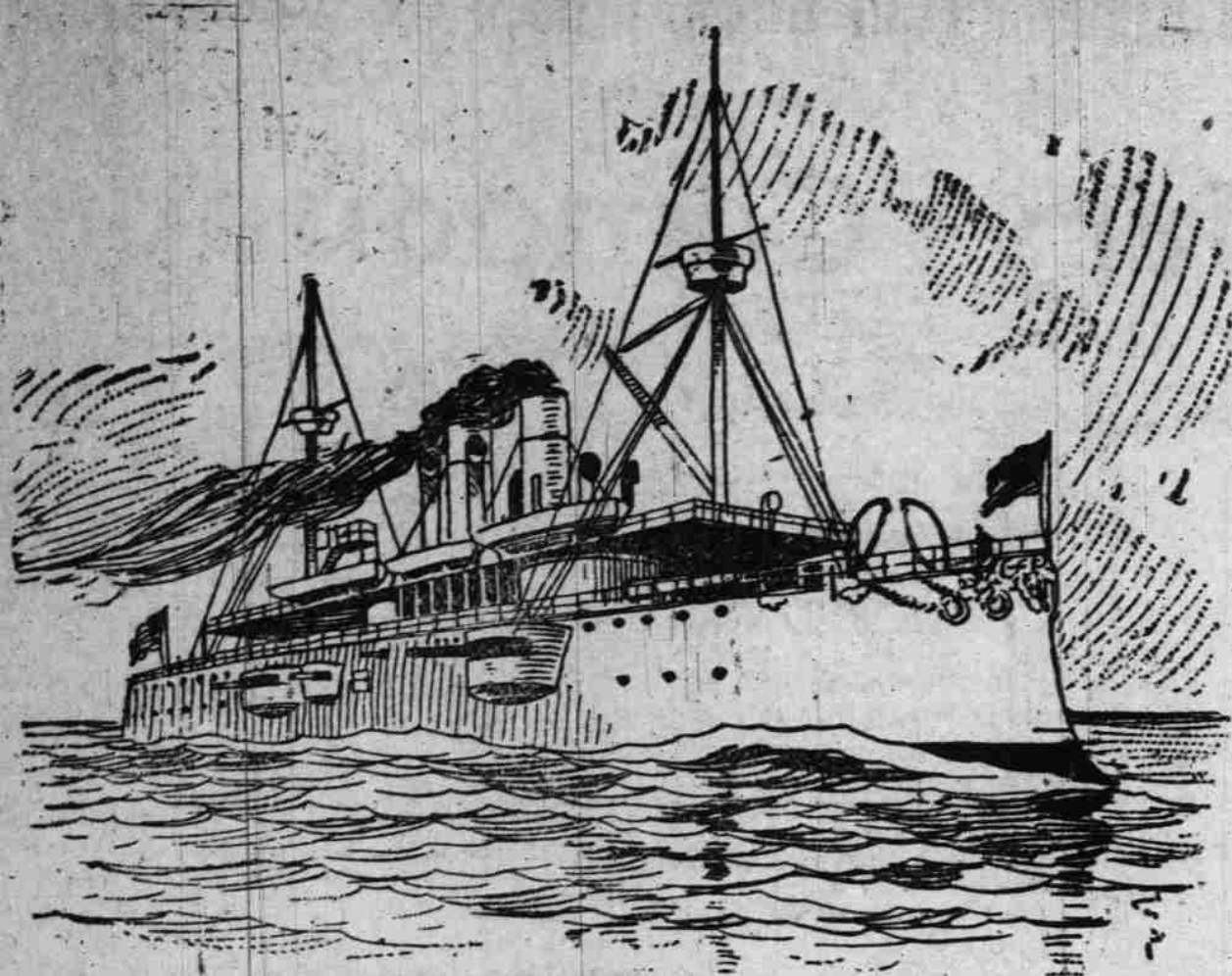


## UNITED STATES WARSHIPS.



### THE BATTLESHIP TEXAS.

The Texas can steam 17 knots an hour when doing her best work. She displaces 6,315 tons of water, develops 9,000 horsepower, and she cost \$2,500,000. Her main battery is composed of two 12 inch and six 6 inch guns. Her secondary battery consists of a dozen smaller guns.

### THE SERPENT'S SIGN.

And How it Did Rodney Barnes a Good Turn.

