

GUNNER DEPEW

CHAPTER I

IN THE AMERICAN NAVY

My father was a seaman, so, naturally, all my life I heard a great deal about ships and the sea. Even when I was a little boy, in Walston, Pennsylvania, I thought about them a whole lot and wanted to be a sailor—especially a sailor in the United States Navy.

You might say I was brought up in the water. As far back as I can remember, I was a good swimmer. When my mother and I were living in Walston and she wanted me for anything, she always sent down to the creek for me, because she knew if I was not at home, I would be swimming. Then, in Yonkers, there was a pier at the Yerks and Company docks which, with the lumber piled on it, was seventy-five feet above the Hudson, and I used to dive off it many times every day in the summer. This was when I was about eleven years old.

When I was twelve I went to sea as cabin boy on the whaler *Therifus*, out of Boston. She was an old square-rigged sailing ship, built more for work