

Boarding the *Nunivak*, his automatic salute to the quarterdeck brought a flicker to the sharp eyes of a young, slight officer waiting at the gangway. This was Lieutenant Estomin, captain of the *Nunivak*, who returned Mallory's salute with a question asked in English tinged by a French accent. "You have seen service?"

Mallory nodded, but did not elaborate. "Excellent. Then we will have no difficulties. Come with me, Captain."

In the cabin, Estomin opened his collar and wearily examined the *Marston's* papers, from time to time dictating to a ramrod-backed yeoman. In the clean, taut atmosphere of a

man-of-war, Mallory relaxed, somewhat ashamed of the oil clinging to his clothes, and disposed to find Estomin a decent fellow.

The Russian finally scrawled something in the *Marston's* log and passed the book across the table. Mallory negligently glanced at the entry and Estomin ceased to be a decent fellow.

"What is the meaning of a warning to leave within twenty-four hours?" he demanded. "What have we done?"

"You are in forbidden waters." "What?" Mallory blurted, like a man informed by his doctor he has but a month to live. Then his volatile temper reacted to Estomin's contemptuous curtness. "American whalers have used this sea for twenty years!"

"As thieves," Estomin said briskly. "There will be no discussion. You have had your notification. Leave."

Unaware of the anger undermining his judgment, Mallory snapped, "I'll remain long enough to pick up my boats!"

"We only traded away Alaska," Estomin exclaimed, smashing the wardroom table with his fist. "Okhotsk is still ours. Do you dare to question the Czar's jurisdiction?"

Mallory hesitated, struggling to control himself, because he had to. "I'm only telling you our boats will be gone at least forty hours."

"They should not be there," Estomin said carelessly. His paperwork was done and the tall, taut American had become tiresome. "I'll return tomorrow. If you are here, I'll sink you or take you to Nikolaievsk, whichever suits my convenience." "I

must warn you that you will fire at my ship at your risk!"

Staring until he could no longer restrain a laugh, Estomin said, "You threaten me?" "I'll leave when I've recovered my boats, not before!"

Secure in the power of his modern, well-manned broadside, Estomin considered himself most generous in merely gesturing to Mitchman Menchikov to return the American to his whaler. A challenge hurled down by a captain armed with a six-pounder would make a good joke to tell when the winter iced the *Nunivak* to her dock at Nikolaievsk.



OUT under the bright sun, Mallory sobered abruptly, having ample time to look about the *Nunivak's* deck while her boat was being manned. The steamer was small but she was unquestionably a man-of-war. The *Shenandoah* would have gobbled her up, and gazing at the fat-bellied *Marston*, Mallory wished with all his heart for the past.

To Mallory, the men in his boats might sing *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, yet they were men cruising on a barren, uninhabited coast halfway around the world from home, with a few days rations to sustain them. No gentleman could leave them to drown in a line squall while struggling towards Japan, and above everything else, Mallory was a gentleman.

Worried, frightened, he was still able to smile mirthlessly at the *Stars and Stripes* curling lazily above the whaler, as he wondered what Marse Robert would say about a Reb who thumbed his nose at a warship in order to save Yankee hides.

On the *Marston's* deck, he watched the *Nunivak* get under way and arrogantly steam off with a blast of her whistle echoing dismally from the distant headland. The squat, black hull had the hideous fascination of a fat, deadly water moccasin, ready to bare its fangs.

The blacksmith came up and indicated that Mallory had even more troubles by asking what the Russians wanted.

"We're to shift our anchorage," Mallory said.

"Better not shift too far," the blacksmith remarked calmly, the big, supple muscles under his shirt coiling as he put his hands on his hips.

Mallory met the Yankee's frank, warning face and realized that he was caught between the devil and the deep. Through loyalty, the blacksmith would choose to stay, and, if necessary, would pit the *Marston's* six-pounder against the Russian's shells.

Mallory cringed at the thought of such stupidity. Estomin could cruise leisurely well out of range and until the *Marston* blew up or burned, the six-pounder would be as valuable as a saluting piece.

