

RUDYARD KIPLING

TRAFFICS AND
DISCOVERIES

Rudyard Joseph Kipling
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Traffics and Discoveries:

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THE CAPTIVE

FROM THE MASJID-AL-AQSA OF SAYYID AHMED (WAHABI)

Not with an outcry to Allah nor any complaining

He answered his name at the muster and stood to the
chaining.

When the twin anklets were nipped on the leg-bars that held
them,

He brotherly greeted the armourers stooping to weld them.

Ere the sad dust of the marshalled feet of the chain-gang
swallowed him,

Observing him nobly at ease, I alighted and followed him.

Thus we had speech by the way, but not touching his sorrow

Rather his red Yesterday and his regal To-morrow,

Wherein he statelily moved to the clink of his chains
unregarded,

Nowise abashed but contented to drink of the potion
awarded.

Saluting aloofly his Fate, he made swift with his story;
And the words of his mouth were as slaves spreading carpets
of glory

Embroidered with names of the Djinns – a miraculous
weaving —

But the cool and perspicuous eye overbore unbelieving.

So I submitted myself to the limits of rapture —

Bound by this man we had bound, amid captives his capture

Till he returned me to earth and the visions departed;

But on him be the Peace and the Blessing: for he was great-
hearted!

THE CAPTIVE

"He that believeth shall not make haste."
— *Isaiah.*

The guard-boat lay across the mouth of the bathing-pool, her crew idly spanking the water with the flat of their oars. A red-coated militia-man, rifle in hand, sat at the bows, and a petty officer at the stern. Between the snow-white cutter and the flat-topped, honey-coloured rocks on the beach the green water was troubled with shrimp-pink prisoners-of-war bathing. Behind their orderly tin camp and the electric-light poles rose those stone-dotted spurs that throw heat on Simonstown. Beneath them the little *Barracouta* nodded to the big *Gibraltar*, and the old *Penelope*, that in ten years has been bachelors' club, natural history museum, kindergarten, and prison, rooted and dug at her fixed moorings. Far out, a three-funnelled Atlantic transport with turtle bow and stern waddled in from the deep sea.

Said the sentry, assured of the visitor's good faith, "Talk to 'em? You can, to any that speak English. You'll find a lot that do."

Here and there earnest groups gathered round ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church, who doubtless preached conciliation, but the majority preferred their bath. The God who Looks after Small Things had caused the visitor that day to receive two weeks' delayed mails in one from a casual postman, and the

whole heavy bundle of newspapers, tied with a strap, he dangled as bait. At the edge of the beach, cross-legged, undressed to his sky-blue army shirt, sat a lean, ginger-haired man, on guard over a dozen heaps of clothing. His eyes followed the incoming Atlantic boat.

"Excuse me, Mister," he said, without turning (and the speech betrayed his nationality), "would you mind keeping away from these garments? I've been elected janitor – on the Dutch vote."

The visitor moved over against the barbed-wire fence and sat down to his mail. At the rustle of the newspaper-wrappers the ginger-coloured man turned quickly, the hunger of a press-ridden people in his close-set iron-grey eyes.

"Have you any use for papers?" said the visitor.

"Have I any use?" A quick, curved forefinger was already snicking off the outer covers. "Why, that's the New York postmark! Give me the ads. at the back of *Harper's* and *M'Clure's* and I'm in touch with God's Country again! Did you know how I was aching for papers?"

The visitor told the tale of the casual postman.

"Providential!" said the ginger-coloured man, keen as a terrier on his task; "both in time and matter. Yes! ... The *Scientific American* yet once more! Oh, it's good! it's good!" His voice broke as he pressed his hawk-like nose against the heavily-inked patent-specifications at the end. "Can I keep it? I thank you – I thank you! Why – why – well – well! The *American Tyler* of all things created! Do you subscribe to that?"

"I'm on the free list," said the visitor, nodding.

He extended his blue-tanned hand with that air of Oriental spaciousness which distinguishes the native-born American, and met the visitor's grasp expertly. "I can only say that you have treated me like a Brother (yes, I'll take every last one you can spare), and if ever – " He plucked at the bosom of his shirt. "Psha! I forgot I'd no card on me; but my name's Zigler – Laughton G. Zigler. An American? If Ohio's still in the Union, I am, Sir. But I'm no extreme States'-rights man. I've used all of my native country and a few others as I have found occasion, and now I am the captive of your bow and spear. I'm not kicking at that. I am not a coerced alien, nor a naturalised Texas mule-tender, nor an adventurer on the instalment plan. *I* don't tag after our consul when he comes around, expecting the American Eagle to lift me out o' this by the slack of my pants. No, sir! If a Britisher went into Indian Territory and shot up his surroundings with a Colt automatic (not that *she's* any sort of weapon, but I take her for an illustration), he'd be strung up quicker'n a snowflake 'ud melt in hell. No ambassador of yours 'ud save him. I'm my neck ahead on this game, anyway. That's how I regard the proposition.

"Have I gone gunning against the British? To a certain extent, I presume you never heard tell of the Laughton-Zigler automatic two-inch field-gun, with self-feeding hopper, single oil-cylinder recoil, and ballbearing gear throughout? Or Laughtite, the new explosive? Absolutely uniform in effect, and one-ninth the bulk of any present effete charge – flake, cannonite, cordite, troisdorf,

cellulose, cocoa, cord, or prism – I don't care what it is. Laughtite's immense; so's the Zigler automatic. It's me. It's fifteen years of me. You are not a gun-sharp? I am sorry. I could have surprised you. Apart from my gun, my tale don't amount to much of anything. I thank you, but I don't use any tobacco you'd be likely to carry... Bull Durham? *Bull Durham!* I take it all back – every last word. Bull Durham – here! If ever you strike Akron, Ohio, when this fool-war's over, remember you've Laughton O. Zigler in your vest pocket. Including the city of Akron. We've a little club there... Hell! What's the sense of talking Akron with no pants?

"My gun? ... For two cents I'd have shipped her to our Filipeens. 'Came mighty near it too; but from what I'd read in the papers, you can't trust Aguinaldo's crowd on scientific matters. Why don't I offer it to our army? Well, you've an effete aristocracy running yours, and we've a crowd of politicians. The results are practically identical. I am not taking any U.S. Army in mine.

"I went to Amsterdam with her – to this Dutch junta that supposes it's bossing the war. I wasn't brought up to love the British for one thing, and for another I knew that if she got in her fine work (my gun) I'd stand more chance of receiving an unbiassed report from a crowd of dam-fool British officers than from a hatful of politicians' nephews doing duty as commissaries and ordnance sharps. As I said, I put the brown man out of the question. That's the way *I* regarded the proposition.

"The Dutch in Holland don't amount to a row of pins. Maybe I misjudge 'em.

Maybe they've been swindled too often by self-seeking adventurers to know a enthusiast when they see him. Anyway, they're slower than the Wrath o' God. But on delusions – as to their winning out next Thursday week at 9 A.M. – they are – if I may say so – quite British.

"I'll tell you a curious thing, too. I fought 'em for ten days before I could get the financial side of my game fixed to my liking. I knew they didn't believe in the Zigler, but they'd no call to be crazy-mean. I fixed it – free passage and freight for me and the gun to Delagoa Bay, and beyond by steam and rail. Then I went aboard to see her crated, and there I struck my fellow-passengers – all deadheads, same as me. Well, Sir, I turned in my tracks where I stood and besieged the ticket-office, and I said, 'Look at here, Van Dunk. I'm paying for my passage and her room in the hold – every square and cubic foot.' 'Guess he knocked down the fare to himself; but I paid. I paid. I wasn't going to deadhead along o' *that* crowd of Pentecostal sweepings. 'Twould have hoodooed my gun for all time. That was the way I regarded the proposition. No, Sir, they were not pretty company.

"When we struck Pretoria I had a hell-and-a-half of a time trying to interest the Dutch vote in my gun an' her potentialities. The bottom was out of things rather much just about that time. Kruger was praying some and stealing some, and the Hollander lot was singing, 'If you haven't any money you needn't come

round,' Nobody was spending his dough on anything except tickets to Europe. We were both grossly neglected. When I think how I used to give performances in the public streets with dummy cartridges, filling the hopper and turning the handle till the sweat dropped off me, I blush, Sir. I've made her to do her stunts before Kaffirs – naked sons of Ham – in Commissioner Street, trying to get a holt somewhere.

"Did I talk? I despise exaggeration – 'tain't American or scientific – but as true as I'm sitting here like a blue-ended baboon in a kloof, Teddy Roosevelt's Western tour was a maiden's sigh compared to my advertising work.

"Long in the spring I was rescued by a commandant called Van Zyl – a big, fleshy man with a lame leg. Take away his hair and his gun and he'd make a first-class Schenectady bar-keep. He found me and the Zigler on the veldt (Pretoria wasn't wholesome at that time), and he annexed me in a somnambulistic sort o' way. He was dead against the war from the start, but, being a Dutchman, he fought a sight better than the rest of that 'God and the Mauser' outfit. Adrian Van Zyl. Slept a heap in the daytime – and didn't love niggers. I liked him. I was the only foreigner in his commando. The rest was Georgia Crackers and Pennsylvania Dutch – with a dash o' Philadelphia lawyer. I could tell you things about them would surprise you. Religion for one thing; women for another; but I don't know as their notions o' geography weren't the craziest. 'Guess that must be some sort of automatic compensation. There wasn't one blamed ant-hill in

their district they didn't know *and* use; but the world was flat, they said, and England was a day's trek from Cape Town.

"They could fight in their own way, and don't you forget it. But I guess you will not. They fought to kill, and, by what I could make out, the British fought to be killed. So both parties were accommodated.

"I am the captive of your bow and spear, Sir. The position has its obligations – on both sides. You could not be offensive or partisan to me. I cannot, for the same reason, be offensive to you. Therefore I will not give you my opinions on the conduct of your war.

"Anyway, I didn't take the field as an offensive partisan, but as an inventor. It was a condition and not a theory that confronted me. (Yes, Sir, I'm a Democrat by conviction, and that was one of the best things Grover Cleveland ever got off.)

"After three months' trek, old man Van Zyl had his commando in good shape and refitted off the British, and he reckoned he'd wait on a British General of his acquaintance that did business on a circuit between Stompiesneuk, Jackhalputs, Vrelegen, and Odendaalstroom, year in and year out. He was a fixture in that section.

"'He's a dam' good man,' says Van Zyl. 'He's a friend of mine. He sent in a fine doctor when I was wounded and our Hollander doc. wanted to cut my leg off. Ya, I'll guess we'll stay with him.' Up to date, me and my Zigler had lived in innocuous desuetude owing to little odds and ends riding out of gear. How in thunder

was I to know there wasn't the ghost of any road in the country? But raw hide's cheap and lastin'. I guess I'll make my next gun a thousand pounds heavier, though.

"Well, Sir, we struck the General on his beat – Vrelegen it was – and our crowd opened with the usual compliments at two thousand yards. Van Zyl shook himself into his greasy old saddle and says, 'Now we shall be quite happy, Mr. Zigler. No more trekking. Joost twelve miles a day till the apricots are ripe.'

"Then we hitched on to his outposts, and vedettes, and cossack-picquets, or whatever they was called, and we wandered around the veldt arm in arm like brothers.

"The way we worked lodge was this way. The General, he had his breakfast at 8:45 A.M. to the tick. He might have been a Long Island commuter. At 8:42 A.M. I'd go down to the Thirty-fourth Street ferry to meet him – I mean I'd see the Zigler into position at two thousand (I began at three thousand, but that was cold and distant) – and blow him off to two full hoppers – eighteen rounds – just as they were bringing in his coffee. If his crowd was busy celebrating the anniversary of Waterloo or the last royal kid's birthday, they'd open on me with two guns (I'll tell you about them later on), but if they were disengaged they'd all stand to their horses and pile on the ironmongery, and washers, and typewriters, and five weeks' grub, and in half an hour they'd sail out after me and the rest of Van Zyl's boys; lying down and firing till 11:45 A.M. or maybe high noon. Then we'd go from labour to refreshment, resooming at 2 P.M. and battling till tea-time.

Tuesday and Friday was the General's moving days. He'd trek ahead ten or twelve miles, and we'd loaf around his flankers and exercise the ponies a piece. Sometimes he'd get hung up in a drift – stalled crossin' a crick – and we'd make playful snatches at his wagons. First time that happened I turned the Zigler loose with high hopes, Sir; but the old man was well posted on rearguards with a gun to 'em, and I had to haul her out with three mules instead of six. I was pretty mad. I wasn't looking for any experts back of the Royal British Artillery. Otherwise, the game was mostly even. He'd lay out three or four of our commando, and we'd gather in four or five of his once a week or thereon. One time, I remember, long towards dusk we saw 'em burying five of their boys. They stood pretty thick around the graves. We wasn't more than fifteen hundred yards off, but old Van Zyl wouldn't fire. He just took off his hat at the proper time. He said if you stretched a man at his prayers you'd have to hump his bad luck before the Throne as well as your own. I am inclined to agree with him. So we browsed along week in and week out. A war-sharp might have judged it sort of docile, but for an inventor needing practice one day and peace the next for checking his theories, it suited Laughton O. Zigler.

"And friendly? Friendly was no word for it. We was brothers in arms.

"Why, I knew those two guns of the Royal British Artillery as well as I used to know the old Fifth Avenoo stages. *They* might have been brothers too.

"They'd jolt into action, and wiggle around and skid and spit and cough and prize 'emselves back again during our hours of bloody battle till I could have wept, Sir, at the spectacle of modern white men chained up to these old hand-power, back-number, flint-and-steel reaping machines. One of 'em – I called her Baldy – she'd a long white scar all along her barrel – I'd made sure of twenty times. I knew her crew by sight, but she'd come switching and teturing out of the dust of my shells like – like a hen from under a buggy – and she'd dip into a gully, and next thing I'd know 'ud be her old nose peeking over the ridge sniffin' for us. Her runnin' mate had two grey mules in the lead, and a natural wood wheel repainted, and a whole raft of rope-ends trailin' around. 'Jever see Tom Reed with his vest off, steerin' Congress through a heat-wave? I've been to Washington often – too often – filin' my patents. I called her Tom Reed. We three 'ud play pussy-wants-a-corner all round the outposts on off-days – cross-lots through the sage and along the mezas till we was short-circuited by canons. O, it was great for me and Baldy and Tom Reed! I don't know as we didn't neglect the legitimate interests of our respective commanders sometimes for this ball-play. I know *I* did.