#### PART I.

A Blackwell bus, rolling eastward along Cornhill, London, reluctantly slowed up at the rear of the Royal Exchange to let two passengers off. The one was a tall, well-built gentleman of middle age, light hearted, clad in blue serge, and with a nautical air about him; his companion was a slim, good looking lad, some 18 or 19 years of age. The captain drew the lad in to a shady passage a little removed from the bustling crowds on Cornhill. "I have business to transact here," he said, pointing to the broad entrance way of Lloyd's, where are the headquarters of the shipping interests of the world. "Of course, you don't want to go with me, but in this great and strange city it is very easy to—"

"I won't get into any danger," interrupted Rodney, "and I won't get lost. I remember a good bit about London." "I'm sorry you can't see more of it on this occasion," said his father. "Two days is little enough, and it would have been twice as much but for the storm that brought us into the Mersey forty-eight hours overdue. And I regret more than all, my boy, that you must go back with me on Wednesday, instead of taking the delightful trip that we planned for you in June. But I hope you will have the opportunity next summer."

"Don't talk about it father," said Rodney, in a low voice. "It was a heavy blow," declared Captain Barnes, his face suddenly clouding. "It is no joke to lose £300, and to replace that sum, as I was bound in honor to do, took nearly all of my savings."

"He broke off suddenly. "What are you going to do with yourself now?" he added. "Take a stroll along the river below London bridge first," Rodney replied, "and then I may run up as far as Chelsea on a penny steamer. It will come back by bus and get supper somewhere on the Strand."

The captain nodded. "You can't go wrong on that," he said, "but keep a watch on the hours, young man, and don't fail to meet me at Euston station at 10 o'clock."

"I will be on hand," promised Rodney. He made a move to go, but turned quickly back. "Father, do you think Stephen Laycock could be in London?" he asked.

"There's no telling," the captain replied, with a shrug of his shoulders. "You are certain he stole the money, father?"

"Yes, I am convinced of that—no doubt of it in the world. He stole it and the will keep it, if there is any left and by now to keep. No, Rodney, don't trope for the recovery of the £300. Remember, Euston station at 10 o'clock sharp. Take a King's Cross bus on the Strand, or at the top of St. Martin's lane."

"It was a hard blow of fate," the lad reflected, bitterly. Briefly, he thought of the same about as follows: During the last voyage of the City of Moscow

from Liverpool to New York, some three weeks previous, there was on board a stinging and eccentric American from the West. He wanted what money he had with him put in a safe place, but refused to trust it to the purser, as was the usual custom. Captain Barnes, on offering out of pure kindness, to take charge of it for him, received from the passenger the sum of £300 in English gold and notes, which he locked up in a small iron safe in his cabin. The last night out being stormy, the captain was on the bridge until nearly dawn, guarding against the perils of the American coast. Then the coming on board of the pilot enabled him to snatch a few hours of sound sleep in his cabin.

By midday the City of Moscow was swinging up the North river to her dock, and now, when the passenger demanded his money, it was found to have mysteriously disappeared from the captain's locked safe. Meanwhile the gangway had been dropped to the pier, and a little later it was learned that one of the deck hands had secretly slipped off the vessel with a flow of passengers. A search revealed the fact that he had packed his scanty belongings and taken them with him.

Beyond a doubt the deck steward, Stephen Laycock by name, was the thief. He was a young Englishman of 22, a bright and willing worker, and had been employed on the steamer for three years. It was clear that he had pilfered the safe key from the sleeping captain's pocket in the dark hours of the morning, taken the money, and then chosen flight in preference to the risk of suspicion and detection.

"I only wish I would run across Steve," Rodney said to himself, as a tide of wheeled traffic checked him under the statue of old King William. He suddenly made a grab at his shirt sleeve and hitched it up to the elbow. On the fleshy part of his arm, several inches above the wrist, a coiled serpent was admirably tattooed in half a dozen brilliant colors. He looked at it with angry eyes, remembering that when it came there, two years ago, while crossing the Atlantic for the first time with his father, he and Stephen Laycock had been fairly chummy. An old sailor, a friend of Steve's, had, with more zeal than discretion, pricked the same snaky design on an arm of each lad. There had been a row, of course, and Captain Barnes had been very angry. It was not pleasant now for Rodney to feel that he and that contemptible thief were branded alike for life.

For two hours the lad lingered amid the memories and sights of the historic old tower. Then, circling around by way of Tower Hill and the Mint, he came, toward 6 o'clock, to the water stairs beneath the tower bridge.

"Want a bit of a ride, sir?" The voice had a hearty and honest ring, and it belonged to the occupant of a wherry that had just grated alongside the lower step—a thickset, youngish man, with deeply bronzed face and clad in blue trousers and a worn shirt of the same color.