Mallory chewed on the idea of a hopeful signal to Clark and then gave it up as too uncertain. He needed a definite way of both remaining to pick up the boats and escaping destruction. If only the *Marston* had the draft of a whaleboat, he could take her into the bay and hide her behind the headland, but the *Marston* was deep with the weight of oil.

Besides, there wasn't any channel.

Suddenly, in the midst of his bitter misery, Mallory rubbed his chin in the

impact of a mortifying but happy thought. He didn't know there wasn't a channel! The chart merely indicated that one didn't exist. He wouldn't know until he looked. If he found the route used by the whales, there might be enough water for a whaler. Almost carefree, he broke open with a harpoon blade the desk drawer containing his gun, strapped it on, picked up his sextant and boat compass, and astonished the blacksmith by an order to sling one of the spare whaleboats into the water.

He didn't tell the men who rowed him what he was seeking or why, because he couldn't waste any precious daylight time in discussion or argument. Calmly, efficiently, he used the afternoon hours to find the whales' channel, refused to be discouraged by the fact that it was several feet too shallow for the *Marston*—and continued to make a painstaking hydrographic survey of the approaches to the headland.

He halted only when failing light robbed his triangulating sights of accuracy. In his cabin, he reviewed his results, carefully constructing his own chart, and exulted like a slave struck free of his shackles to see a wriggling, hazardous possibility spring out of the lifeless paper. He threw down his pencil. With Yankee luck, a ship could possibly be eased in. Since a Reb was worth ten Yankees, Mallory was confident he could manage it.

Besides, if he failed and smashed in the whaler's hull, he still wouldn't have lost anything. Trying the shoal was the only chance of safety for all.

At dawn, he went on deck, assembled the crew and told them his

intention. As soon as he explained about Estomin, he didn't have any use for the Colts on his hip. The Nantucket men simply turned silently to the windlass and anchors.



WITH the early sun slanting obliquely into the water and showing the masthead lookout the darker masses of submerged rocks, Mallory groped into the winding fairway he had discovered. Under bare steerageway, so that damage should not be fatal if the hull touched, he backed and filled with a delicate hand, constantly shifting helm as he plotted his advance. He led out anchors to kedge the ship gently ahead or sideways when sail was impossible.

Again and again, the *Marston* gouged long, grinding furrows into her side or bottom, and each time Mallory slacked off the pressure before her timbers snapped. The whaler moved with the flexibility of a canoe, steadily negotiating the underwater hazards in response to a masterful display of shiphandling.

Noon came, and with it an ominous dot on the seaward horizon, just as the *Marston* started to turn the headland. Coolly, refusing to be terrified into losing the game in the last few minutes, Mallory ignored the dot which grew into the *Nunivak* plowing ahead at full speed. Gradually, with the leaden slowness of escapes in nightmares, the whaler interposed the bulk of the headland between her vulnerable hull and the onrushing guns of Estomin.

Then the *Nunivak* was blocked from view, and the whaler was across the shelf and into the Bay. Mallory took a full breath, his knees unhinged

by relief.

“Steer for that cove,” he said to the helmsman.

Tasting the sweetness of triumph, Mallory glanced at the blacksmith, who had been manning the mizzen braces. Provisioned for a year, they could outwait the *Nunivak* if Estomin elected to wait for her to reappear. But they wouldn't be held that long. Nikolaievsk froze up in the fall before the ice formed in Shanter Bay and Estomin would have to leave.

Mallory's glow of self-esteem lasted only as long as it took the blacksmith to remark laconically, “He's still coming at full speed.”

The realization shook Mallory. He hadn't considered that Estomin could easily have a reliable chart of the shelf and the anger to risk the *Nunivak*, with her light draft. Cursing, he looked at the sheet of water stretching for thirty miles, fringed by cruel shores or crueler reefs. If it weren't for the boats, he could have taken his chances in a lethal game of hide and seek. As it was, he was chained to the area where Clark would reappear.