"Long towards the fall the Royal British Artillery grew shy – hung back in their breeching sort of – and their shooting was way – way off. I observed they wasn't taking any chances, not though I acted kitten almost underneath 'em.

"I mentioned it to Van Zyl, because it struck me I had about

knocked their Royal British moral endways.

"'No,' says he, rocking as usual on his pony. 'My Captain Mankeltow he is sick. That is all.'

"'So's your Captain Mankeltow's guns,' I said. 'But I'm going to make 'em a heap sicker before he gets well.'

"'No,' says Van Zyl. 'He has had the enteric a little. Now he is better, and he was let out from hospital at Jackhalputs. Ah, that Mankeltow! He always makes me laugh so. I told him – long back – at Colesberg, I had a little home for him at Nooitgedacht. But he would not come – no! He has been sick, and I am sorry.'

"'How d'you know that?' I says.

"'Why, only to-day he sends back his love by Johanna Van der Merwe, that goes to their doctor for her sick baby's eyes. He sends his love, that Mankeltow, and he tells her tell me he has a little garden of roses all ready for me in the Dutch Indies – Umballa. He is very funny, my Captain Mankeltow.'

"'The Dutch and the English ought to fraternise, Sir. They've the same notions of humour, to my thinking.'

"'When he gets well,' says Van Zyl, 'you look out, Mr. American. He comes back to his guns next Tuesday. Then they shoot better.'

"I wasn't so well acquainted with the Royal British Artillery as old man Van Zyl. I knew this Captain Mankeltow by sight, of course, and, considering what sort of a man with the hoe he was, I thought he'd done right well against my Zigler. But nothing epoch-making.

"Next morning at the usual hour I waited on the General, and old Van Zyl come along with some of the boys. Van Zyl didn't hang round the Zigler much as a rule, but this was his luck that day.

"He was peeking through his glasses at the camp, and I was helping pepper, the General's sow-belly – just as usual – when he turns to me quick and says, 'Almighty! How all these Englishmen are liars! You cannot trust one,' he says. 'Captain Mankeltow tells our Johanna he comes not back till Tuesday, and to-day is Friday, and there he is! Almighty! The English are all Chamberlains!'

"If the old man hadn't stopped to make political speeches he'd have had his supper in laager that night, I guess. I was busy attending to Tom Reed at two thousand when Baldy got in her fine work on me. I saw one sheet of white flame wrapped round the hopper, and in the middle of it there was one o' my mules straight on end. Nothing out of the way in a mule on end, but this mule hadn't any head. I remember it struck me as incongruous at the time, and when I'd ciphered it out I was doing the Santos-Dumont act without any balloon and my motor out of gear. Then I got to thinking about Santos-Dumont and how much better my new way was. Then I thought about Professor Langley and the Smithsonian, and wishing I hadn't lied so extravagantly in some of my specifications at Washington. Then I quit thinking for quite a while, and when I resumed my train of thought I was nude, Sir, in a very stale stretcher, and my mouth was full of fine dirt all flavoured with Laughtite.

"I coughed up that dirt.

"'Hullo!' says a man walking beside me. 'You've spoke almost in time. Have a drink?'

"I don't use rum as a rule, but I did then, because I needed it.

"'What hit us?' I said.

"'Me,' he said. 'I got you fair on the hopper as you pulled out of that donga; but I'm sorry to say every last round in the hopper's exploded and your gun's in a shocking state. I'm real sorry,' he says. 'I admire your gun, Sir.'

"'Are you Captain Mankeltow?' I says.

"'Yes,' he says. 'I presoom you're Mister Zigler. Your commanding officer told me about you.'

"'Have you gathered in old man Van Zyl?' I said.

"'Commandant Van Zyl,' he says very stiff, 'was most unfortunately wounded, but I am glad to say it's not serious. We hope he'll be able to dine with us to-night; and I feel sure,' he says, 'the General would be delighted to see you too, though he didn't expect,' he says, 'and no one else either, by Jove!' he says, and blushed like the British do when they're embarrassed.

"I saw him slide an Episcopalian Prayer-book up his sleeve, and when I looked over the edge of the stretcher there was half-a-dozen enlisted men – privates – had just quit digging and was standing to attention by their spades. I guess he was right on the General not expecting me to dinner; but it was all of a piece with their sloppy British way of doing business. Any God's quantity of fuss and flubdub to bury a man, and not an ounce of

forehandedness in the whole outfit to find out whether he was rightly dead. And I am a Congregationalist anyway!

"Well, Sir, that was my introduction to the British Army. I'd write a book about it if anyone would believe me. This Captain Mankeltow, Royal British Artillery, turned the doctor on me (I could write another book about *him*) and fixed me up with a suit of his own clothes, and fed me canned beef and biscuits, and give me a cigar – a Henry Clay and a whisky-and- sparklet. He was a white man.

"'Ye-es, by Jove,' he said, dragging out his words like a twist of molasses, 'we've all admired your gun and the way you've worked it. Some of us betted you was a British deserter. I won a sovereign on that from a yeoman. And, by the way,' he says, 'you've disappointed me groom pretty bad.'

"'Where does your groom come in?' I said.

"'Oh, he was the yeoman. He's a dam poor groom,' says my captain, 'but he's a way-up barrister when he's at home. He's been running around the camp with his tongue out, waiting for the chance of defending you at the court-martial.'

"'What court-martial?' I says.

"'On you as a deserter from the Artillery. You'd have had a good run for your money. Anyway, you'd never have been hung after the way you worked your gun. Deserter ten times over,' he says, 'I'd have stuck out for shooting you like a gentleman.'

"Well, Sir, right there it struck me at the pit of my stomach – sort of sickish, sweetish feeling – that my position needed

regularising pretty bad. I ought to have been a naturalised burgher of a year's standing; but Ohio's my State, and I wouldn't have gone back on her for a desertful of Dutchmen. That and my enthooosiasm as an inventor had led me to the existing crisis; but I couldn't expect this Captain Mankeltow to regard the proposition that way. There I sat, the rankest breed of unreconstructed American citizen, caught red-handed squirting hell at the British Army for months on end. I tell *you*, Sir, I wished I was in Cincinnatah that summer evening. I'd have compromised on Brooklyn.

"What d'you do about aliens?' I said, and the dirt I'd coughed up seemed all back of my tongue again.

"'Oh,' says he, 'we don't do much of anything. They're about all the society we get. I'm a bit of a pro-Boer myself,' he says, 'but between you and me the average Boer ain't over and above intellectual. You're the first American we've met up with, but of course you're a burgher.'

"It was what I ought to have been if I'd had the sense of a common tick, but the way he drawled it out made me mad.

"'Of course I am not,' I says. 'Would *you* be a naturalised Boer?'

"'I'm fighting against 'em,' he says, lighting a cigarette, 'but it's all a matter of opinion.'

"'Well,' I says, 'you can hold any blame opinion you choose, but I'm a white man, and my present intention is to die in that colour.'

"He laughed one of those big, thick-ended, British laughs that don't lead anywhere, and whacked up some sort of compliment about America that made me mad all through.

"I am the captive of your bow and spear, Sir, but I do not understand the alleged British joke. It is depressing.

"I was introduced to five or six officers that evening, and every blame one of 'em grinned and asked me why I wasn't in the Filipeens suppressing our war! And that was British humour! They all had to get it off their chests before they'd talk sense. But they was sound on the Zigler. They had all admired her. I made out a fairy-story of me being wearied of the war, and having pushed the gun at them these last three months in the hope they'd capture it and let me go home. That tickled 'em to death. They made me say it three times over, and laughed like kids each time. But half the British *are* kids; specially the older men. My Captain Mankeltow was less of it than the others. He talked about the Zigler like a lover, Sir, and I drew him diagrams of the hopper-feed and recoil-cylinder in his note-book. He asked the one British question I was waiting for, 'Hadn't I made my working-parts too light?' The British think weight's strength.

"At last – I'd been shy of opening the subject before – at last I said, 'Gentlemen, you are the unprejudiced tribunal I've been hunting after. I guess you ain't interested in any other gun-factory, and politics don't weigh with you. How did it feel your end of the game? What's my gun done, anyway?'

"'I hate to disappoint you,' says Captain Mankeltow, 'because

I know you feel as an inventor.' I wasn't feeling like an inventor just then. I felt friendly, but the British haven't more tact than you can pick up with a knife out of a plate of soup.

"The honest truth,' he says, 'is that you've wounded about ten of us one way and another, killed two battery horses and four mules, and – oh, yes,' he said, 'you've bagged five Kaffirs. But, buck up,' he said, 'we've all had mighty close calls' – shaves, he called 'em, I remember. 'Look at my pants.'

"They was repaired right across the seat with Minneapolis flour-bagging. I could see the stencil.

"I ain't bluffing,' he says. 'Get the hospital returns, Doc.'

"The doctor gets 'em and reads 'em out under the proper dates. That doctor alone was worth the price of admission.

"I was right pleased right through that I hadn't killed any of these cheerful kids; but none the less I couldn't help thinking that a few more Kaffirs would have served me just as well for advertising purposes as white men. No, sir. Anywhichway you regard the proposition, twenty-one casualties after months of close friendship like ours was – paltry.

"They gave me taffy about the gun – the British use taffy where we use sugar. It's cheaper, and gets there just the same. They sat around and proved to me that my gun was too good, too uniform – shot as close as a Mannlicher rifle.

"Says one kid chewing a bit of grass: 'I counted eight of your shells, Sir, burst in a radius of ten feet. All of 'em would have gone through one waggon-tilt. It was beautiful,' he says. 'It was

too good.'

"I shouldn't wonder if the boys were right. My Laughtite is too mathematically uniform in propelling power. Yes; she was too good for this refractory fool of a country. The training gear was broke, too, and we had to swivel her around by the trail. But I'll build my next Zigler fifteen hundred pounds heavier. Might work in a gasoline motor under the axles. I must think that up.

"'Well, gentlemen,' I said, 'I'd hate to have been the death of any of you; and if a prisoner can deed away his property, I'd love to present the Captain here with what he's seen fit to leave of my Zigler.'

"'Thanks awf'ly,' says my Captain. 'I'd like her very much. She'd look fine in the mess at Woolwich. That is, if you don't mind, Mr. Zigler.'

"'Go right ahead,' I says. 'I've come out of all the mess I've any use for; but she'll do to spread the light among the Royal British Artillery.'

"I tell you, Sir, there's not much of anything the matter with the Royal British Artillery. They're brainy men languishing under an effete system which, when you take good holt of it, is England – just all England. 'Times I'd feel I was talking with real live citizens, and times I'd feel I'd struck the Beef Eaters in the Tower.

"How? Well, this way. I was telling my Captain Mankeltow what Van Zyl had said about the British being all Chamberlains when the old man saw him back from hospital four days ahead of time.

"Oh, damn it all!" he says, as serious as the Supreme Court. 'It's too bad,' he says. 'Johanna must have misunderstood me, or else I've got the wrong Dutch word for these blarsted days of the week. I told Johanna I'd be out on Friday. The woman's a fool. Oah, da-am it all!' he says. 'I wouldn't have sold old Van Zyl a pup like that,' he says. 'I'll hunt him up and apologise.'

"He must have fixed it all right, for when we sailed over to the General's dinner my Captain had Van Zyl about half-full of sherry and bitters, as happy as a clam. The boys all called him Adrian, and treated him like their prodigal father. He'd been hit on the collarbone by a wad of shrapnel, and his arm was tied up.

"But the General was the peach. I presume you're acquainted with the average run of British generals, but this was my first. I sat on his left hand, and he talked like – like the *Ladies' Home Journal*. J'ever read that paper? It's refined, Sir – and innocuous, and full of nickel-plated sentiments guaranteed to improve the mind. He was it. He began by a Lydia Pinkham heart-to-heart talk about my health, and hoped the boys had done me well, and that I was enjoying my stay in their midst. Then he thanked me for the interesting and valuable lessons that I'd given his crowd – specially in the matter of placing artillery and rearguard attacks. He'd wipe his long thin moustache between drinks – lime-juice and water he used – and blat off into a long 'a-aah,' and ladle out more taffy for me or old man Van Zyl on his right. I told him how I'd had my first Pisgah-sight of the principles of the Zigler when I was a fourth-class postmaster on a star-route in Arkansas. I told

him how I'd worked it up by instalments when I was machinist in Waterbury, where the dollar-watches come from. He had one on his wrist then. I told him how I'd met Zalinski (he'd never heard of Zalinski!) when I was an extra clerk in the Naval Construction Bureau at Washington. I told him how my uncle, who was a truck-farmer in Noo Jersey (he loaned money on mortgage too, for ten acres ain't enough now in Noo Jersey), how he'd willed me a quarter of a million dollars, because I was the only one of our kin that called him down when he used to come home with a hard-cider jag on him and heave ox-bows at his nieces. I told him how I'd turned in every red cent on the Zigler, and I told him the whole circus of my coming out with her, and so on, and so following; and every forty seconds he'd wipe his moustache and blat, 'How interesting. Really, now? How interesting.'

"It was like being in an old English book, Sir. Like *Bracebridge Hall*. But an American wrote *that!* I kept peeking around for the Boar's Head and the Rosemary and Magna Charta and the Cricket on the Hearth, and the rest of the outfit. Then Van Zyl whirled in. He was no ways jagged, but thawed – thawed, Sir, and among friends. They began discussing previous scraps all along the old man's beat – about sixty of 'em – as well as side-shows with other generals and columns. Van Zyl told 'im of a big beat he'd worked on a column a week or so before I'd joined him. He demonstrated his strategy with forks on the table.

"'There!' said the General, when he'd finished. 'That proves my contention to the hilt. Maybe I'm a bit of a pro-Boer, but I

stick to it,' he says, 'that under proper officers, with due regard to his race prejudices, the Boer'ud make the finest mounted infantry in the Empire. Adrian,' he says, 'you're simply squandered on a cattle-run. You ought to be at the Staff College with De Wet.'

"You catch De Wet and I come to your Staff College – eh,' says Adrian, laughing. 'But you are so slow, Generaal. Why are you so slow? For a month,' he says, 'you do so well and strong that we say we shall hands-up and come back to our farms. Then you send to England and make us a present of two – three – six hundred young men, with rifles and wagons and rum and tobacco, and such a great lot of cartridges, that our young men put up their tails and start all over again. If you hold an ox by the horn and hit him by the bottom he runs round and round. He never goes anywhere. So, too, this war goes round and round. You know that, Generaal!'