"Hullo! I didn't see you land," exclaimed Rodney. "Yes, I wouldn't mind a little ride. How much farther down are you going?"

"Only to Wapping, sir. Come along if you like."

Rodney hesitated an instant. Then, remembering that he had some time to spare, and tempted by his love of the water, he stepped into the wherry and took the stern seat.

"Thank you kindly, sir," said the man, as the lad gave him sixpence. "I suppose you are a waterman, and this is your boat," said Rodney.

The man shook his head. "It's only a poor devil's craft in 'ard luck," he replied. "If the wherry was mine I'd manage to make a living out of it, as sure as my name's Tom Pugsley."

"I'm sorry for you," said Rodney, who was impressed by the seaman's honest face. "It's hard to be out of work in a big city like this. If another shilling will help you along—"

He broke off with a sharp cry, which was echoed at the same instant from a different quarter. A fussy little tug-boat had glided quietly and suddenly from behind the stern of a big merchantman, and was steaming diagonally up stream across the boat of the wherry.

"It's all right sir," exclaimed Tom Pugsley, who had shot a quick glance over his shoulder; "we ain't goin' to collide."

But nevertheless, so unexpected and close at hand had the tug loomed up, there was imminent danger. The sailor knew this, and hustled him a bit. With both hands he jerked at one oar—jerked so hard that the blade snapped off at the rowlock, and he fell sidewise against the gunwale. The tug and the wherry met with a crash, and the latter capsize in the twinkling of an eye.

Rodney went far down toward the Thames mud, but he was a good swimmer, and did not lose his presence of mind or his breath. Striking out hard, he came to the surface, where he looked the water from his eyes and shook about him. He had passed under the tug, and it was now some feet astern. Close to one side was Tom Pugsley, feebly splashing to keep his mouth above water. There was a bleeding wound on his forehead, evidently caused by striking the bottom of the tug, and this seemed to have stunned him. No immediate help was at hand, and he was in peril of drowning.

Rodney knew the fearful risk of trying to aid a man in such a condition, but he was too plucky to hesitate for an instant. At once he swam up behind Pugsley, and took a tight hold of his collar. The half-unconscious sailor

Tom Pugsley went first, and no sooner had Rodney's feet touched the deck than the sailors who were holding him dropped him. As though he had been a hot potato, they broke into loud shouts and jeers.

"It's the strong party!" declared one. "I thought he looked kind of queer."

"Ay, so it is; here's a rummy go!" cried another.

"Hush your noise!" thundered Captain Bowers. Striding into the group he peered first at Rodney's face, and then at the stooped reptile on his bared elbow. His jaw dropped, and his features turned from red to purple. "Ay, ay," he muttered. "Why bless me, if you ain't a different chap altogether! Hang my infernal luck, I say! I'm sorry my infernal luck, I say! The mistake was no more than natural, lad, about that India-ink 'pent on your arm. Might you have a 'rother tattooed the same?"

"No, I have no brother."

"A pal, then? Come, did you ever know a pal on with a serpent on his arm like yours?"

Rodney hesitated a moment, observing that Tom Pugsley was gazing at him curiously. The mystery was growing clear to him, and he was uncertain how to answer. "Two of us had the serpent 'pent on our arms at the same time by an old sailor, a couple of years ago," he finally said. "The other chap was a steward on the ship I crossed in."

"Name of Carson?" eagerly demanded the captain.

"No—Laycock."