The blacksmith looked at him calmly, the spokesman for the Nantucket men, and asked with the confidence of a respectful friend, “What will we do now, sir?”

The blacksmith's confidence was a reflection of an attitude that Mallory newly found on all the faces of the crew. He had proved himself. They trusted his judgment. They would accept his decision. His uncertainty broke with the sharpness of fever.

“Can you men serve a gun?”

The blacksmith's white teeth grinned in a bearded background.

Sailormen learned the rudiments of gun drill as other men learned how to shave.

“All right,” Mallory smiled. “Let's give that Russian a fight if he wants it.” He looked the blacksmith in the eye. “I told him we would, anyway.”

The blacksmith laughed, patting him on the shoulder and, strangely, Mallory didn't resent the Yankee's familiarity in the least.



STANDING on the crest of the headland, looking out at the *Nunivak* lazing at the entrance to the shelf, he was surprised to find himself as lighthearted as he had been in the glorious days on the *Shenandoah*. He actually itched for battle, generously wishing Estomin success in finding a way into the bay. The *Marston* had been warped into a fiord which sheltered her from view or fire except from directly astern, and before Estomin found her, he would first meet the crew.

A slight smile on his lips, Mallory glanced down on his starboard hand to a knoll where the men sprawled in readiness about the *Marston's* gun. The six-pounder was no longer despicable. Expertly placed to take advantage of natural curtains, the gun's muzzle bore on a point less than a hundred yards distant where the *Nunivak* would have to pass. On the *Nunivak*, the gun would be perceived only short seconds before it fired, giving the blacksmith gunner one unhampered shot at the steamer's boilers. That one shot could easily end the career of Lieutenant Estomin. If the shot missed, the Yankees still had the relatively huge target to try again, while the Russian gun crews, alarmed

and hurried, would only have a small, well-protected party of men to aim at.

Mallory had redressed the disparity in arms and, more than this, he would have the shock advantage of surprise. The blacksmith waved cheerfully at him and Mallory spontaneously waved back, in a gesture of comradeship that would once have shriveled his arm.

Below him, Estomin's binoculars sparkled on the steamer's bridge as she lost way to put over a heavily manned boat. The steamer prudently remained at the edge of the shelf, rocking in the groundswell, her crew at battle stations. When the boat pulled away, Mallory was amazed that Estomin was angry enough to pursue the whaler with a cutting out party. Estomin was merely throwing men away, for the Russians huddled in the boat would be helpless against even a small number of determined men armed with a hidden cannon.

Tensed, ready to signal the news to his gun, somewhat sickened at the slaughter that would necessarily ensue, Mallory watched the boat sweep onto the shelf. With grim accuracy, the boat began to twist through the channel that the *Marston* had managed. Mallory reluctantly signaled down to the guncrew to draw their solid shot and reload with canister, and the order electrified the Yankees. In a position with sheer rock below them, the Yankees were unassailable and the Russians exploring the channel were doomed if they came within range.

As though sensing the destruction awaiting them, the Russians rested on their oars a half mile distant from the

headland, and then leisurely put about and returned to the *Nunivak*. Mallory wondered what Estomin would do next. Hearing a scramble on the rocks below, he turned to see the blacksmith climbing up to him, carrying a small United States flag.

"I saw 'em turn back," the blacksmith said, planting the flag beside him. "Thought they might wonder where we are." He slyly studied Mallory before looking off towards the steamer.

Mallory hesitated to be identified with Mr. Lincoln's banner, and yet, whipped out straight by the chill wind sweeping the cliff, the flag brazenly challenged the Russians, and this was Mallory's intention. Estomin would see that impudent rag and know that the *Marston* was standing her ground in justice, though not in law. His bluff had been called, and he would have to do something about Mallory's stubborn insistence that the *Marston* would stay long enough to retrieve her men.

Estomin's reaction was violent. The *Nunivak* abruptly billowed with smoke. The sun sparkled on soaring iron that to Mallory seemed to float straight at him. He stiffened, smiling at the possibility of being killed under the *Stars and Stripes*, and then shells slammed into the rise below. The heavy rock reverberated with concussions that flung great gouts of splinters into spraying dust that harmlessly pattered away.