"Quite right, Adrian,' says the General; 'but you must believe your Bible.'

"Hooh!" says Adrian, and reaches for the whisky. 'I've never known a Dutchman a professing Atheist, but some few have been rather active Agnostics since the British sat down in Pretoria. Old man Van Zyl – he told me – had soured on religion after Bloemfontein surrendered. He was a Free Stater for one thing.'

"He that believeth,' says the General, 'shall not make haste. That's in Isaiah. We believe we're going to win, and so we don't make haste. As far as I'm concerned I'd like this war to last another five years. We'd have an army then. It's just this way,

Mr. Zigler,' he says, 'our people are brimfull of patriotism, but they've been born and brought up between houses, and England ain't big enough to train 'em – not if you expect to preserve.'

'''Preserve what?' I says. 'England?'

'''No. The game,' he says; 'and that reminds me, gentlemen, we haven't drunk the King and Foxhunting.'

'''So they drank the King and Fox-hunting. I drank the King because there's something about Edward that tickles me (he's so blame British); but I rather stood out on the Fox-hunting. I've ridden wolves in the cattle- country, and needed a drink pretty bad afterwards, but it never struck me as I ought to drink about it – he-red-it-arily.

'''No, as I was saying, Mr. Zigler,' he goes on, 'we have to train our men in the field to shoot and ride. I allow six months for it; but many column-commanders – not that I ought to say a word against 'em, for they're the best fellows that ever stepped, and most of 'em are my dearest friends – seem to think that if they have men and horses and guns they can take tea with the Boers. It's generally the other way about, ain't it, Mr. Zigler?'

'''To some extent, Sir,' I said.

'''I'm *so* glad you agree with me,' he says. 'My command here I regard as a training depot, and you, if I may say so, have been one of my most efficient instructors. I mature my men slowly but thoroughly. First I put 'em in a town which is liable to be attacked by night, where they can attend riding-school in the day. Then I use 'em with a convoy, and last I put 'em into a column. It

takes time,' he says, 'but I flatter myself that any men who have worked under me are at least grounded in the rudiments of their profession. Adrian,' he says, 'was there anything wrong with the men who upset Van Bester's applecart last month when he was trying to cross the line to join Piper with those horses he'd stole from Gabbitas?'

"'No, Generaal,' says Van Zyl. 'Your men got the horses back and eleven dead; and Van Besters, he ran to Delarey in his shirt. They was very good, those men. They shoot hard.'

"'So pleased to hear you say so. I laid 'em down at the beginning of this century – a 1900 vintage. *You* remember 'em, Mankeltow?' he says. 'The Central Middlesex Buncho Busters – clerks and floorwalkers mostly,' and he wiped his moustache. 'It was just the same with the Liverpool Buckjumpers, but they were stevedores. Let's see – they were a last-century draft, weren't they? They did well after nine months. *You* know 'em, Van Zyl? You didn't get much change out of 'em at Pootfontein?'

"'No,' says Van Zyl. 'At Pootfontein I lost my son Andries.'

"'I beg your pardon, Commandant,' says the General; and the rest of the crowd sort of cooed over Adrian.

"'Excoose,' says Adrian. 'It was all right. They were good men those, but it is just what I say. Some are so dam good we want to hands-up, and some are so dam bad, we say, "Take the Vierkleur into Cape Town." It is not upright of you, Generaal. It is not upright of you at all. I do not think you ever wish this war to finish.'

"It's a first-class dress-parade for Armageddon,' says the General. 'With luck, we ought to run half a million men through the mill. Why, we might even be able to give our Native Army a look in. Oh, not here, of course, Adrian, but down in the Colony – say a camp-of-exercise at Worcester. You mustn't be prejudiced, Adrian. I've commanded a district in India, and I give you my word the native troops are splendid men.'

"'Oh, I should not mind them at Worcester,' says Adrian. 'I would sell you forage for them at Worcester – yes, and Paarl and Stellenbosch; but Almighty!' he says, 'must I stay with Cronje till you have taught half a million of these stupid boys to ride? I shall be an old man.'

"Well, Sir, then and there they began arguing whether St. Helena would suit Adrian's health as well as some other places they knew about, and fixing up letters of introduction to Dukes and Lords of their acquaintance, so's Van Zyl should be well looked after. We own a fair-sized block of real estate – America does – but it made me sickish to hear this crowd fluttering round the Atlas (oh yes, they had an Atlas), and choosing stray continents for Adrian to drink his coffee in. The old man allowed he didn't want to roost with Cronje, because one of Cronje's kin had jumped one of his farms after Paardeberg. I forget the rights of the case, but it was interesting. They decided on a place called Umballa in India, because there was a first-class doctor there.

"So Adrian was fixed to drink the King and Foxhunting, and study up the Native Army in India (I'd like to see 'em myself), till

the British General had taught the male white citizens of Great Britain how to ride. Don't misunderstand me, Sir. I loved that General. After ten minutes I loved him, and I wanted to laugh at him; but at the same time, sitting there and hearing him talk about the centuries, I tell you, Sir, it scared me. It scared me cold. He admitted everything – he acknowledged the corn before you spoke – he was more pleased to hear that his men had been used to wipe the geldt with than I was when I knocked out Tom Reed's two lead- horses – and he sat back and blew smoke through his nose and matured his men like cigars and – he talked of the everlastin' centuries!

"I went to bed nearer nervous prostration than I'd come in a long time. Next morning me and Captain Mankeltow fixed up what his shrapnel had left of my Zigler for transport to the railroad. She went in on her own wheels, and I stencilled her 'Royal Artillery Mess, Woolwich,' on the muzzle, and he said he'd be grateful if I'd take charge of her to Cape Town, and hand her over to a man in the Ordnance there. 'How are you fixed financially? You'll need some money on the way home,' he says at last.

"'For one thing, Cap,' I said, 'I'm not a poor man, and for another I'm not going home. I am the captive of your bow and spear. I decline to resign office.'

"'Skittles!' he says (that was a great word of his), 'you'll take parole, and go back to America and invent another Zigler, a trifle heavier in the working parts – I would. We've got more prisoners

than we know what to do with as it is,' he says. 'You'll only be an additional expense to me as a taxpayer. Think of Schedule D,' he says, 'and take parole.'

"'I don't know anything about your tariffs,' I said, 'but when I get to Cape Town I write home for money, and I turn in every cent my board'll cost your country to any ten-century-old department that's been ordained to take it since William the Conqueror came along.'

"'But, confound you for a thick-headed mule,' he says, 'this war ain't any more than just started! Do you mean to tell me you're going to play prisoner till it's over?'

"'That's about the size of it,' I says, 'if an Englishman and an American could ever understand each other.'

"'But, in Heaven's Holy Name, why?' he says, sitting down of a heap on an anthill.

"'Well, Cap,' I says, 'I don't pretend to follow your ways of thought, and I can't see why you abuse your position to persecute a poor prisoner o' war on *his!*'

"'My dear fellow,' he began, throwing up his hands and blushing, 'I'll apologise.'

"'But if you insist,' I says, 'there are just one and a half things in this world I can't do. The odd half don't matter here; but taking parole, and going home, and being interviewed by the boys, and giving lectures on my single-handed campaign against the hereditary enemies of my beloved country happens to be the one. We'll let it go at that, Cap.'

"'But it'll bore you to death,' he says. The British are a heap more afraid of what they call being bored than of dying, I've noticed.

"'I'll survive,' I says, 'I ain't British. I can think,' I says.

"'By God,' he says, coming up to me, and extending the right hand of fellowship, 'you ought to be English, Zigler!'

"It's no good getting mad at a compliment like that. The English all do it. They're a crazy breed. When they don't know you they freeze up tighter'n the St. Lawrence. When they *do*, they go out like an ice-jam in April. Up till we prisoners left – four days – my Captain Mankeltow told me pretty much all about himself there was; his mother and sisters, and his bad brother that was a trooper in some Colonial corps, and how his father didn't get on with him, and – well, everything, as I've said. They're undomesticated, the British, compared with us. They talk about their own family affairs as if they belonged to someone else. 'Taint as if they hadn't any shame, but it sounds like it. I guess they talk out loud what we think, and we talk out loud what they think.

"I liked my Captain Mankeltow. I liked him as well as any man I'd ever struck. He was white. He gave me his silver drinking-flask, and I gave him the formula of my Laughtite. That's a hundred and fifty thousand dollars in his vest-pocket, on the lowest count, if he has the knowledge to use it. No, I didn't tell him the money-value. He was English. He'd send his valet to find out.

"Well, me and Adrian and a crowd of dam Dutchmen was sent down the road to Cape Town in first-class carriages under escort. (What did I think of your enlisted men? They are largely different from ours, Sir: very largely.) As I was saying, we slid down south, with Adrian looking out of the car-window and crying. Dutchmen cry mighty easy for a breed that fights as they do; but I never understood how a Dutchman could curse till we crossed into the Orange Free State Colony, and he lifted up his hand and cursed Steyn for a solid ten minutes. Then we got into the Colony, and the rebs – ministers mostly and schoolmasters – came round the cars with fruit and sympathy and texts. Van Zyl talked to 'em in Dutch, and one man, a big red-bearded minister, at Beaufort West, I remember, he jest wilted on the platform.

"'Keep your prayers for yourself,' says Van Zyl, throwing back a bunch of grapes. 'You'll need 'em, and you'll need the fruit too, when the war comes down here. *You* done it,' he says. 'You and your picayune Church that's deader than Cronje's dead horses! What sort of a God have you been unloading on us, you black *aas vogels*? The British came, and we beat 'em,' he says, 'and you sat still and prayed. The British beat us, and you sat still,' he says. 'You told us to hang on, and we hung on, and our farms was burned, and you sat still – you and your God. See here,' he says, 'I shot my Bible full of bullets after Bloemfontein went, and you and God didn't say anything. Take it and pray over it before we Federals help the British to knock hell out of you rebels.'

"Then I hauled him back into the car. I judged he'd had a fit.

But life's curious – and sudden – and mixed. I hadn't any more use for a reb than Van Zyl, and I knew something of the lies they'd fed us up with from the Colony for a year and more. I told the minister to pull his freight out of that, and went on with my lunch, when another man come along and shook hands with Van Zyl. He'd known him at close range in the Kimberley seige and before. Van Zyl was well seen by his neighbours, I judge. As soon as this other man opened his mouth I said, 'You're Kentucky, ain't you?' 'I am,' he says; 'and what may you be?' I told him right off, for I was pleased to hear good United States in any man's mouth; but he whipped his hands behind him and said, 'I'm not knowing any man that fights for a Tammany Dutchman. But I presoom you've been well paid, you dam gun-runnin' Yank.'

"Well, Sir, I wasn't looking for that, and it near knocked me over, while old man Van Zyl started in to explain.

"Don't you waste your breath, Mister Van Zyl,' the man says. 'I know this breed. The South's full of 'em.' Then he whirls round on me and says, 'Look at here, you Yank. A little thing like a King's neither here nor there, but what *you've* done,' he says, 'is to go back on the White Man in six places at once – two hemispheres and four continents – America, England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Don't open your head,' he says. 'You know well if you'd been caught at this game in our country you'd have been jiggling in the bight of a lariat before you could reach for your naturalisation papers. Go on and prosper,' he says, 'and you'll fetch up by fighting for niggers, as

the North did.' And he threw me half-a-crown – English money.

"Sir, I do not regard the proposition in that light, but I guess I must have been somewhat shook by the explosion. They told me at Cape Town one rib was driven in on to my lungs. I am not adducing this as an excuse, but the cold God's truth of the matter is – the money on the floor did it... I give up and cried. Put my head down and cried.

"I dream about this still sometimes. He didn't know the circumstances, but I dream about it. And it's Hell!

"How do you regard the proposition – as a Brother? If you'd invented your own gun, and spent fifty-seven thousand dollars on her – and had paid your own expenses from the word 'go'? An American citizen has a right to choose his own side in an unpleasantness, and Van Zyl wasn't any Krugerite ... and I'd risked my hide at my own expense. I got that man's address from Van Zyl; he was a mining man at Kimberley, and I wrote him the facts. But he never answered. Guess he thought I lied... Damned Southern rebel!

"Oh, say. Did I tell you my Captain gave me a letter to an English Lord in Cape Town, and he fixed things so's I could lie up a piece in his house? I was pretty sick, and threw up some blood from where the rib had gouged into the lung – here. This Lord was a crank on guns, and he took charge of the Zigler. He had his knife into the British system as much as any American. He said he wanted revolution, and not reform, in your army. He said the British soldier had failed in every point except courage. He

said England needed a Monroe Doctrine worse than America – a new doctrine, barring out all the Continent, and strictly devoting herself to developing her own Colonies. He said he'd abolish half the Foreign Office, and take all the old hereditary families clean out of it, because, he said, they was expressly trained to fool around with continental diplomats, and to despise the Colonies. His own family wasn't more than six hundred years old. He was a very brainy man, and a good citizen. We talked politics and inventions together when my lung let up on me.

"Did he know my General? Yes. He knew 'em all. Called 'em Teddie and Gussie and Willie. They was all of the very best, and all his dearest friends; but he told me confidentially they was none of 'em fit to command a column in the field. He said they were too fond of advertising. Generals don't seem very different from actors or doctors or – yes, Sir – inventors.

"He fixed things for me lovelily at Simons-Town. Had the biggest sort of pull – even for a Lord. At first they treated me as a harmless lunatic; but after a while I got 'em to let me keep some of their books. If I was left alone in the world with the British system of bookkeeping, I'd reconstruct the whole British Empire – beginning with the Army. Yes, I'm one of their most trusted accountants, and I'm paid for it. As much as a dollar a day. I keep that. I've earned it, and I deduct it from the cost of my board. When the war's over I'm going to pay up the balance to the British Government. Yes, Sir, that's how I regard the proposition.

"Adrian? Oh, he left for Umballa four months back. He told

me he was going to apply to join the National Scouts if the war didn't end in a year. 'Tisn't in nature for one Dutchman to shoot another, but if Adrian ever meets up with Steyn there'll be an exception to the rule. Ye – es, when the war's over it'll take some of the British Army to protect Steyn from his fellow-patriots. But the war won't be over yet awhile. He that believeth don't hurry, as Isaiah says. The ministers and the school-teachers and the rebs'll have a war all to themselves long after the north is quiet.

