

HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

JACK ARCHER: A TALE OF
THE CRIMEA

George Henty

Jack Archer: A Tale of the Crimea

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CHAPTER I.

THE MIDSHIPMAN

The first day of term cannot be considered a cheerful occasion. As the boys arrive on the previous evening, they have so much to tell each other, are so full of what they have been doing, that the chatter and laughter are as great as upon the night preceding the breaking-up. In the morning, however, all this is changed. As they take their places at their desks and open their books, a dull, heavy feeling takes possession of the boys, and the full consciousness that they are at the beginning of another half year's work weighs heavily on their minds.

It is true enough that the half year will have its play, too, its matches, with their rivalry and excitement. But at present it is the long routine of lessons which is most prominent in the minds of the lads who are sitting on the long benches of the King's School, Canterbury.

As a whole, however, these have not great reason for sadness. Not more than a third of them are boarders, and the rest, who have in truth, for the last week, begun to be tired of their holidays, will, when they once get out of school, and begin to choose sides for football, be really glad that the term has again commenced.

"So your brother is not coming back again, Archer?" one of the boys said to a lad of some fifteen years old, a merry, curly-haired fellow, somewhat short for his age, but square-shouldered and sturdy.

"No. He is expecting in another six months to get his commission, and is going up to town to study with a coach. My father has lodged the money for him, and hopes to get him gazetted to his old regiment, the 33d."

"What is he going to a coach for? There is no examination, is there? And if there was, I should think he could pass it. He has been in the sixth for the last year."

"Oh, he is all right enough," Archer said. "But my father is sending him to an army man to get up military drawing and fortification. Dad says it is of no use his going on grinding here at Greek and Latin, and that he had much better spend the time, till he gets his commission, in learning something that may be of use to him. I wish I had done with Latin and Greek too, I'm sure they'll never be of any use to me, and I hate them."

At this moment the conversation between the boys was abruptly broken off by Archer being called up by the class master.

"Archer," he said, looking up from the papers on the desk before him, "these verses are disgraceful. Of all in the holiday tasks sent in, yours appears to me to be the worst."

"I'm very sorry, sir," Jack Archer said, "I really tried hard to do them, but somehow or other the quantities never will come right."

"I don't know what you call trying hard, Archer, but it's utterly impossible, if you had taken the trouble to look the words out in the Gradus, that you could have made such mistakes as those here."

"I don't know, sir," Jack answered. "I can do exercises and translations and all that sort of thing well enough, but I always break down with verses, and I don't see what good they are, except for fellows who want to write Latin verses for tombstones."

"That has nothing to do with it," the master said; "and I am not going to discuss the utility of verses with you. I shall report you to Dr. Wallace, and if you will not work in your holidays, you will have to do so in your play-hours."

Jack retired to his seat, and for the next ten minutes indulged in a diatribe against classical learning in general, and hexameters and pentameters in particular.

Presently one of the sixth form came down to where Jack was sitting,—

"Archer, Dr. Wallace wants you."

"Oh, lord," Jack groaned, "now I'm in for it! I haven't seen Marshall get out of his seat. I suppose he has written a report about those beastly verses."

The greeting of Dr. Wallace was, however, of a different nature from that which he had anticipated.

"Archer," he said, "I have just received a note from your father. You are to go home at once."

Jack Archer opened his eyes in astonishment. It was but an hour and a half since he had started from Harbledown, a mile or so distant from the school. His father had said nothing at breakfast, and what on earth could he want him home again for?

With a mechanical "Yes, sir," he returned to his place, gathered up his books hastily together, fastening them with a strap, and was soon on his way home at a rapid trot. He overtook ere long the servant who had brought the note—an old soldier, who had been Major Archer's servant in the army.

"What is the matter, Jones? Is any one ill at home?"

"No, sir; no one is ill as I knows of. The major called me into his study, and told me to take a note to Dr. Wallace, and, of course, I asked the master no questions."

"No," Jack said, "I don't suppose you did, Jones. I don't suppose you'd ask any questions if you were told to take a letter straight to the man in the moon. I wonder what it can mean."

And continuing his run, he soon left the steady-going old soldier far behind. Up High Street, under the great gate, along through the wide, straggling street beyond, into the open country, and then across through the fields to Harbledown. Jack never paused till, hot and panting, he entered the gate.

His father and his elder brother, who had seen him coming across the fields, were standing in the porch.

"Hurrah! Jack," the latter shouted; "you're going to be first out after all."

"Going to be first out?" Jack gasped. "What on earth do you mean, Harry?"

"Come into the parlor, Jack," his father said, "and you shall hear all about it."