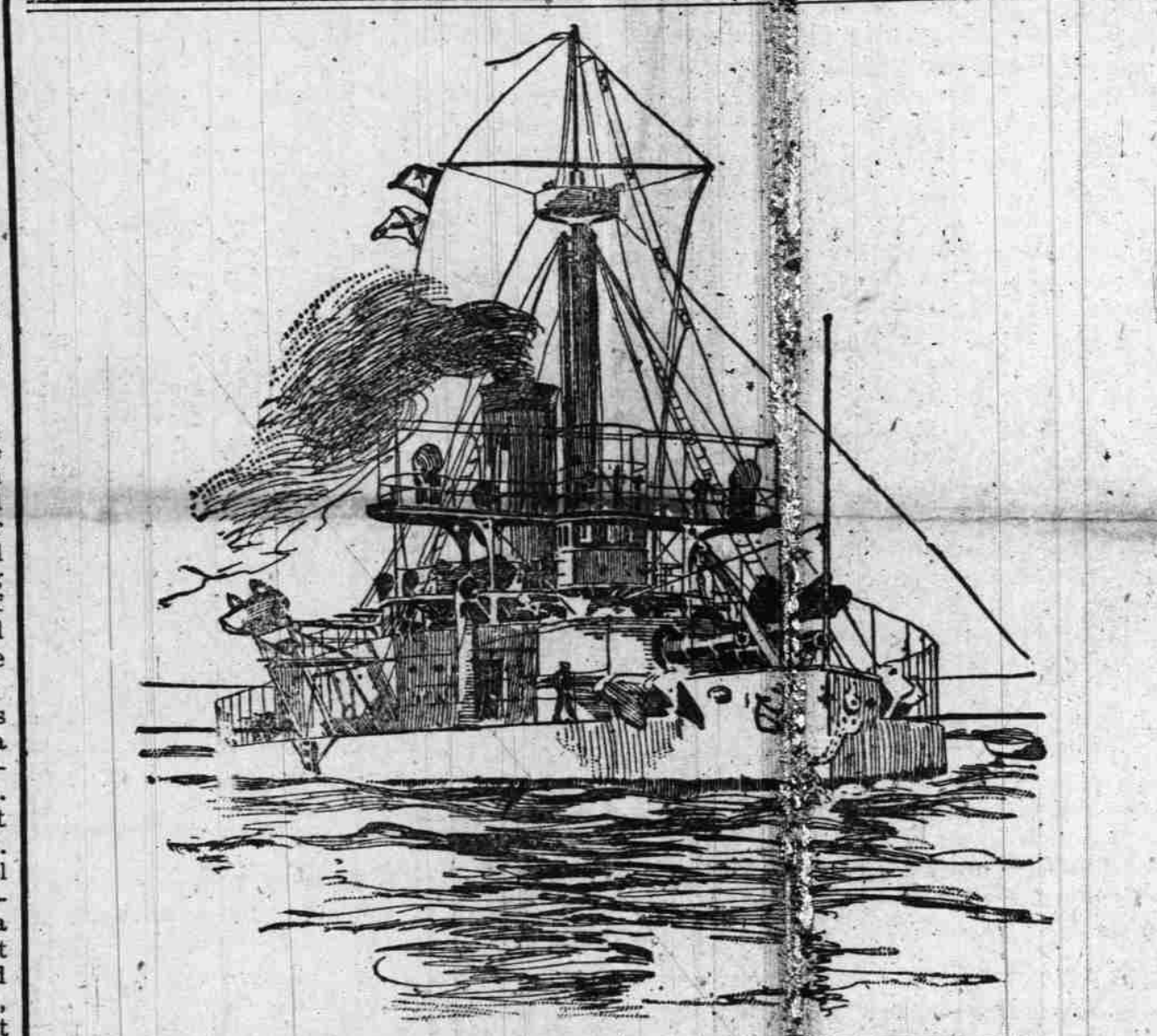
"Was he 'bout 20 years old, slim and sandy-haired, with grayish eyes?"

"Yes, that fits him," assented Rodney.

"It's the identical chap, only he give a different name," cried Captain Bowers.

"Very likely," said Rodney. "What do you mean of him? What has he done?"

"Done?" echoed the angry captain. "Why the scally skunk signed with me for the round trip, and then skipped out as soon as we got into the Thames. That was the day days ago, and the police ain't found him yet. When I seen the serpent on your arm I reckoned you was him, of course—"



### THE DOUBLE TURRET MONITOR TERROR.

The Terror is a modern coast defense vessel of 3,910 tons displacement. Her speed is 12 knots, and she cost Uncle Sam \$3,178,000. Her four big 10 inch guns are carried two in each turret. She also has eight smaller guns. In action she can sink so that her upper deck is flush with the water and her curved deck and revolving turrets are alone presented as a target. She carries a crew of 200 men.

twisted around, seized the lad by the hair, and both sank beneath the tide. Struggling desperately they came to the top again, Rodney grimly holding his breath, and now unable to break his hold, he wished. Once more he was dragged down, and he gave himself up for lost; thoughts of parents and home flashed across his wide-awake mind. Then he saw light, and gulped a mouthful of air. The tug was alongside of him, and he felt strong arms grasp him and pull him on board.

In a moment the brave lad was all right, and able to thank his rescuers. The struggle had drawn his shirt sleeve far up, and the tattooed serpent on his elbow was exposed to plain view. Tom Pugsley was in much better shape than might have been expected.

"God bless you, young gentleman!" he whispered faintly, leaning toward Rodney. "I shan't forget 'ow you saved my life—that blow sort of stunned me. Put us ashore at Wapping stairs, if you don't mind, sir," he added to the captain of the tug.