"I'm pleased with this country – it's big. Not so many folk on the ground as in America. There's a boom coming sure. I've talked it over with Adrian, and I guess I shall buy a farm somewhere near Bloemfontein and start in cattle-raising. It's big and peaceful – a ten-thousand-acre farm. I could go on inventing there, too. I'll sell my Zigler, I guess. I'll offer the patent rights to the British Government; and if they do the 'reelly-now-how-interesting' act over her, I'll turn her over to Captain Mankeltow and his friend the Lord. They'll pretty quick find some Gussie, or Teddie, or Algie who can get her accepted in the proper quarters. I'm beginning to know my English.

"And now I'll go in swimming, and read the papers after lunch. I haven't had such a good time since Willie died." He pulled the blue shirt over his head as the bathers returned to their piles of clothing, and, speaking through the folds, added:

"But if you want to realise your assets, you should lease the whole proposition to America for ninety-nine years."

THE BONDS OF DISCIPLINE

POSEIDON'S LAW

When the robust and brass-bound man commissioned first
for sea

His fragile raft, Poseidon laughed, and, "Mariner," said he,
"Behold, a Law immutable I lay on thee and thine,
That never shall ye act or tell a falsehood at my shrine.

"Let Zeus adjudge your landward kin, whose votive meal
and salt

At easy-cheated altars win oblivion for the fault,
But ye the unhoodwinked waves shall test – the immediate
gulfs condemn —

Unless ye owe the Fates a jest, be slow to jest with them.

"Ye shall not clear by Greekly speech, nor cozen from your
path

The twinkling shoal, the leeward beach, and Hadria's white-
lipped wrath;

Nor tempt with painted cloth for wood my fraud-avenging
hosts;

Nor make at all or all make good your bulwarks and your
boasts.

"Now and henceforward serve unshod through wet and wakeful shifts,

A present and oppressive God, but take, to aid, my gifts —
The wide and windward-opened eye, the large and lavish hand,

The soul that cannot tell a lie – except upon the land!"

In dromond and in catafract – wet, wakeful, windward-eyed

He kept Poseidon's Law intact (his ship and freight beside),
But, once discharged the dromond's hold, the bireme beached once more,

Splendaciously mendacious rolled the brass-bound man ashore.

* * * * *

The thranite now and thalamite are pressures low and high,
And where three hundred blades bit white the twin-propellers ply:

The God that hailed, the keel that sailed, are changed beyond recall,

But the robust and brass-bound man he is not changed at all!

From Punt returned, from Phormio's Fleet, from Javan and

Gadire,

He strongly occupies the seat about the tavern fire,
And, moist with much Falernian or smoked Massilian juice,
Revenge there the brass-bound man his long-enforced
truce!

THE BONDS OF DISCIPLINE

As literature, it is beneath contempt. It concerns the endurance, armament, turning-circle, and inner gear of every ship in the British Navy – the whole embellished with profile plates. The Teuton approaches the matter with pagan thoroughness; the Muscovite runs him close; but the Gaul, ever an artist, breaks enclosure to study the morale, at the present day, of the British sailorman.

In this, I conceive, he is from time to time aided by the zealous amateur, though I find very little in his dispositions to show that he relies on that amateur's hard-won information. There exists – unlike some other publication, it is not bound in lead boards – a work by one "M. de C.," based on the absolutely unadorned performances of one of our well-known *Acolyte* type of cruisers. It contains nothing that did not happen. It covers a period of two days; runs to twenty-seven pages of large type exclusive of appendices; and carries as many exclamation points as the average Dumas novel.

I read it with care, from the adorably finished prologue – it is

the disgrace of our Navy that we cannot produce a commissioned officer capable of writing one page of lyric prose – to the eloquent, the joyful, the impassioned end; and my first notion was that I had been cheated. In this sort of book-collecting you will see how entirely the bibliophile lies at the mercy of his agent.

"M. de C.," I read, opened his campaign by stowing away in one of her boats what time H.M.S. *Archimandrite* lay off Funchal. "M. de C." was, always on behalf of his country, a Madeira Portuguese fleeing from the conscription. They discovered him eighty miles at sea and bade him assist the cook. So far this seemed fairly reasonable. Next day, thanks to his histrionic powers and his ingratiating address, he was promoted to the rank of "supernumerary captain's servant" – a "post which," I give his words, "I flatter myself, was created for me alone, and furnished me with opportunities unequalled for a task in which one word malapropos would have been my destruction."

From this point onward, earth and water between them held no marvels like to those "M. de C." had "envisaged" – if I translate him correctly. It became clear to me that "M. de C." was either a pyramidal liar, or...

I was not acquainted with any officer, seaman, or marine in the *Archimandrite*; but instinct told me I could not go far wrong if I took a third-class ticket to Plymouth.

I gathered information on the way from a leading stoker, two seaman-gunners, and an odd hand in a torpedo factory.

They courteously set my feet on the right path, and that led me through the alleys of Devonport to a public-house not fifty yards from the water. We drank with the proprietor, a huge, yellowish man called Tom Wessels; and when my guides had departed, I asked if he could produce any warrant or petty officer of the *Archimandrite*.

"The *Bedlamite*, d'you mean – 'er last commission, when they all went crazy?"

"Shouldn't wonder," I replied. "Fetch me a sample and I'll see."

"You'll excuse me, o' course, but – what d'you want 'im *for*?"

"I want to make him drunk. I want to make you drunk – if you like. I want to make him drunk here."

"Spoke very 'andsome. I'll do what I can." He went out towards the water that lapped at the foot of the street. I gathered from the pot-boy that he was a person of influence beyond Admirals.

In a few minutes I heard the noise of an advancing crowd, and the voice of Mr. Wessels.

"'E only wants to make you drunk at 'is expense. Dessay 'e'll stand you all a drink. Come up an' look at 'im. 'E don't bite."

A square man, with remarkable eyes, entered at the head of six large bluejackets. Behind them gathered a contingent of hopeful free-drinkers.

"'E's the only one I could get. Transferred to the *Postulant* six months back. I found 'im quite accidental." Mr. Wessels beamed.

"I'm in charge o' the cutter. Our wardroom is dinin' on the

beach *en masse*. They won't be home till mornin'," said the square man with the remarkable eyes. "Are you an *Archimandrite*?" I demanded.

"That's me. I was, as you might say."

"Hold on. I'm a *Archimandrite*." A Red Marine with moist eyes tried to climb on the table. "Was you lookin' for a *Bedlamite*? I've – I've been invalided, an' what with that, an' visitin' my family 'ome at Lewes, per'aps I've come late. 'Ave I?"

"You've 'ad all that's good for you," said Tom Wessels, as the Red Marine sat cross-legged on the floor.

"There are those 'oo haven't 'ad a thing yet!" cried a voice by the door.

"I will take this *Archimandrite*" I said, "and this Marine. Will you please give the boat's crew a drink now, and another in half an hour if – if Mr. – "

"Pyecroft," said the square man. "Emanuel Pyecroft, second-class petty-officer."

" – Mr. Pyecroft doesn't object?"

"He don't. Clear out. Goldin', you picket the hill by yourself, throwin' out a skirmishin'-line in ample time to let me know when Number One's comin' down from his vittles."

The crowd dissolved. We passed into the quiet of the inner bar, the Red Marine zealously leading the way.

"And what do you drink, Mr. Pyecroft?" I said.

"Only water. Warm water, with a little whisky an' sugar an' per'aps a lemon."

"Mine's beer," said the Marine. "It always was."

"Look 'ere, Glass. You take an' go to sleep. The picket'll be comin' for you in a little time, an' per'aps you'll 'ave slep' it off by then. What's your ship, now?" said Mr. Wessels.

"The Ship o' State – most important?" said the Red Marine magnificently, and shut his eyes.

"That's right," said Mr. Pyecroft. "He's safest where he is. An' now – here's santy to us all! – what d'you want o' me?"

"I want to read you something."

"Tracts, again!" said the Marine, never opening his eyes. "Well. I'm game... A little more 'ead to it, miss, please."

"He thinks 'e's drinkin' – lucky beggar!" said Mr. Pyecroft. "I'm agreeable to be read to. 'Twon't alter my convictions. I may as well tell you beforehand I'm a Plymouth Brother."

He composed his face with the air of one in the dentist's chair, and I began at the third page of "M. de C."

"At the moment of asphyxiation, for I had hidden myself under the boat's cover, I heard footsteps upon the superstructure and coughed with empress' – coughed loudly, Mr. Pyecroft. 'By this time I judged the vessel to be sufficiently far from land. A number of sailors extricated me amid language appropriate to their national brutality. I responded that I named myself Antonio, and that I sought to save myself from the Portuguese conscription.'

"Ho!" said Mr. Pyecroft, and the fashion of his countenance changed. Then pensively: "Ther beggar! What might you have in your hand there?"

"It's the story of Antonio – a stowaway in the *Archimandrite's* cutter. A French spy when he's at home, I fancy. What do *you* know about it?"

"An' I thought it was tracts! An' yet some'ow I didn't." Mr. Pyecroft nodded his head wonderingly. "Our old man was quite right – so was 'Op – so was I. 'Ere, Glass!" He kicked the Marine. "Here's our Antonio 'as written a impromptu book! He *was* a spy all right."

The Red Marine turned slightly, speaking with the awful precision of the half-drunk. "'As 'e got any-thin' in about my 'orrible death an' execution? Ex_cuse_me, but if I open my eyes, I shan't be well. That's where I'm different from *all* other men. Ahem!"

"What about Glass's execution?" demanded Pyecroft.

"The book's in French," I replied.

"Then it's no good to me."

"Precisely. Now I want you to tell your story just as it happened. I'll check it by this book. Take a cigar. I know about his being dragged out of the cutter. What I want to know is what was the meaning of all the other things, because they're unusual."

"They were," said Mr. Pyecroft with emphasis. "Lookin' back on it as I set here more an' more I see what an 'ighly unusual affair it was. But it happened. It transpired in the *Archimandrite*– the ship you can trust... Antonio! Ther beggar!"

"Take your time, Mr. Pyecroft."

In a few moments we came to it thus —

"The old man was displeased. I don't deny he was quite a little displeased. With the mail-boats trottin' into Madeira every twenty minutes, he didn't see why a lop-eared Portugee had to take liberties with a man-o'-war's first cutter. Any'ow, we couldn't turn ship round for him. We drew him out and took him out to Number One. 'Drown 'im,' 'e says. 'Drown 'im before 'e dirties my fine new decks.' But our owner was tenderhearted. 'Take him to the galley,' 'e says. 'Boil 'im! Skin 'im! Cook 'im! Cut 'is bloomin' hair? Take 'is bloomin' number! We'll have him executed at Ascension.'

"Retallick, our chief cook, an' a Carth'lic, was the on'y one any way near grateful; bein' short-'anded in the galley. He annexes the blighter by the left ear an' right foot an' sets him to work peelin' potatoes. So then, this Antonio that was avoidin' the conscription – "

"_Sub_scription, you pink-eyed matlow!" said the Marine, with the face of a stone Buddha, and whimpered sadly: "Pye don't see any fun in it at all."

"_Con_scription – come to his illegitimate sphere in Her Majesty's Navy, an' it was just then that Old 'Op, our Yeoman of Signals, an' a fastidious joker, made remarks to me about 'is hands.

"'Those 'ands,' says 'Op, 'properly considered, never done a day's honest labour in their life. Tell me those hands belong to a blighted Portugee manual labourist and I won't call you a liar, but I'll say you an' the Admiralty are pretty much unique in your

statements.' 'Op was always a fastidious joker – in his language as much as anything else. He pursued 'is investigations with the eye of an 'awk outside the galley. He knew better than to advance line-head against Retallick, so he attacked *ong eshlong*, speakin' his remarks as much as possible into the breech of the starboard four point seven, an' 'ummin' to 'imself. Our chief cook 'ated 'ummin'. 'What's the matter of your bowels?' he says at last, fistin' out the mess- pork agitated like. "'Don't mind me,' says 'Op. 'I'm only a mildewed buntin'-tossler,' 'e says: 'but speakin' for my mess, I do hope,' 'e says, 'you ain't goin' to boil your Portugee friend's boots along o' that pork you're smellin' so gay!'

""Boots! Boots! Boots!' says Retallick, an' he run round like a earwig in a alder-stalk. 'Boots in the galley,' 'e says. 'Cook's mate, cast out an' abolish this cutter-cuddlin' abori_gine's_ boots!'"

"They was hove overboard in quick time, an' that was what 'Op was lyin' to for. As subsequently transpired.

"'Fine Arab arch to that cutter-cuddler's hinstep,' he says to me. 'Run your eye over it, Pye,' 'e says. 'Nails all present an' correct,' 'e says. 'Bunion on the little toe, too,' 'e says; 'which comes from wearin' a tight boot. What do *you* think?'

""Dook in trouble, per'aps,' I says. 'He ain't got the hang of spud- skinnin'.' No more he 'ad. 'E was simply cannibalisin' 'em.

"'I want to know what 'e 'as got the 'ang of,' says 'Op, obstructed-like.

'Watch 'im,' 'e says. 'These shoulders were foreign-drilled somewhere.'

"When it comes to "Down 'ammicks!" which is our naval way o' goin' to bye-bye, I took particular trouble over Antonio, 'oo had 'is 'ammick 'ove at 'im with general instructions to sling it an' be sugared. In the ensuin' melly I pioneered him to the after-'atch, which is a orifice communicatin' with the after-flat an' similar suites of apartments. He havin' navigated at three fifths power immejit ahead o' me, *I* wasn't goin' to volunteer any assistance, nor he didn't need it.'

"Mong Jew!" says 'e, sniffin' round. An' twice more 'Mong Jew!' – which is pure French. Then he slings 'is 'ammick, nips in, an' coils down. 'Not bad for a Portugee conscript,' I says to myself, casts off the tow, abandons him, and reports to 'Op.

"About three minutes later I'm over'auled by our sub-lieutenant, navigatin' under forced draught, with his bearin's 'eated. 'E had the temerity to say I'd instructed our Antonio to sling his carcass in the alleyway, an' 'e was peevish about it. O' course, I prevaricated like 'ell. You get to do that in the service. Nevertheless, to oblige Mr. Ducane, I went an' readjusted Antonio. You may not 'ave ascertained that there are two ways o' comin' out of an 'ammick when it's cut down. Antonio came out t'other way – slidin' 'andsome to his feet. That showed me two things. First, 'e had been in an 'ammick before, an' next, he hadn't been asleep. Then I reproached 'im for goin' to bed where 'e'd been told to go, instead o' standin' by till some one gave him entirely contradictory orders. Which is the essence o' naval discipline.