"Not even close," the blacksmith said.

"We're too high. They can't elevate their guns enough," Mallory said as a hopeful explanation that proved true.

The *Nunivak* purposefully steamed out to sea, swung and fired a trial shell that still fell short of the object of obliterating the Yankee flag. Estomin grimly went to maximum range, tried again, and his shell exploded at the foot of the headland. In futile rage, Estomin then anchored, giving up the effort to punish the bold Americans, and prepared to wait the entire summer for them to emerge. Mallory sighed, feeling almost cheated, for there would be no action. From the vantage point of the headland, any attempt of the Russians to row in and attack could be detected and stopped. Since Estomin had the sense to perceive this, the crew of the well-stocked whaler could simply outwait him, snug in their ship and secure in their position.

The strain and fatigue of months struck Mallory simultaneously, and he was exhausted. "Set up a watch," he said. "Wake me if they do anything."

"Aye, aye, sir," the blacksmith said, Navy-style, and saluted.

Mallory grinned soberly and went to bed.



HE WAS roused, looked about, and saw Clark sitting patiently on a cabin chair.

"Had a good trip," Clark said. "We've just cut in the second bow-head. We can leave any time."

Rubbing his chin, Mallory guessed that he had slept around the clock. He was refreshed, ready for anything, even the friendly twinkle in Clark's eyes, when the mate remarked that the *Nunivak* had left that morning in a huff of smoke.

"Soon as you're up to it, you'd better get us out of this pocket," Clark

said, and thereby delicately implied that Henry Mallory was a very valuable person indeed, able to do something better than a Nantucket man.

"This afternoon, with the sun behind us."

"You're the skipper," Clark said and got up.

Mallory was warmed by the simple words, and decided that he had been mistaken in thinking all Yankees were uncouth. There were a few exceptions like Clark and the blacksmith. Later, going on deck with his sextant and hand-made chart to take the *Marston* through the channel that Estomin had not dared to try, Mallory changed his mind further.

In fact, he had to turn away and shield his eyes looking at the sun, because the men happily mincing the blubber that would enable them to go home spontaneously proved they knew the words of *Dixie* almost as well as *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. And there, over the fan-tail of the *Marston*, fluttered a flag hastily made by the sailmaker in an inexact but well meant imitation of the *Stars and Bars*.

Mallory only hesitated for the moments needed to blink his eyes clear before he strode to the halliards and hauled down his flag.

RIDING instead of walking down Nanking Road, immaculate in fresh white linens, Mallory acknowledged the polite bows of shopkeepers and the nods of his white equals.

Entering his cousin's place of business, he squared his big shoulders. The clerk, having just drawn up papers for Mr. Henry

Mallory to sign in exchange for a heavy sack of gold, was quite obsequious in saying, "Go right in, sir! Mr. Bentham is expecting you."

"Hullo, Henry," Bentham said. "I heard you had a quick cruise."

"The *Marston* has the best crew in the Pacific," Mallory said, his eyes on the respectable pile of heavy coins in front of his cousin.

Bentham quickly executed their business and sat back. "That should set you up, Henry. One last thing—what are you going to do?"

Speculatively weighing the smooth leather sack which had once been his only reason for staying aboard the whaler, Mallory told him, "I'm going home with the *Marston*."

"No!" Bentham exclaimed.

Mallory smiled and bent over to shake hands hard. "Thanks for everything. You'll never know what you've done for me."

"Sorry to lose you," Claude Bentham murmured, and watched his cousin walk out, shoulders square and head high, and decided that a lesson in loyalty was worth a private investment of five thousand dollars.

However, Bentham did have just the slightest pang of conscience when he opened his desk and thoughtfully ripped up Her Britannic Majesty's most gracious consent to accept Henry Mallory as her subject once he had completed and notarized his approved application for citizenship. This had been in his desk since the day he sent Mallory on a cruise with the Nantucket men.