

**THE GUN-BOAT
SERIES; FRANK
BEFORE VICKSBURG**

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The Gun-Boat Series; Frank before Vicksburg by H. C. Castlemon

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**THE GUN-BOAT
SERIES; FRANK
BEFORE VICKSBURG**

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BY
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FRANK BEFORE VICKSBURG.

CHAPTER I.

Home Again.



AFTER all the tragic adventures which Frank Nelson had passed through, since entering the service of his country, which we have attempted to describe in the preceding volume of this series, he found himself surrounded by his relatives and friends, petted and fêted, enjoying all the comforts of his old and well-beloved home.

Only those who have been in similar circumstances can imagine how pleasant that quiet little cottage seemed to Frank, after the scenes of danger through which he had passed. He looked back to the memorable struggle between the

lines; the scene in the turret during the first day's fight at Fort Pemberton; the privations he had undergone while confined in the prison at Shreveport; his almost miraculous escape; and they seemed to him like a dream. All his sufferings were forgotten in the joy he felt at finding himself once more at home. But sorrow was mingled with his joy when he looked upon the weeds which his mother wore, and when he saw the look of sadness which had taken the place of her once happy smile. She seemed ten years older than she looked on that pleasant morning, just fifteen months before, when, standing in the door, she had strained her son to her bosom, and uttered those words which had rung in Frank's ears whenever he felt himself about to give away to his feelings of terror:

"Good-by, my son; I may never see you again, but I hope I shall never hear that you shrank from your duty."

Frank shuddered when he thought how intense must have been the suffering that could work so great a change. But now that he was safe at home again, there was no cause but for rejoicing. His presence there afforded abundant proof that

he had *not* been shot while attempting to run the guards at Shreveport, as had been reported.

And how great must have been the joy which that mother felt at beholding him once more! Although he did not move about the house in his accustomed noisy, boyish way, and although his cheek had been paled by his recent sickness, from which he had not yet wholly recovered, he was still the same lively, generous Frank whom she had so freely given up to the service of his country. During the short time that they had been separated, he had been placed in situations where his courage and determination had been severely tested, and had come safely through, never forgetting his mother's advice; and that mother could not suppress the emotions of pride that arose in her heart, for she knew that her son had done his duty.

Numerous were the questions that were asked and answered, on both sides. Frank was obliged to relate, over and over again, the story of his capture and escape, until Aunt Hannah thrust her head into the room, with the announcement that supper was ready.

When the meal was finished, Frank removed his