"In the middle o' this argument the gunner protrudes his ram-bow from 'is cabin, an' brings it all to an 'urried conclusion with some remarks suitable to 'is piebald warrant-rank. Navigatin' thence under easy steam, an' leavin' Antonio to re-sling his little foreign self, my large flat foot comes in detonatin' contact with a small objec' on the deck. Not 'altin' for the obstacle, nor changin' step, I shuffles it along under the ball of the big toe to the foot o' the hatchway, when, lightly stoopin', I catch it in my right hand and continue my evolutions in rapid time till I eventuates under 'Op's lee.

"It was a small moroccer-bound pocket-book, full of indelible pencil- writin' – in French, for I could plainly discern the *doodeladays*, which is about as far as my education runs.

"'Op fists it open and peruses. 'E'd known an 'arf-caste Frenchwoman pretty intricate before he was married; when he was trained man in a stinkin' gunboat up the Saigon River. He understood a lot o' French – domestic brands chiefly – the kind that isn't in print.

"'Pye,' he says to me, 'you're a tattician o' no mean value. I am a trifle shady about the precise bearin' an' import' o' this beggar's private log here,' 'e says, 'but it's evidently a case for the owner. You'll 'ave your share o' the credit,' 'e says.

"'Nay, nay, Pauline,' I says, 'You don't catch Emanuel Pyecroft mine- droppin' under any post-captain's bows,' I says, 'in search of honour,' I says. 'I've been there oft.'

"'Well, if you must, you must,' 'e says, takin' me up quick. 'But

I'll speak a good word for you, Pye.'

"'You'll shut your mouth, 'Op,' I says, 'or you an' me'll part brass-rags. The owner has his duties, an' I have mine. We will keep station,' I says, 'nor seek to deviate.'

"'Deviate to blazes!' says 'Op. 'I'm goin' to deviate to the owner's comfortable cabin direct.' So he deviated."

Mr. Pyecroft leaned forward and dealt the Marine a large pattern Navy kick. "'Ere, Glass! You was sentry when 'Op went to the old man – the first time, with Antonio's washin'-book. Tell us what transpired. You're sober. You don't know how sober you are!"

The Marine cautiously raised his head a few inches. As Mr. Pyecroft said, he was sober – after some R.M.L.I. fashion of his own devising. "'Op bounds in like a startled anteloper, carryin' 'is signal-slate at the ready. The old man was settin' down to 'is bountiful platter – not like you an' me, without anythin' more in sight for an 'ole night an' 'arf a day. Talkin' about food – "

"No! No! No!" cried Pyecroft, kicking again. "What about 'Op?" I thought the Marine's ribs would have snapped, but he merely hiccuped.

"Oh, 'im! 'E 'ad it written all down on 'is little slate – I think – an' 'e shoves it under the old man's nose. 'Shut the door,' says 'Op. 'For 'Eavin's sake shut the cabin door!' Then the old man must ha' said somethin' 'bout irons. 'I'll put 'em on, Sir, in your very presence,' says 'Op, 'only 'ear my prayer,' or – words to that 'fect... It was jus' the same with me when I called our Sergeant

a bladder-bellied, lard-'eaded, perspirin' pension-cheater. They on'y put on the charge-sheet 'words to that effect,' Spoiled the 'ole 'fect."

"'Op! 'Op! 'Op! What about 'Op?'" thundered Pycroft.

"'Op? Oh, shame thing. Words t' that 'fect. Door shut. Nushin' more transphired till 'Op comes out – nose exshtreme angle plungin' fire or – or words 'that effect. Proud's parrot. 'Oh, you prou' old parrot,' I says."

Mr. Glass seemed to slumber again.

"Lord! How a little moisture disintegrates, don't it? When we had ship's theatricals off Vigo, Glass 'ere played Dick Deadeye to the moral, though of course the lower deck wasn't pleased to see a leatherneck interpretin' a strictly maritime part, as you might say. It's only his repartees, which 'e can't contain, that conquers him. Shall I resume my narrative?"

Another drink was brought on this hint, and Mr. Pycroft resumed.

"The essence o' strategy bein' forethought, the essence o' tattics is surprise. Per'aps you didn't know that? My forethought 'avin' secured the initial advantage in attack, it remained for the old man to ladle out the surprise-packets. 'Eavens! What surprises! That night he dines with the wardroom, bein' of the kind – I've told you as we were a 'appy ship? – that likes it, and the wardroom liked it too. This ain't common in the service. They had up the new Madeira – awful undisciplined stuff which gives you a cordite mouth next morning. They told the mess-

men to navigate towards the extreme an' remote 'orizon, an' they abrogated the sentry about fifteen paces out of earshot. Then they had in the Gunner, the Bo'sun, an' the Carpenter, an' stood them large round drinks. It all come out later – wardroom joints bein' lower-deck hash, as the sayin' is – that our Number One stuck to it that 'e couldn't trust the ship for the job. The old man swore 'e could, 'avin' commanded 'er over two years. He was right. There wasn't a ship, I don't care in what fleet, could come near the *Archimandrites* when we give our mind to a thing. We held the cruiser big-gun records, the sailing-cutter (fancy-rig) championship, an' the challenge-cup row round the fleet. We 'ad the best nigger-minstrels, the best football an' cricket teams, an' the best squee-jee band of anything that ever pushed in front of a brace o' screws. An' yet our Number One mistrusted us! 'E said we'd be a floatin' hell in a week, an' it 'ud take the rest o' the commission to stop our way. They was arguin' it in the wardroom when the bridge reports a light three points off the port bow. We overtakes her, switches on our search-light, an' she discloses herself as a collier o' no mean reputation, makin' about seven knots on 'er lawful occasions – to the Cape most like.

"Then the owner – so we 'eard in good time – broke the boom, springin' all mines together at close interval.

"Look 'ere, my jokers,' 'e says (I'm givin' the grist of 'is arguments, remember), 'Number One says we can't enlighten this cutter-cuddlin Gaulish loutenant on the manners an' customs o' the Navy without makin' the ship a market-garden. There's

a lot in that,' 'e says, 'specially if we kept it up lavish, till we reached Ascension. But,' 'e says, 'the appearance o' this strange sail has put a totally new aspect on the game. We can run to just one day's amusement for our friend, or else what's the good o' discipline? An' then we can turn 'im over to our presumably short-'anded fellow-subject in the small-coal line out yonder. He'll be pleased,' says the old man, 'an' so will Antonio. M'rover,' he says to Number One, 'I'll lay you a dozen o' liquorice an' ink' – it must ha' been that new tawny port – 'that I've got a ship I can trust – for one day,' 'e says. 'Wherefore,' he says, 'will you have the extreme goodness to reduce speed as requisite for keepin' a proper distance behind this providential tramp till further orders?' Now, that's what I call tattics.

"The other manoeuvres developed next day, strictly in accordance with the plans as laid down in the wardroom, where they sat long an' steady. 'Op whispers to me that Antonio was a Number One spy when 'e was in commission, and a French lieutenant when 'e was paid off, so I navigated at three 'undred and ninety six revolutions to the galley, never 'avin' kicked a lieutenant up to date. I may as well say that I did not manoeuvre against 'im as a Frenchman, because I like Frenchmen, but stric'ly on 'is rank an' ratin' in 'is own navy. I inquired after 'is health from Retallick.

"'Don't ask me,' 'e says, sneerin' be'ind his silver spectacles. 'E's promoted to be captain's second supernumerary servant, to be dressed and addressed as such. If 'e does 'is dooties same as he skinned the spuds, *I ain't for changin'* with the old man.'

"In the balmy dawnin' it was given out, all among the 'olystones, by our sub-lootenant, who was a three-way-discharge devil, that all orders after eight bells was to be executed in inverse ration to the cube o' the velocity. 'The reg'lar routine,' he says, 'was arrogated for reasons o' state an' policy, an' any flat-foot who presumed to exhibit surprise, annoyance, or amusement, would be slightly but firmly reproached.' Then the Gunner mops up a heathenish large detail for some hanky-panky in the magazines, an' led 'em off along with our Gunnery Jack, which is to say, our Gunnery Lootenant.

"That put us on the *viva voce*— particularly when we understood how the owner was navigatin' abroad in his sword-belt trustin' us like brothers. We shifts into the dress o' the day, an' we musters *an'* we prays *ong reggle*, an' we carries on anticipatory to bafflin' Antonio.

"Then our Sergeant of Marines come to me wringin' his 'ands an' weepin'. 'E'd been talkin' to the sub-lootenant, an' it looked like as if his upper-works were collapsin'.

"'I want a guarantee,' 'e says, wringin' 'is 'ands like this. 'I 'aven't 'ad sunstroke slave-dhowin' in Tajurrah Bay, an' been compelled to live on quinine an' chlorodyne ever since. *I* don't get the horrors off glasses o' brown sherry.'

"'What 'ave you got now?' I says.

"'I ain't an officer,' 'e says. 'My sword won't be handed back to me at the end o' the court-martial on account o' my little weaknesses, an' no stain on my character. I'm only a pore beggar

of a Red Marine with eighteen years' service, an' why for,' says he, wringin' 'is hands like this all the time, 'must I chuck away my pension, sub-lootenant or no sub-lootenant? Look at 'em,' he says, 'only look at 'em. Marines fallin' in for small-arm drill!'

"The leathernecks was layin' aft at the double, an' a more insanitary set of accidents I never wish to behold. Most of 'em was in their shirts. They had their trousers on, of course – rolled up nearly to the knee, but what I mean is belts over shirts. Three or four 'ad *our* caps, an' them that had drawn helmets wore their chin-straps like Portugee earrings. Oh, yes; an' three of 'em 'ad only one boot! I knew what our bafflin' tattics was goin' to be, but even I was mildly surprised when this gay fantasia of Brazee drummers halted under the poop, because of an 'ammick in charge of our Navigator, an' a small but 'ighly efficient landin'-party.

""Ard astern both screws!" says the Navigator. 'Room for the captain's 'ammick!' The captain's servant – Cockburn 'is name was – had one end, an' our newly promoted Antonio, in a blue slop rig, 'ad the other. They slung it from the muzzle of the port poop quick-firer thort-ships to a stanchion. Then the old man flickered up, smokin' a cigarette, an' brought 'is stern to an anchor slow an' oriental.

""What a blessin' it is, Mr. Ducane,' 'e says to our sub-lootenant, 'to be out o' sight o' the 'ole pack o' blighted admirals! What's an admiral after all?' 'e says. 'Why, 'e's only a post-captain with the pip, Mr. Ducane. The drill will now proceed. What O!

Antonio, *descendez* an' get me a split.'

"When Antonio came back with the whisky-an'-soda, he was told off to swing the 'ammick in slow time, an' that massacritin' small-arm party went on with their oratorio. The Sergeant had been kindly excused from participating an' he was jumpin' round on the poop-ladder, stretchin' 'is leather neck to see the disgustin' exhibition an' cluckin' like a ash- hoist. A lot of us went on the fore an' aft bridge an' watched 'em like 'Listen to the Band in the Park.' All these evolutions, I may as well tell you, are highly unusual in the Navy. After ten minutes o' muckin' about, Glass 'ere – pity 'e's so drunk! – says that 'e'd had enough exercise for 'is simple needs an' he wants to go 'ome. Mr. Ducane catches him a sanakatowzer of a smite over the 'ead with the flat of his sword. Down comes Glass's rifle with language to correspond, and he fiddles with the bolt. Up jumps Maclean – 'oo was a Gosport 'ighlander – an' lands on Glass's neck, thus bringin' him to the deck, fully extended.

"The old man makes a great show o' wakin' up from sweet slumbers. 'Mistah Ducane,' he says, 'what is this painful interregnum?' or words to that effect. Ducane takes one step to the front, an' salutes: 'Only 'nother case of attempted assassination, Sir,' he says.

"'Is that all?' says the old man, while Maclean sits on Glass's collar button. 'Take him away,' 'e says, 'he knows the penalty.'"

"'Ah! I suppose that is the 'invincible *morgue* Britannic in the presence of brutally provoked mutiny,'" I muttered, as I turned

over the pages of M. de C.

"So, Glass, 'e was led off kickin' an' squealin', an' hove down the ladder into 'is Sergeant's volupshus arms. 'E run Glass forward, an' was all for puttin' 'im in irons as a maniac.

"'You refill your waterjacket and cool off!' says Glass, sittin' down rather winded. 'The trouble with you is you haven't any imagination.'

"'Haven't I? I've got the remnants of a little poor authority though,' 'e says, lookin' pretty vicious.

"'You 'ave?' says Glass. 'Then for pity's sake 'ave some proper feelin' too. I'm goin' to be shot this evenin'. You'll take charge o' the firin'- party.'

"Some'ow or other, that made the Sergeant froth at the mouth. 'E 'ad no more play to his intellects than a spit-kid. 'E just took everything as it come. Well, that was about all, I think... Unless you'd care to have me resume my narrative."

We resumed on the old terms, but with rather less hot water. The marine on the floor breathed evenly, and Mr. Pyecroft nodded.

"I may have omitted to inform you that our Number One took a general row round the situation while the small-arm party was at work, an' o' course he supplied the outlines; but the details we coloured in by ourselves. These were our tattics to baffle Antonio. It occurs to the Carpenter to 'ave the steam-cutter down for repairs. 'E gets 'is cheero-party together, an' down she comes. You've never seen a steam-cutter let down on the deck, 'ave

you? It's not usual, an' she takes a lot o' humourin'. Thus we 'ave the starboard side completely blocked an' the general traffic tricklin' over'eard along the fore-an'-aft bridge. Then Chips gets into her an' begins balin' out a mess o' small reckonin's on the deck. Simultaneous there come up three o' those dirty engine-room objects which we call 'tiffies,' an' a stoker or two with orders to repair her steamin'-gadgets. *They* get into her an' bale out another young Christmas-treeful of small reckonin's – brass mostly. Simultaneous it hits the Pusser that 'e'd better serve out mess pork for the poor matlow. These things half shifted Retallick, our chief cook, off 'is bed-plate. Yes, you might say they broke 'im wide open. 'E wasn't at all used to 'em.