The captain nodded assent, and gave orders to put on steam. Just then the tug drifted close under the bows of a rakish looking cargo steamer, on which the name Lapping was painted in huge letters of red. Over the rail leaned some one of the crew, and between these suddenly crowded a red-faced, sandy-bearded man. One downward glance he cast at the tug and its occupants, and then yelled excitedly: "Hold on there below! Stop and make fast! Do you hear? I want that lad—there's a warrant out fur him! Heave the young scoundrel up!"

#### PART II.

"I say, hold on there!" came angrily from the cargo steamer. "Don't you be taking that chap away, or I'll give you trouble. He's a deserter from my vessel, an' I want him."

"Is that so?" demanded the captain. "Of course it is," was the reply, "else why should I say it?"

"I never saw the fellow before," exclaimed Rodney. "It's a mistake, sir."

"I am all yours," exclaimed Rodney. "And as I've wronged you, sir?"

"Yes, he 'boded my father of a large sum of money—but what do you mean?"

"I mean I've got 'o'other tattooed chap fur you," was the whispered reply. "Alfred Dyer is the name 'e goes by, and 'e's 'ayin' at my lodgin' place yonder in Upper East Smithfield."

"Can he be the same?"

"Yes, sir. I seen the serpent on 'is arm when 'e was washing 'is hands, an' didn't know 'e was about."

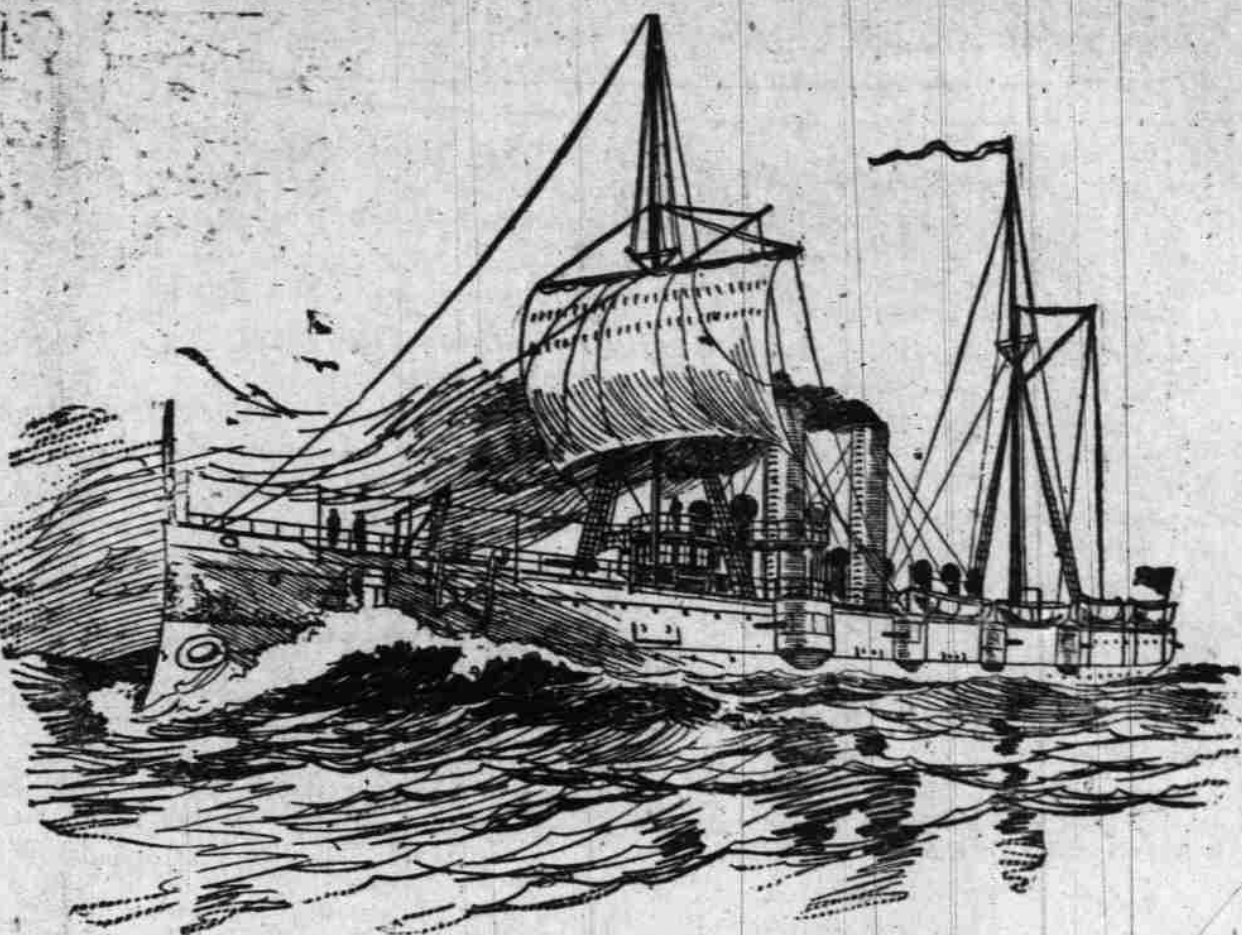
#### PART III.

