

**THE GUN-BOAT
SERIES. FRANK ON
A GUN-BOAT**

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The gun-boat series. Frank on a gun-boat by Harry Castlemon

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HARRY CASTLEMON

**THE GUN-BOAT
SERIES. FRANK ON
A GUN-BOAT**

THE GUN-BOAT SERIES.

FRANK

ON A GUN-BOAT

BY

HARRY CASTLEMON,

AUTHOR OF "THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SERIES," "THE GO-AHEAD
SERIES," ETC.



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FRANK ON A GUN-BOAT.

CHAPTER I.

In the Cabin.



ELL, Frank, did you bring home the evening's paper?" inquired Mrs. Nelson, as her son entered the room where she was sitting.

"Yes, ma'am. Here it is!" answered Frank, producing it. "But there is no news in it. The Army of the Potomac has not moved yet. I don't see what makes them wait so long. Why don't McClellan go to work and thrash the rebels?"

"You must remember that the rebels have about as many men as we have," answered his mother. "Perhaps, if McClellan should undertake to 'thrash' the rebels, as you say, he would get whipped himself."

"That makes no difference," answered Frank "If I was in his place, and the rebels *should* whip me, it wouldn't do any good, for I'd renew the battle every day, as long as I had a man left."

It was toward the close of the first year of the war, during the "masterly inactivity" of the Army of the Potomac. For almost eight months McClellan had been lying idle in his encampment, holding in check that splendid army, which, with one blow, could have crushed out the rebellion, and allowing the rebels ample time to encircle their capital with fortifications, before which the blood of loyal men was to be poured out like water. The people of the North were growing impatient; and "On to Richmond!" was the cry from every part of the land.

From the time Fort Sumter had fallen, Frank had been deeply interested in what was going on. The insults which had been heaped upon the flag under which his grandfather had fought and died, made the blood boil in his veins, and he often wished that he could enlist with the brave defenders of his country. He grew more excited each day, as the struggle went on, and the news of a triumph or defeat would fire his spirit, and he

longed to be standing side by side with the soldiers of the Union, that he might share in their triumphs, or assist in retrieving their disasters.

He was left almost alone now, for many of the boys of his acquaintance had shouldered their muskets and gone off with the others; and that very day he had met Harry Butler, who had enlisted as a private, wearing the uniform of a lieutenant, which he had won by his bravery at Fort Donelson.

He had never said one word to his mother about enlisting, for he was an only son, and he dreaded to ask her permission. But that mother's quick eye easily read what was going on in her son's mind. She had Puritan blood in her veins; her ancestors had fought in the war of the Revolution, and she had resolved that, if Frank wished to go, she would give her full consent. A mother's heart alone can tell the struggle it had cost her to come to this determination.

"I've got a letter from Archie, also," said Frank.

His mother took it from his hand, and read as follows:

PORTLAND, *March* 18, 1862.

DEAR COUSIN:

I am about to tell you something which you will call strange news. Father has at last given his consent to my going to war, provided you will go too. He says that if I go, I must have you with me, to take care of me, and keep me straight. I suppose he thinks I will never go if I am obliged to wait for you, for he says your mother will not consent to your going. You can ask her, any way. You know you always wanted to have a hand in putting down this rebellion.

If we go at all, I think the best plan is to enter the navy. It is a much better branch of the service than the army—the discipline is better; there are no long marches to endure; and, wherever you go, your house goes with you.

Now, be sure and do your best, for now is our chance, if ever. Please write immediately, for I am afraid father will change his mind.

Yours, in haste,

ARCHIBALD WINTERS.

When Mrs. Nelson had read the letter, she handed it back to her son without saying a word.

“Well, mother, what do you think of it?” inquired Frank.

“The matter rests entirely with you, my son,” answered Mrs. Nelson, dropping her sewing into her lap. “Do just as you think best.”

“Do you say I may go?” inquired Frank, joyfully.