"Number One tells off five or six prime, able-bodied seamen-gunners to the pork barrels. You never see pork fisted out of its receptacle, 'ave you? Simultaneous, it hits the Gunner that now's the day an' now's the hour for a non-continuous class in Maxim instruction. So they all give way together, and the general effect was *non plus ultra*. There was the cutter's innards spread out like a Fratton pawnbroker's shop; there was the 'tiffies' hammerin' in the stern of 'er, an' *they* ain't antiseptic; there was the Maxim class in light skirmishin' order among the pork, an' forrard the blacksmith had 'is forge in full blast, makin' 'orse-shoes, I suppose. Well, that accounts for the starboard side. The on'y warrant officer 'oo hadn't a look in so far was the Bosun. So 'e stated, all out of 'is own 'ead, that Chips's reserve o' wood an' timber, which Chips 'ad stole at our last refit, needed restowin'.

It was on the port booms – a young an' healthy forest of it, for Charley Peace wasn't to be named 'longside o' Chips for burglary.

"'All right,' says our Number One. 'You can 'ave the whole port watch if you like. Hell's Hell,' 'e says, 'an when there study to improve.'

"Jarvis was our Bosun's name. He hunted up the 'ole of the port watch by hand, as you might say, callin' 'em by name loud an' lovin', which is not precisely Navy makee-pigeon. They 'ad that timber-loft off the booms, an' they dragged it up and down like so many sweatin' little beavers. But Jarvis was jealous o' Chips an' went round the starboard side to envy at him.

"'Tain't enough,' 'e says, when he had climbed back. 'Chips 'as got his bazaar lookin' like a coal-hulk in a cyclone. We must adop' more drastic measures.' Off 'e goes to Number One and communicates with 'im. Number One got the old man's leave, on account of our goin' so slow (we were keepin' be'ind the tramp), to fit the ship with a full set of patent supernumerary sails. Four trysails – yes, you might call 'em trysails – was our Admiralty allowance in the un'eard of event of a cruiser breakin' down, but we had our awnin's as well. They was all extricated from the various flats an' 'oles where they was stored, an' at the end o' two hours' hard work Number One 'e made out eleven sails o' different sorts and sizes. I don't know what exact nature of sail you'd call 'em – pyjama-stun'sles with a touch of Sarah's shimmy, per'aps – but the riggin' of 'em an' all the supernumerary details, as you might say, bein' carried on through an' over an' between

the cutter an' the forge an' the pork an' cleanin' guns, an' the Maxim class an' the Bosun's calaboose *and* the paintwork, was sublime. There's no other word for it. Sub-lime!

"The old man keeps swimmin' up an' down through it all with the faithful Antonio at 'is side, fetchin' him numerous splits. 'E had eight that mornin', an' when Antonio was detached to get 'is spy-glass, or his gloves, or his lily-white 'andkerchief, the old man would waste 'em down a ventilator. Antonio must ha' learned a lot about our Navy thirst."

"He did."

"Ah! Would you kindly mind turnin' to the precise page indicated an' givin' me a *résumé* of 'is tattics?" said Mr. Pycroft, drinking deeply. "I'd like to know 'ow it looked from 'is side o' the deck."

"How will this do?" I said. "*Once clear of the land, like Voltaire's Habakkuk—*"

"One o' their new commerce-destroyers, I suppose," Mr. Pycroft interjected.

"—*each man seemed veritably capable of all – to do according to his will. The boats, dismantled and forlorn, are lowered upon the planking. One cries "Aid me!" flourishing at the same time the weapons of his business. A dozen launch themselves upon him in the orgasm of zeal misdirected. He beats them off with the howlings of dogs. He has lost a hammer. This ferocious outcry signifies that only. Eight men seek the utensil, colliding on the way with some many others which, seated in the stern of the*

boat, tear up and scatter upon the planking the ironwork which impedes their brutal efforts. Elsewhere, one detaches from on high wood, canvas, iron bolts, coal-dust – what do I know?"

"That's where 'e's comin' the bloomin' onjenew. 'E knows a lot, reely."

"They descend thundering upon the planking, and the spectacle cannot reproduce itself. In my capacity of valet to the captain, whom I have well and beautifully plied with drink since the rising of the sun (behold me also, Ganymede!) I pass throughout observing, it may be not a little. They ask orders. There is none to give them. One sits upon the edge of the vessel and chants interminably the lugubrious "Roule Britannia" – to endure how lomg?"

"That was me! On'y 'twas 'A Life on the Ocean Wave' – which I hate more than any stinkin' tune I know, havin' dragged too many nasty little guns to it. Yes, Number One told me off to that for ten minutes; an' I ain't musical, you might say."

"Then come marines, half-dressed, seeking vainly through this "tohu- bohu" (that's one of his names for the Archimandrite, Mr. Pyecroft), 'for a place whence they shall not be dislodged. The captain, heavy with drink, rolls himself from his hammock. He would have his people fire the Maxims. They demand which Maxim. That to him is equal. The breech-lock indispensable is not there. They demand it of one who opens a barrel of pork, for this Navy feeds at all hours. He refers them to the cook, yesterday my master– "'

"Yes, an' Retallick nearly had a fit. What a truthful an' observin' little Antonio we 'ave!"

"*It is discovered in the hands of a boy who says, and they do not rebuke him, that he has found it by hazard.*' I'm afraid I haven't translated quite correctly, Mr. Pyecroft, but I've done my best."

"Why, it's beautiful – you ought to be a Frenchman – you ought. You don't want anything o' *me*. You've got it all there."

"Yes, but I like your side of it. For instance. Here's a little thing I can't quite see the end of. Listen! '*Of the domain which Britannia rules by sufferance, my gross captain, knew nothing, and his Navigator, if possible, less. From the bestial recriminations and the indeterminate chaos of the grand deck, I ascended – always with a whisky-and-soda in my hands – to a scene truly grotesque. Behold my captain in plain sea, at issue with his Navigator! A crisis of nerves due to the enormous quantity of alcohol which he had swallowed up to then, has filled for him the ocean with dangers, imaginary and fantastic. Incapable of judgment, menaced by the phantasms of his brain inflamed, he envisages islands perhaps of the Hesperides beneath his keel – vigias innumerable.*' I don't know what a vigia is, Mr. Pyecroft. '*He creates shoals sad and far-reaching of the mid-Atlantic!*' What was that, now?"

"Oh, I see! That come after dinner, when our Navigator threw 'is cap down an' danced on it. Danby was quartermaster. They 'ad a tea-party on the bridge. It was the old man's contribution. Does he say anything about the leadsmen?"

"Is this it? *'Overborne by his superior's causeless suspicion, the Navigator took off the badges of his rank and cast them at the feet of my captain and sobbed. A disgusting and maudlin reconciliation followed. The argument renewed itself, each grasping the wheel, crapulous'* (that means drunk, I think, Mr. Pyecroft), *'shouting. It appeared that my captain would chenaler'* (I don't know what that means, Mr. Pyecroft) *'to the Cape. At the end, he placed a sailor with the sound'* (that's the lead, I think) *'in his hand, garnished with suet.'* Was it garnished with suet?"

"He put two leadsmen in the chains, o' course! He didn't know that there mightn't be shoals there, 'e said. Morgan went an' armed his lead, to enter into the spirit o' the thing. They 'eaved it for twenty minutes, but there wasn't any suet – only tallow, o' course."

"*'Garnished with suet at two thousand metres of profundity. Decidedly the Britannic Navy is well guarded.'* Well, that's all right, Mr. Pyecroft. Would you mind telling me anything else of interest that happened?"

"There was a good deal, one way an' another. I'd like to know what this Antonio thought of our sails."

"He merely says that *'the engines having broken down, an officer extemporised a mournful and useless parody of sails.'* Oh, yes! he says that some of them looked like *'bonnets in a needlecase,'* I think."

"Bonnets in a needlecase! They were stun'sles. That shows the

beggar's no sailor. That trick was really the one thing we did. Pho! I thought he was a sailorman, an' 'e hasn't sense enough to see what extemporisin' eleven good an' drawin' sails out o' four trys'les an' a few awnin's means. 'E must have been drunk!"

"Never mind, Mr. Pyecroft. I want to hear about your target-practice, and the execution."

"Oh! We had a special target-practice that afternoon all for Antonio. As I told my crew – me bein' captain of the port-bow quick-firer, though I'm a torpedo man now – it just showed how you can work your gun under any discomforts. A shell – twenty six-inch shells – burstin' inboard couldn't 'ave begun to make the varicose collection o' tit-bits which we had spilled on our deck. It was a lather – a rich, creamy lather!"

"We took it very easy – that gun-practice. We did it in a complimentary 'Jenny-'ave-another-cup-o' tea' style, an' the crew was strictly ordered not to rupture 'emselves with unnecessary exertion. This isn't our custom in the Navy when we're *in puris naturalibus*, as you might say. But we wasn't so then. We was impromptu. An' Antonio was busy fetchin' splits for the old man, and the old man was wastin' 'em down the ventilators. There must 'ave been four inches in the bilges, I should think – wardroom whisky- an'-soda.

"Then I thought I might as well bear a hand as look pretty. So I let my *bundoop* go at fifteen 'undred – sightin' very particular. There was a sort of 'appy little belch like – no more, I give you my word – an' the shell trundled out maybe fifty feet an' dropped

into the deep Atlantic.

"'Government powder, Sir!' sings out our Gunnery Jack to the bridge, laughin' horrid sarcastic; an' then, of course, we all laughs, which we are not encouraged to do *in puris naturalibus*. Then, of course, I saw what our Gunnery Jack 'ad been after with his subcutaneous details in the magazines all the mornin' watch. He had redooced the charges to a minimum, as you might say. But it made me feel a trifle faint an' sickish notwithstanding this spit-in-the-eye business. Every time such transpired, our Gunnery Lootenant would say somethin' sarcastic about Government stores, an' the old man fair howled. 'Op was on the bridge with 'im, an' 'e told me – 'cause 'e's a free-knowledgeist an' reads character – that Antonio's face was sweatin' with pure joy. 'Op wanted to kick him. Does Antonio say anything about that?"

"Not about the kicking, but he is great on the gun-practice, Mr. Pycroft. He has put all the results into a sort of appendix – a table of shots. He says that the figures will speak more eloquently than words."

"What? Nothin' about the way the crews flinched an' hopped? Nothin' about the little shells rumblin' out o' the guns so casual?"

"There are a few pages of notes, but they only bear out what you say. He says that these things always happen as soon as one of our ships is out of sight of land. Oh, yes! I've forgotten. He says, '*From the conversation of my captain with his inferiors I gathered that no small proportion of the expense of these*

nominally efficient cartridges finds itself in his pockets. So much, indeed, was signified by an officer on the deck below, who cried in a high voice: "I hope, Sir, you are making something out of it. It is rather monotonous." This insult, so flagrant, albeit well-merited, was received with a smile of drunken bonhommy'— that's cheerfulness, Mr. Pyecroft. Your glass is empty."

"Resumin' afresh," said Mr. Pyecroft, after a well-watered interval, "I may as well say that the target-practice occupied us two hours, and then we had to dig out after the tramp. Then we half an' three-quarters cleaned up the decks an' mucked about as requisite, haulin' down the patent awnin' stunsles which Number One 'ad made. The old man was a shade doubtful of his course, 'cause I 'eard him say to Number One, 'You were right. A week o' this would turn the ship into a Hayti bean-feast. But,' he says pathetic, 'haven't they backed the band noble?'

"'Oh! it's a picnic for them,' says Number One.

"'But when do we get rid o' this whisky-peddlin' blighter o' yours, Sir?'

"'That's a cheerful way to speak of a Viscount,' says the old man. 'E's the bluest blood o' France when he's at home,'

"'Which is the precise landfall I wish 'im to make,' says Number One.'

It'll take all 'ands and the Captain of the Head to clean up after 'im.'

"'They won't grudge it,' says the old man. 'Just as soon as it's dusk we'll overhaul our tramp friend an' waft him over,'

"Then a sno – midshipman – Moorshed was is name – come up an' says somethin' in a low voice. It fetches the old man.

"'You'll oblige me,' 'e says, 'by takin' the wardroom poultry for *that*. I've ear-marked every fowl we've shipped at Madeira, so there can't be any possible mistake. M'rover,' 'e says, 'tell 'em if they spill one drop of blood on the deck,' he says, 'they'll not be extenuated, but hung.'

"Mr. Moorshed goes forward, lookin' unusual 'appy, even for him. The Marines was enjoyin' a committee-meetin' in their own flat.

"After that, it fell dark, with just a little streaky, oily light on the sea – an' anythin' more chronic than the *Archimandrite* I'd trouble you to behold. She looked like a fancy bazaar and a auction-room – yes, she almost looked like a passenger-steamer. We'd picked up our tramp, an' was about four mile be'ind 'er. I noticed the wardroom as a class, you might say, was manoeuvrin' *en masse*, an' then come the order to cockbill the yards. We hadn't any yards except a couple o' signallin' sticks, but we cock-billed 'em. I hadn't seen that sight, not since thirteen years in the West Indies, when a post-captain died o' yellow jack. It means a sign o' mourning the yards bein' canted opposite ways, to look drunk an' disorderly. They do.

"'An' what might our last giddy-go-round signify?' I asks of 'Op.

"'Good 'Evins!' 'e says, 'Are you in the habit o' permittin' leathernecks to assassinate lootenants every morning at drill

without immejity 'avin' 'em shot on the foc'sle in the horrid crawly-crawly twilight?"

"Yes,' I murmured over my dear book, *'the infinitely lugubrious crepuscule. A spectacle of barbarity unparalleled – hideous – cold-blooded, and yet touched with appalling grandeur.'*"

"Ho! Was that the way Antonio looked at it? That shows he 'ad feelin's. To resoom. Without anyone givin' us orders to that effect, we began to creep about an' whisper. Things got stiller and stiller, till they was as still as – mushrooms! Then the bugler let off the 'Dead March' from the upper bridge. He done it to cover the remarks of a cock-bird bein' killed forrard, but it came out paralyzin' in its *tout ensemble*. You never heard the 'Dead March' on a bugle? Then the pipes went twitterin' for both watches to attend public execution, an' we came up like so many ghosts, the 'ole ship's company. Why, Mucky 'Arcourt, one o' our boys, was that took in he give tongue like a beagle-pup, an' was properly kicked down the ladder for so doin'. Well, there we lay – engines stopped, rollin' to the swell, all dark, yards cock-billed, an' that merry tune yowlin' from the upper bridge. We fell in on the foc'sle, leavin' a large open space by the capstan, where our sail-maker was sittin' sewin' broken firebars into the foot of an old 'ammick. 'E looked like a corpse, an' Mucky had another fit o' hysterics, an' you could 'ear us breathin' 'ard. It beat anythin' in the theatrical line that even us *Archimandrites* had done – an' we was the ship you could trust. Then come the doctor an' lit a red

lamp which he used for his photographic muckin's, an' chocked it on the capstan. That was finally gashly!