They tugged from the river up Nightingale lane, between the high, dingy walls of great dock warehouses, and five minutes' steady walking brought them to Upper East Smithfield.

"That's the place whispered Tom, pointing to a sign on which could be read: 'Looking for seamen and emigrants.'"

"An' right," replied Rodney. "Here goes! Don't wait more than a minute or two."

With a fast-beating heart he crossed the street, and pulling his collar up and his hat down a little he glouched carelessly into a building that looked in-



### THE CRUISER MONTGOMERY.

The Montgomery is an unprotected cruiser of 2,080 tons displacement. She cost \$612,500 and has a speed of 19.5 knots. She carries nine 5 inch rapid fire guns and ten smaller guns.

capable of sheltering the possessor of anything like £300.

"I'd like to see Alfred Dyer," Rodney said to the grimy youth in attendance.

"You know him, eh?" was the reply, accompanied by a keen glance.

"Yes; he's an old friend."

"The chap's in," said the grimy youth, apparently satisfied. He flourished his greasy knife and pointed to an open door around the counter to the left. "That way, next floor back."

Rodney followed directions and reached a gloomy hall. He ascended a flight of narrow, uncarpeted stairs to an upper hall, which was in darkness save a thin, upright bar of light, a few yards straight ahead. To this the lad advanced cautiously, and pushing a partly open door back on its hinges he boldly entered.

The room was small and dingy, lighted by a cheap oil lamp, on a shelf, and with a small open window at the rear. And on a low bed, reading a flashy illustrated paper, sat Stephen Laycock. He glanced up, and when he saw his visitor the paper fell from his hands and his bronzed cheeks turned pale.

"Rodney Barnes!" he exclaimed hoarsely, and with a ghastly attempt at a smile. "It ain't really you?"

"That's just who it is," replied Rodney, pushing the door shut and stepping nearer, "and you know what I want. Give me the money you stole from my father's cabin."

"I don't know anything about it," muttered Steve. "Don't deny it," said Rodney. "It's no use. I'm not going to waste time in words. You nearly ruined my father, and you've got the money in that belt. Hand it over, Steve. You shan't get away with it to the cape, as you're planning to do."

"Who told you—"

"Never mind! I want the money without any fuss. And it will be for your own good to give it up."

"What is in this belt is mine," Steve interrupted angrily. "Bluff won't work fine chap, and if I choose to go to the cape I'll go. What proof have you that I stole any money?"

"It's enough that I know it," Rodney answered quietly; "I don't need proof. Look here, Steve, how about Captain Jerry Bowers of the Lapping?"

Steve turned color again, and a gleam of fear shone in his eyes. "Who—who did you say?" he stammered.

"You heard me," Rodney replied. "I said Captain Bowers. He's not far off this minute, and he wants you pretty badly."

fought for mastery. Steve did not dare to cry out, and Rodney kept silent because the still had hopes of gaining his end.

They were pretty evenly matched and for several minutes the struggle went on a brief advantage shifting constantly from one to the other.

"You'll be caught," panted Rodney. "Give up!"

"Never!" Steve hissed. "I'll fix you—"

There was a sudden commotion down stairs—loud voices, the slamming of a door, and then heavy footsteps clattering upward. With an oath Steve threw all his strength into a last desperate effort. He forced his antagonist over, hurled him against a chair, and broke loose. But Rodney had seized and broken the money-belt, and it remained in his hands.

Just then, as Steve stood to his feet, the door flew open, and into the room fairly pitched Captain Jerry Bowers. "I've got you my runaway chicken!" he cried.

"Not yet!" snarled Steve. In a trice he was across the room, and a dull crash told that he had landed on the nearby roof of a shed—outbuilding near by. With a howl of rage and a brief glance at Rodney, Captain Jerry Bowers plunged in pursuit. He recklessly straddled the window sill, and there was another noisy crash as he dropped. Then followed a hoarse outcry and the clatter of feet along a paved court.