"Then come twelve Marines guardin' Glass 'ere. You wouldn't think to see 'im what a gratooitous an' aboundin' terror he was that evenin'. 'E was in a white shirt 'e'd stole from Cockburn, an' his regulation trousers, barefooted. 'E'd pipe-clayed 'is 'ands an' face an' feet an' as much of his chest as the openin' of his shirt showed. 'E marched under escort with a firm an' undeviatin' step to the capstan, an' came to attention. The old man reinforced by an extra strong split – his seventeenth, an' 'e didn't throw *that* down the ventilator – come up on the bridge an' stood like a image. 'Op, 'oo was with 'im, says that 'e heard Antonio's teeth singin', not chatterin' – singin' like funnel-stays in a typhoon. Yes, a moanin' æolian harp, 'Op said.

"When you are ready, Sir, drop your 'andkerchief,' Number One whispers.

"Good Lord!" says the old man, with a jump. 'Eh! What? What a sight! What a sight!' an' he stood drinkin' it in, I suppose, for quite two minutes.

"Glass never says a word. 'E shoved aside an 'andkerchief which the sub-lootenant proffered 'im to bind 'is eyes with – quiet an' collected; an' if we 'adn't been feelin' so very much as we did feel, his gestures would 'ave brought down the 'ouse." "I can't open my eyes, or I'll be sick," said the Marine with appalling clearness. "I'm pretty far gone – I know it – but there wasn't anyone could 'ave beaten Edwardo Glass, R.M.L.I., that time.

Why, I scared myself nearly into the 'orrors. Go on, Pye. Glass is in support – as ever."

"Then the old man drops 'is 'andkerchief, an' the firin'-party fires like one man. Glass drops forward, twitchin' an' 'eavin' horrid natural, into the shotted 'ammick all spread out before him, and the firin' party closes in to guard the remains of the deceased while Sails is stitchin' it up. An' when they lifted that 'ammick it was one wringin' mess of blood! They on'y expended one wardroom cock-bird, too. Did you know poultry bled that extravagant? *I never did.*

"The old man – so 'Op told me – stayed on the bridge, brought up on a dead centre. Number One was similarly, though lesser, impressed, but o' course 'is duty was to think of 'is fine white decks an' the blood. 'Arf a mo', Sir,' he says, when the old man was for leavin'. 'We have to wait for the burial, which I am informed takes place immejit.'

"'It's beyond me,' says the owner. 'There was general instructions for an execution, but I never knew I had such a dependable push of mountebanks aboard,' he says. 'I'm all cold up my back, still.'

"The Marines carried the corpse below. Then the bugle give us some more 'Dead March,' Then we 'eard a splash from a bow six-pounder port, an' the bugle struck up a cheerful tune. The whole lower deck was complimentin' Glass, 'oo took it very meek. 'E is a good actor, for all 'e's a leatherneck.

"'Now,' said the old man, 'we must turn over Antonio. He's in

what I have 'eard called one perspirin' funk.'

"Of course, I'm tellin' it slow, but it all 'appened much quicker. We run down our trampo – without o' course informin' Antonio of 'is 'appy destiny – an' inquired of 'er if she had any use for a free and gratis stowaway. Oh, yes? she said she'd be highly grateful, but she seemed a shade puzzled at our generosity, as you might put it, an' we lay by till she lowered a boat. Then Antonio – who was un'appy, distinctly un'appy – was politely requested to navigate elsewhere, which I don't think he looked for. 'Op was deputed to convey the information, an' 'Op got in one sixteen-inch kick which 'oisted 'im all up the ladder. 'Op ain't really vindictive, an' 'e's fond of the French, especially the women, but his chances o' kicking lootnants was like the cartridge – reduced to a minimum.

"The boat 'adn't more than shoved off before a change, as you might say, came o'er the spirit of our dream. The old man says, like Elphinstone an' Bruce in the Portsmouth election when I was a boy: 'Gentlemen,' he says, 'for gentlemen you have shown yourselves to be – from the bottom of my heart I thank you. The status an' position of our late lamented shipmate made it obligate,' 'e says, 'to take certain steps not strictly included in the regulations. An' nobly,' says 'e, 'have you assisted me. Now,' 'e says, 'you hold the false and felonious reputation of bein' the smartest ship in the Service. Pigsties,' 'e says, 'is plane trigonometry alongside our present disgustin' state. Efface the effects of this indecent orgy,' he says. 'Jump, you lop-eared,

flat-footed, butter-backed Amalekites! Dig out, you briny-eyed beggars!""

"Do captains talk like that in the Navy, Mr. Pyecroft?" I asked.

"I've told you once I only give the grist of his arguments. The Bosun's mate translates it to the lower deck, as you may put it, and the lower deck springs smartly to attention. It took us half the night 'fore we got 'er anyway ship-shape; but by sunrise she was beautiful as ever, and we resumed. I've thought it over a lot since; yes, an' I've thought a lot of Antonio trimmin' coal in that tramp's bunkers. 'E must 'ave been highly surprised. Wasn't he?"

"He was, Mr. Pyecroft," I responded. "But now we're talking of it, weren't you all a little surprised?"

"It come as a pleasant relief to the regular routine," said Mr. Pyecroft. "We appreciated it as an easy way o' workin' for your country. But – the old man was right – a week o' similar manoeuvres would 'ave knocked our moral double-bottoms bung out. Now, couldn't you oblige with Antonio's account of Glass's execution?"

I obliged for nearly ten minutes. It was at best but a feeble rendering of M. de C.'s magnificent prose, through which the soul of the poet, the eye of the mariner, and the heart of the patriot bore magnificent accord. His account of his descent from the side of the "*infamous vessel consecrated to blood*" in the "*vast and gathering dusk of the trembling ocean*" could only be matched by his description of the dishonoured hammock sinking unnoticed through the depths, while, above, the bugler played

music "of an indefinable brutality"

"By the way, what did the bugler play after Glass's funeral?" I asked.

"Him? Oh! 'e played 'The Strict Q.T.' It's a very old song. We 'ad it in Fratton nearly fifteen years back," said Mr. Pyecroft sleepily.

I stirred the sugar dregs in my glass. Suddenly entered armed men, wet and discourteous, Tom Wessels smiling nervously in the background.

"Where is that – minutely particularised person – Glass?" said the sergeant of the picket.

"'Ere!" The marine rose to the strictest of attentions. "An' it's no good smelling of my breath, because I'm strictly an' ruinously sober."

"Oh! An' what may you have been doin' with yourself?"

"Listenin' to tracts. You can look! I've had the evenin' of my little life. Lead on to the *Cornucopia's* midmost dunjing cell. There's a crowd of brass-'atted blighters there which will say I've been absent without leaf. Never mind. I forgive them before'and. *The* evenin' of my life, an' please don't forget it." Then in a tone of most ingratiating apology to me: "I soaked it all in be'ind my shut eyes. 'I'm" – he jerked a contemptuous thumb towards Mr. Pyecroft – "'e's a flatfoot, a indigo-blue matlow. 'E never saw the fun from first to last. A mournful beggar – most depressin'." Private Glass departed, leaning heavily on the escort's arm.

Mr. Pyecroft wrinkled his brows in thought – the profound

and far-reaching meditation that follows five glasses of hot whisky-and-water.

"Well, I don't see anything comical – greatly – except here and there. Specially about those reloaded charges in the guns. Do *you* see anything funny in it?"

There was that in his eye which warned me the night was too wet for argument.

"No, Mr. Pyecroft, I don't," I replied. "It was a beautiful tale, and I thank you very much."

A SAHIBS' WAR

THE RUNNERS

News!

What is the word that they tell now – now – now!
The little drums beating in the bazaars?
They beat (among the buyers and sellers)
"Nimrud – ah Nimrud! God sends a gnat against Nimrud!"
Watchers, O Watchers a thousand!

News!

At the edge of the crops – now – now – where the well-wheels
are halted,
One prepares to loose the bullocks and one scrapes his hoe,
They beat (among the sowers and the reapers)
"Nimrud – ah Nimrud! God prepares an ill day for Nimrud!"
Watchers, O Watchers ten thousand.

News!

By the fires of the camps – now – now – where the travellers
meet

Where the camels come in and the horses: their men
conferring,

They beat (among the packmen and the drivers)

"Nimrud – ah Nimrud! Thus it befell last noon to Nimrud!"

Watchers, O Watchers an hundred thousand!

News!

Under the shadow of the border-peels – now – now – now!
In the rocks of the passes where the expectant shoe their
horses,

They beat (among the rifles and the riders)

"Nimrud – ah Nimrud! Shall we go up against Nimrud?"

Watchers, O Watchers a thousand thousand?

News!

Bring out the heaps of grain – open the account-books again!
Drive forward the well-bullocks against the taxable harvest!
Eat and lie under the trees – pitch the police-guarded fair-
grounds,

O dancers!

Hide away the rifles and let down the ladders from the watch-
towers!

They beat (among all the peoples)

*"Now – now – now! God has reserved the Sword for Nimrud!
God has given Victory to Nimrud!" Let us abide under
Nimrud!"*

O Well-disposed and Heedful, an hundred thousand
thousand!

A SAHIBS' WAR

Pass? Pass? Pass? I have one pass already, allowing me to go by the *rêl* from Kroonstadt to Eshtellenbosch, where the horses are, where I am to be paid off, and whence I return to India. I am a – trooper of the Gurgaon Rissala (cavalry regiment), the One Hundred and Forty-first Punjab Cavalry, Do not herd me with these black Kaffirs. I am a Sikh – a trooper of the State. The Lieutenant-Sahib does not understand my talk? Is there *any* Sahib on the train who will interpret for a trooper of the Gurgaon Rissala going about his business in this devil's devising of a country, where there is no flour, no oil, no spice, no red pepper, and no respect paid to a Sikh? Is there no help?.. God be thanked,

here is such a Sahib! Protector of the Poor! Heaven-born! Tell the young Lieutenant-Sahib that my name is Umr Singh; I am – I was servant to Kurban Sahib, now dead; and I have a pass to go to Eshtellenbosch, where the horses are. Do not let him herd me with these black Kaffirs!.. Yes, I will sit by this truck till the Heaven-born has explained the matter to the young Lieutenant-Sahib who does not understand our tongue.

* * * * *

What orders? The young Lieutenant-Sahib will not detain me? Good! I go down to Eshtellenbosch by the next *terain*? Good! I go with the Heaven- born? Good! Then for this day I am the Heaven-born's servant. Will the Heaven-born bring the honour of his presence to a seat? Here is an empty truck; I will spread my blanket over one corner thus – for the sun is hot, though not so hot as our Punjab in May. I will prop it up thus, and I will arrange this hay thus, so the Presence can sit at ease till God sends us a *terain* for Eshtellenbosch...

The Presence knows the Punjab? Lahore? Amritzar? Attaree, belike? My village is north over the fields three miles from Attaree, near the big white house which was copied from a certain place of the Great Queen's by – by – I have forgotten the name. Can the Presence recall it? Sirdar Dyal Singh Attareewalla! Yes, that is the very man; but how does the Presence know? Born and bred in Hind, was he? O-o-oh! This is

quite a different matter. The Sahib's nurse was a Surtee woman from the Bombay side? That was a pity. She should have been an up-country wench; for those make stout nurses. There is no land like the Punjab. There are no people like the Sikhs. Umr Singh is my name, yes. An old man? Yes. A trooper only after all these years? Ye-es. Look at my uniform, if the Sahib doubts. Nay – nay; the Sahib looks too closely. All marks of rank were picked off it long ago, but – but it is true – mine is not a common cloth such as troopers use for their coats, and – the Sahib has sharp eyes – that black mark is such a mark as a silver chain leaves when long worn on the breast. The Sahib says that troopers do not wear silver chains? No-o. Troopers do not wear the Arder of Beritish India? No. The Sahib should have been in the Police of the Punjab. I am not a trooper, but I have been a Sahib's servant for nearly a year – bearer, butler, sweeper, any and all three. The Sahib says that Sikhs do not take menial service? True; but it was for Kurban Sahib – my Kurban Sahib – dead these three months!

* * * * *

Young – of a reddish face – with blue eyes, and he lilted a little on his feet when he was pleased, and cracked his finger-joints. So did his father before him, who was Deputy-Commissioner of Jullundur in my father's time when I rode with the Gurgaon Rissala. *My father?* Jwala Singh. A Sikh of Sikhs – he fought against the English at Sobraon and carried the mark to his death.

So we were knit as it were by a blood-tie, I and my Kurban Sahib. Yes, I was a trooper first – nay, I had risen to a Lance-Duffadar, I remember – and my father gave me a dun stallion of his own breeding on that day; and *he* was a little baba, sitting upon a wall by the parade-ground with his ayah – all in white, Sahib – laughing at the end of our drill. And his father and mine talked together, and mine beckoned to me, and I dismounted, and the baba put his hand into mine – eighteen – twenty-five – twenty-seven years gone now – Kurban Sahib – my Kurban Sahib! Oh, we were great friends after that! He cut his teeth on my sword-hilt, as the saying is. He called me Big Umr Singh – Buwwa Umwa Singh, for he could not speak plain. He stood only this high, Sahib, from the bottom of this truck, but he knew all our troopers by name – every one... And he went to England, and he became a young man, and back he came, liting a little in his walk, and cracking his finger-joints – back to his own regiment and to me. He had not forgotten either our speech or our customs. He was a Sikh at heart, Sahib. He was rich, open-handed, just, a friend of poor troopers, keen-eyed, jestful, and careless. *I* could tell tales about him in his first years. There was very little he hid from *me*. I was his Umr Singh, and when we were alone he called me Father, and I called him Son. Yes, that was how we spoke. We spoke freely together on everything – about war, and women, and money, and advancement, and such all.

We spoke about this war, too, long before it came. There were many box-wallas, pedlars, with Pathans a few, in this country,

notably at the city of Yunasbagh (Johannesburg), and they sent news in every week how the Sahibs lay without weapons under the heel of the Boer-log; and how big guns were hauled up and down the streets to keep Sahibs in order; and how a Sahib called Eger Sahib (Edgar?) was killed for a jest by the Boer-log. The Sahib knows how we of Hind hear all that passes over the earth? There was not a gun cocked in Yunasbagh that the echo did not come into Hind in a month. The Sahibs are very clever, but they forget their own cleverness has created the *dak* (the post), and that for an anna or two all things become known. We of Hind listened and heard and wondered; and when it was a sure thing, as reported by the pedlars and the vegetable-sellers, that the Sahibs of Yunasbagh lay in bondage to the Boer-log, certain among us asked questions and waited for signs. Others of us mistook the meaning of those signs. *Wherefore, Sahib, came the long war in the Tirah!* This Kurban Sahib knew, and we talked together. He said, "There is no haste. Presently we shall fight, and we shall fight for all Hind in that country round Yunasbagh. Here he spoke truth. Does the Sahib not agree? Quite so. It is for Hind that the Sahibs are fighting this war. Ye cannot in one place rule and in another bear service. Either ye must everywhere rule or everywhere obey. God does not make the nations ringstraked. True – true – true!"

So did matters ripen – a step at a time. It was nothing to me, except I think – and the Sahib sees this, too? – that it is foolish to make an army and break their hearts in idleness. Why have

they not sent for men of the Tochi – the men of the Tirah – the men of Buner? Folly, a thousand times. *We* could have done it all so gently – so gently.

Then, upon a day, Kurban Sahib sent for me and said, "Ho, Dada, I am sick, and the doctor gives me a certificate for many months." And he winked, and I said, "I will get leave and nurse thee, Child. Shall I bring my uniform?" He said, "Yes, and a sword for a sick man to lean on. We go to Bombay, and thence by sea to the country of the Hubshis" (niggers). Mark his cleverness! He was first of all our men among the native regiments to get leave for sickness and to come here. Now they will not let our officers go away, sick or well, except they sign a bond not to take part in this war-game upon the road. But *he* was clever. There was no whisper of war when he took his sick-leave. I came also? Assuredly. I went to my Colonel, and sitting in the chair (I am – I was – of that rank for which a chair is placed when we speak with the Colonel) I said, "My child goes sick. Give me leave, for I am old and sick also."

And the Colonel, making the word double between English and our tongue, said, "Yes, thou art truly *Sikh*"; and he called me an old devil – jestingly, as one soldier may jest with another; and he said my Kurban Sahib was a liar as to his health (that was true, too), and at long last he stood up and shook my hand, and bade me go and bring my Sahib safe again. My Sahib back again – aie me!

So I went to Bombay with Kurban Sahib, but there, at sight

of the Black Water, Wajib Ali, his bearer checked, and said that his mother was dead. Then I said to Kurban Sahib, "What is one Mussulman pig more or less? Give me the keys of the trunks, and I will lay out the white shirts for dinner." Then I beat Wajib Ali at the back of Watson's Hotel, and that night I prepared Kurban Sahib's razors. I say, Sahib, that I, a Sikh of the Khalsa, an unshorn man, prepared the razors. But I did not put on my uniform while I did it. On the other hand, Kurban Sahib took for me, upon the steamer, a room in all respects like to his own, and would have given me a servant. We spoke of many things on the way to this country; and Kurban Sahib told me what he perceived would be the conduct of the war. He said, "They have taken men afoot to fight men ahorse, and they will foolishly show mercy to these Boer-log because it is believed that they are white." He said, "There is but one fault in this war, and that is that the Government have not employed *us*, but have made it altogether a Sahibs' war. Very many men will thus be killed, and no vengeance will be taken." True talk – true talk! It fell as Kurban Sahib foretold.

And we came to this country, even to Cape Town over yonder, and Kurban Sahib said, "Bear the baggage to the big dak-bungalow, and I will look for employment fit for a sick man." I put on the uniform of my rank and went to the big dak-bungalow, called Maun Nihâl Seyn, [Footnote: Mount Nelson?] and I caused the heavy baggage to be bestowed in that dark lower place – is it known to the Sahib? – which was already full of the swords and baggage of officers. It is fuller now – dead men's kit

all! I was careful to secure a receipt for all three pieces. I have it in my belt. They must go back to the Punjab.

Anon came Kurban Sahib, liling a little in his step, which sign I knew, and he said, "We are born in a fortunate hour. We go to Eshtellenbosch to oversee the despatch of horses." Remember, Kurban Sahib was squadron- leader of the Gurgaon Rissala, and I was Umr Singh. So I said, speaking as we do – we did – when none was near, "Thou art a groom and I am a grass- cutter, but is this any promotion, Child?" At this he laughed, saying, "It is the way to better things. Have patience, Father." (Aye, he called me father when none were by.) "This war ends not to-morrow nor the next day. I have seen the new Sahibs," he said, "and they are fathers of owls – all – all – all!"

So we went to Eshtellenbosch, where the horses are; Kurban Sahib doing the service of servants in that business. And the whole business was managed without forethought by new Sahibs from God knows where, who had never seen a tent pitched or a peg driven. They were full of zeal, but empty of all knowledge. Then came, little by little from Hind, those Pathans – they are just like those vultures up there, Sahib – they always follow slaughter. And there came to Eshtellenbosch some Sikhs – Muzbees, though – and some Madras monkey-men. They came with horses. Puttiala sent horses. Jhind and Nabha sent horses. All the nations of the Khalsa sent horses.

All the ends of the earth sent horses. God knows what the army did with them, unless they ate them raw. They used horses

as a courtesan uses oil: with both hands. These needed many men. Kurban Sahib appointed me to the command (what a command for me!) of certain woolly ones —*Hubshis*— whose touch and shadow are pollution. They were enormous eaters; sleeping on their bellies; laughing without cause; wholly like animals. Some were called Fingoes, and some, I think, Red Kaffirs, but they were all Kaffirs – filth unspeakable. I taught them to water and feed, and sweep and rub down. Yes, I oversaw the work of sweepers – a *jemadar* of *mehtars* (headman of a refuse-gang) was I, and Kurban Sahib little better, for five months. Evil months! The war went as Kurban Sahib had said. Our new men were slain and no vengeance was taken. It was a war of fools armed with the weapons of magicians. Guns that slew at half a day's march, and men who, being new, walked blind into high grass and were driven off like cattle by the Boer-log! As to the city of Eshtellenbosch, I am not a Sahib – only a Sikh. I would have quartered one troop only of the Gurgaon Rissala in that city – one little troop – and I would have schooled that city till its men learned to kiss the shadow of a Government horse upon the ground. There are many *mullahs* (priests) in Eshtellenbosch. They preached the Jihad against us. This is true – all the camp knew it. And most of the houses were thatched! A war of fools indeed!

At the end of five months my Kurban Sahib, who had grown lean, said, "The reward has come. We go up towards the front with horses to-morrow, and, once away, I shall be too sick so

return. Make ready the baggage." Thus we got away, with some Kaffirs in charge of new horses for a certain new regiment that had come in a ship. The second day by *terain*, when we were watering at a desolate place without any sort of a bazaar to it, slipped out from the horse-boxes one Sikander Khan, that had been a *jemadar* of *saises* (head-groom) at Eshtellenbosch, and was by service a trooper in a Border regiment. Kurban Sahib gave him big abuse for his desertion; but the Pathan put up his hands as excusing himself, and Kurban Sahib relented and added him to our service. So there were three of us – Kurban Sahib, I, and Sikander Khan – Sahib, Sikh, and *Sag* (dog). But the man said truly, "We be far from our homes and both servants of the Raj. Make truce till we see the Indus again." I have eaten from the same dish as Sikander Khan – beef, too, for aught I know! He said, on the night he stole some swine's flesh in a tin from a mess-tent, that in his Book, the Koran, it is written that whoso engages in a holy war is freed from ceremonial obligations. Wah! He had no more religion than the sword-point picks up of sugar and water at baptism. He stole himself a horse at a place where there lay a new and very raw regiment. I also procured myself a grey gelding there. They let their horses stray too much, those new regiments.

Some shameless regiments would indeed have made away with *our* horses on the road! They exhibited indents and requisitions for horses, and once or twice would have uncoupled the trucks; but Kurban Sahib was wise, and I am not altogether a

fool. There is not much honesty at the front. Notably, there was one congregation of hard-bitten horse-thieves; tall, light Sahibs, who spoke through their noses for the most part, and upon all occasions they said, "Oah Hell!" which, in our tongue, signifies *Jehannum ko jao*. They bore each man a vine-leaf upon their uniforms, and they rode like Rajputs. Nay, they rode like Sikhs. They rode like the Ustrelyahs! The Ustrelyahs, whom we met later, also spoke through their noses not little, and they were tall, dark men, with grey, clear eyes, heavily eyelashed like camel's eyes – very proper men – a new brand of Sahib to me. They said on all occasions, "No fee-ah," which in our tongue means *Durro mut* ("Do not be afraid"), so we called them the *Durro Muts*. Dark, tall men, most excellent horsemen, hot and angry, waging war *as* war, and drinking tea as a sandhill drinks water. Thieves? A little, Sahib. Sikander Khan swore to me; and he comes of a horse-stealing clan for ten generations; he swore a Pathan was a babe beside a *Durro Mut* in regard to horse-lifting. The *Durro Muts* cannot walk on their feet at all. They are like hens on the high road. Therefore they must have horses. Very proper men, with a just lust for the war. Aah – "No fee-ah," say the *Durro Muts*. *They* saw the worth of Kurban Sahib. *They* did not ask him to sweep stables. They would by no means let him go. He did substitute for one of their troop-leaders who had a fever, one long day in a country full of little hills – like the mouth of the Khaibar; and when they returned in the evening, the *Durro Muts* said, "Wallah! This is a man. Steal him!" So they stole my

Kurban Sahib as they would have stolen anything else that they needed, and they sent a sick officer back to Eshtellenbosch in his place.

Thus Kurban Sahib came to his own again, and I was his bearer, and Sikander Khan was his cook. The law was strict that this was a Sahibs' war, but there was no order that a bearer and a cook should not ride with their Sahib – and we had naught to wear but our uniforms. We rode up and down this accursed country, where there is no bazaar, no pulse, no flour, no oil, no spice, no red pepper, no firewood; nothing but raw corn and a little cattle. There were no great battles as I saw it, but a plenty of gun-firing. When we were many, the Boer-log came out with coffee to greet us, and to show us *purwanas* (permits) from foolish English Generals who had gone that way before, certifying they were peaceful and well-disposed. When we were few, they hid behind stones and shot us. Now the order was that they were Sahibs, and this was a Sahibs' war. Good! But, as I understand it, when a Sahib goes to war, he puts on the cloth of war, and only those who wear that cloth may take part in the war. Good! That also I understand. But these people were as they were in Burma, or as the Afridis are. They shot at their pleasure, and when pressed hid the gun and exhibited *purwanas*, or lay in a house and said they were farmers. Even such farmers as cut up the Madras troops at Hlinedatalone in Burma! Even such farmers as slew Cavagnari Sahib and the Guides at Kabul! We schooled *those* men, to be sure – fifteen, aye, twenty of a morning pushed off

the verandah in front of the Bala Hissar. I looked that the Jungi-lat Sahib (the Commander-in-Chief) would have remembered the old days; but – no. All the people shot at us everywhere, and he issued proclamations saying that he did not fight the people, but a certain army, which army, in truth, was all the Boer-log, who, between them, did not wear enough of uniform to make a loincloth. A fool's war from first to last; for it is manifest that he who fights should be hung if he fights with a gun in one hand and a *purwana* in the other, as did all these people. Yet we, when they had had their bellyful for the time, received them with honour, and gave them permits, and refreshed them and fed their wives and their babes, and severely punished our soldiers who took their fowls. So the work was to be done not once with a few dead, but thrice and four times over. I talked much with Kurban Sahib on this, and he said, "It is a Sahibs' war. That is the order;" and one night, when Sikander Khan would have lain out beyond the pickets with his knife and shown them how it is worked on the Border, he hit Sikander Khan between the eyes and came near to breaking in his head. Then Sikander Khan, a bandage over his eyes, so that he looked like a sick camel, talked to him half one march, and he was more bewildered than I, and vowed he would return to Eshtellenbosch. But privately to me Kurban Sahib said we should have loosed the Sikhs and the Gurkhas on these people till they came in with their foreheads in the dust. For the war was not of that sort which they comprehended.

They shot us? Assuredly they shot us from houses adorned

with a white flag; but when they came to know our custom, their widows sent word by Kaffir runners, and presently there was not quite so much firing. *No fee- ah!* All the Boer-log with whom we dealt had *purwanas* signed by mad Generals attesting that they were well-disposed to the State.

They had also rifles not a few, and cartridges, which they hid in the roof. The women wept very greatly when we burned such houses, but they did not approach too near after the flames had taken good hold of the thatch, for fear of the bursting cartridges. The women of the Boer-log are very clever. They are more clever than the men. The Boer-log are clever? Never, never, no! It is the Sahibs who are fools. For their own honour's sake the Sahibs must say that the Boer-log are clever; but it is the Sahibs' wonderful folly that has made the Boer-log. The Sahibs should have sent *us* into the game.

But the *Durro Muts* did well. They dealt faithfully with all that country thereabouts – not in any way as we of Hind should have dealt, but they were not altogether fools. One night when we lay on the top of a ridge in the cold, I saw far away a light in a house that appeared for the sixth part of an hour and was obscured. Anon it appeared again thrice for the twelfth part of an hour. I showed this to Kurban Sahib, for it was a house that had been spared – the people having many permits and swearing fidelity at our stirrup-leathers. I said to Kurban Sahib, "Send half a troop, Child, and finish that house. They signal to their brethren." And he laughed where he lay and said, "If I listened to my bearer Umr

Singh, there would not be left ten houses in all this land." I said, "What need to leave one? This is as it was in Burma. They are farmers to-day and fighters to-morrow. Let us deal justly with them." He laughed and curled himself up in his blanket, and I watched the far light in the house till day. I have been on the border in eight wars, not counting Burma. The first Afghan War; the second Afghan War; two Mahsud Waziri wars (that is four); two Black Mountain wars, if I remember right; the Malakand and Tirah. I do not count Burma, or some small things. *I*

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