Rodney tucked the precious belt under his jacket and darted into the hall, where he came face to face with Tom Pugsley. The latter, with a gesture of silence, drew him into an unlit room a few feet away and pulled the door nearly shut.

"It's my lodgin'," he whispered. "Wait 'ere a bit, an' we'll find a chance to slip out. You were right about the captain, sir—'e must 'ave 'eard us talkin' on deck."

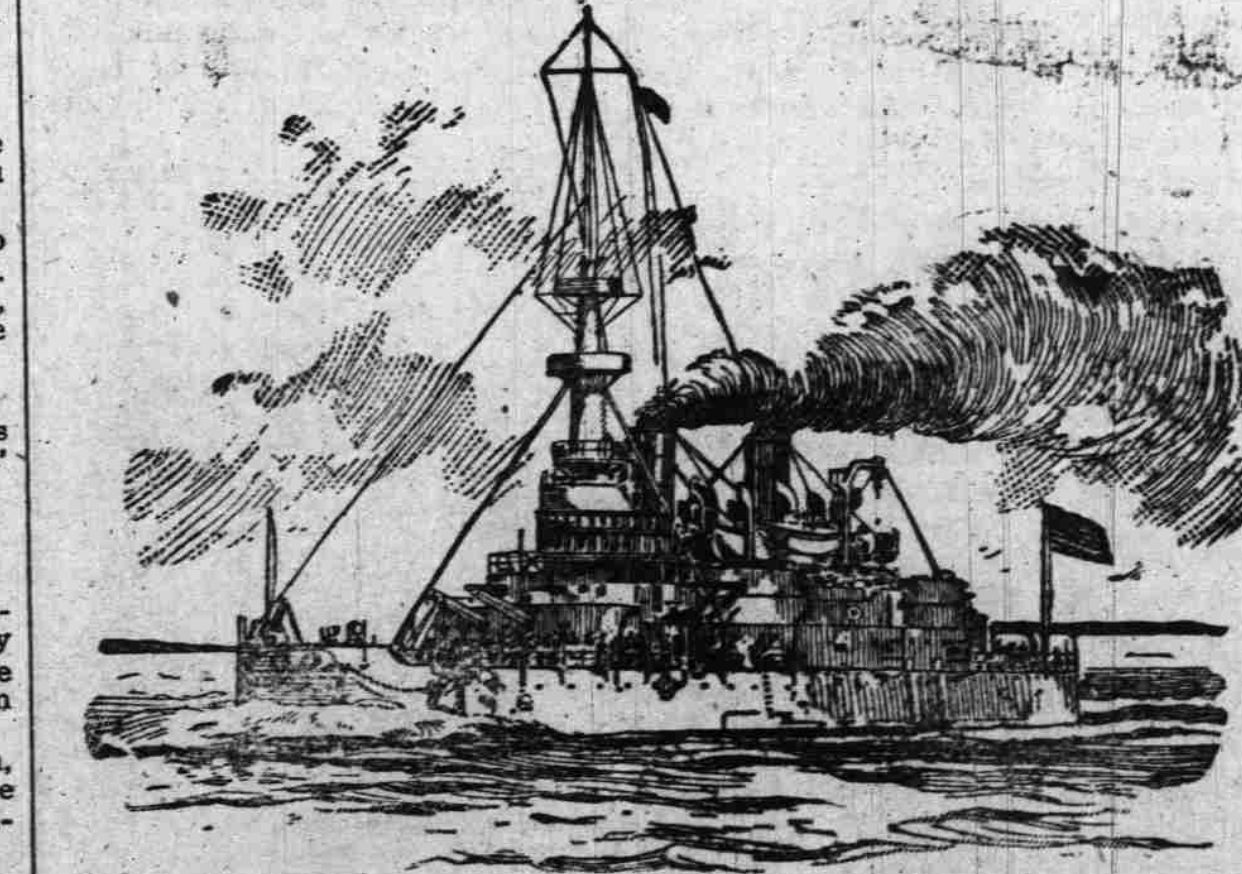
The house was now ringing with noise, and in quick succession five men clattered up the stairs. As soon as they had entered Steve's room Tom and Rodney crept out and down meeting no person on the way. The door at the foot of the lower hall was unlocked and by this they gained the street unseen. They turned the first corner and hurried on by devious ways to the Mimortes. Here they luckily found a hansom, and during the rapid ride that followed Rodney described his adventure to his companion.

"I'm certain the money is in the belt," he concluded, "and I'm glad we've got away all right. There would have been no end of trouble explaining matters to the police, and it might have kept father from taking out his ship on time."

"Yes, we're lucky," assented Tom, "an' no mistake. I knew what was up the minute I seen Captain Bowers go to the door, an' I was afraid 'e'd spoil your trick."

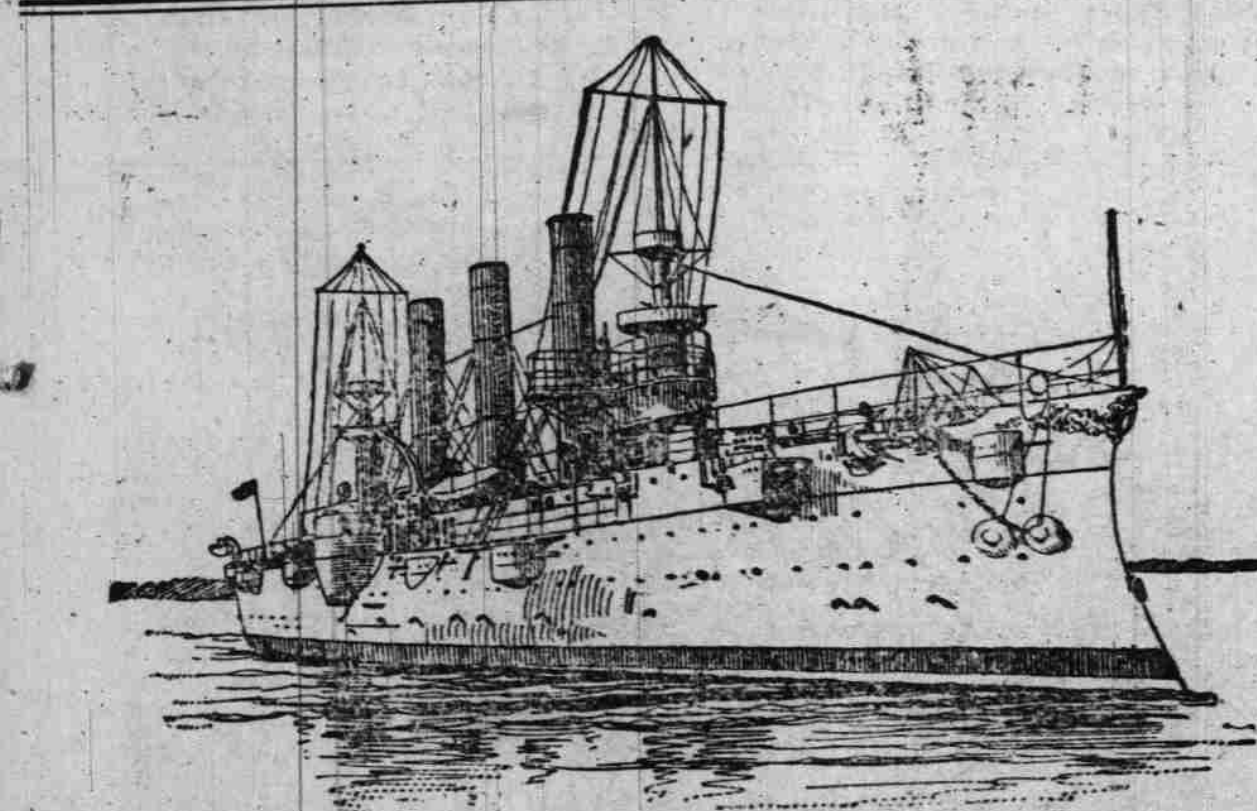
It was just twenty-eight minutes past 10 o'clock when the cab rattled into Euston station, where Captain Barnes was waiting impatiently. He promptly abandoned his intention of catching the night express to Liverpool and all three went to a room in a neighboring hotel. The belt was found to contain exactly 296 pounds, and this sum was further reduced, by a gift of 25 to Tom Pugsley, when the whole story of the recovery of the money had been told.

Why is it that men always look at the face of a bride and women at her clothes?



### SEAGOING BATTLESHIP MASSACHUSETTS.

The Massachusetts is a 15 knot ship and cost \$3,020,000. She displaces 10,288 tons of water, has 9,000 horsepower and carries four 13 inch, eight 8 inch, four 6 inch and 80 guns of smaller size.



### ARMORED CRUISER BROOKLYN.

The Brooklyn is the navy's greatest cruiser. Her speed is 20 knots, her displacement 9,271 tons, and she cost about \$3,000,000. She carries eight 8 inch, twelve 5 inch and 20 smaller guns.