Here his mother and two sisters were sitting.

"My dear boy," the former said, rising and throwing her arms round his neck, "this is sudden indeed."

"What is sudden, mother? What is sudden?" Jack asked. "What is it all about?" and noticing a tear on his mother's cheek, he went on, "It can't be those beastly verses, is it?" the subject most upon his mind being prominent. "But no, it couldn't be that. Even if Wallace took it into his head to make a row about them, there would not be time. But what is it, mother?"

"Sit down, Jack," his father said. "You know, my boy, you have always said that you would like to go to sea. I had no interest that way, but six months ago I wrote to my nephew Charles, who is, as you know, a first lieutenant in the navy, and asked him if he thought he could get you a midshipman's berth. He wrote back to say that he was at present on half pay, and feared it would be a long time before he was afloat again, as there were but few ships in commission, and he had not much interest. But if he were appointed he might be able to get you a berth on board the ship. As that didn't seem very hopeful, I thought it better to say nothing to you about it. However, this morning, just after you had started for school, the postman brought a letter from him, saying that, owing to the threatening state of affairs in the East, a number of ships were being rapidly put in commission, and that he had been appointed to the 'Falcon,' and had seen the captain, and as the latter, who happened to be an old friend of his, had no one in particular whom he wished to oblige, he had kindly asked the Admiralty for a midshipman's appointment for you. This he had, of course, obtained. The 'Falcon' is being fitted out with all haste, and you are to join at once. So I shall take you to Portsmouth to-morrow."

Jack was too much delighted and surprised to be able to speak at first. But after a minute or two he recovered his breath, uttered a loud hurrah of delight, and then gave vent to his feelings by exuberantly kissing his mother and sisters.

"This is glorious," he said. "Only to think that I, who have just been blown up for my verses, am a midshipman in her Majesty's service. I can hardly believe that it is true. Oh, father, I have so wished to go to sea, but I have never said much about it because I thought you did not like it, and now to think of my getting it when I had quite given up all hope, and just at a time, too, when there seems to be a chance of a row. What is it all about, father? I have heard you say something about a dispute with Russia, but I never gave much attention to it."

"The cause of the dispute is trumpery enough, and in itself wholly insufficient to cause a war between two great nations. It began by a squabble about the holy places at Jerusalem, as to the rights of the Greek and Latin pilgrims respectively."

"But what have we got to do with either the Latin or the Greek pilgrims?" Jack asked. "I should have thought that we were quite bothered enough with Latin and Greek verses, without having anything to do with pilgrims. Besides, I didn't know there were any Latins now, and the Greeks ain't much."

Major Archer smiled.

"The Latin pilgrims are the members of the countries which profess the Roman Catholic religion, while the Greeks are those who profess the religion of the Greek Church. That is to say, in the present case, principally Russians. There have for years been squabbles, swelling sometimes into serious tumults, between the pilgrims of these creeds, the matter being generally complicated by the interference of the Turkish authorities with them. The Russian government has been endeavoring to obtain from Turkey the protectorate of all Christians in her dominions, which France, as the leading Catholic country, naturally objects to. All this, however, is only a pretext. The real fact is that Russia, who has for centuries been casting a longing eye upon Turkey, thinks that the time has arrived when she can carry out her ambitious designs. It has always been our policy, upon the other hand, to sustain Turkey. We have large interests in the Mediterranean, and a considerable trade with the Levant, and were Russia to extend her dominion to Constantinople, our position would be seriously menaced. Moreover, and this perhaps is the principal point, it is absolutely necessary for us in the future to be dominant in the east of the Mediterranean. Egypt is rapidly becoming our highway to India, and many men think that in the future our trade with that great dependency will flow down the valley of the Euphrates. Consequently, it is necessary to prevent Russia, at any cost, obtaining a footing south of the Black Sea."

"And do you think, father, that there will really be a war?"

"I'm inclined to think that there will be, Jack, although this is not the popular opinion. We have so long, in England, been talking about the iniquity of war that I believe that the Emperor Nicholas has persuaded himself that we will not fight at any price. In this I am sure that he is wholly mistaken. So long as there was no probability of war, the people of England have quietly permitted the cheese-paring politicians who govern us to cut down the army and navy to a point when we can hardly be said to have an army at all. But I am convinced that the people of England are at heart as warlike as of old. Few nations have done more fighting than we, and, roughly speaking, the wars have always been popular. If the people at large once become convinced that the honor and interest of England are at stake, they will go to war, and the politicians in power will have to follow the popular current, or give way to men who will do so. At present, however, the general idea is that a demonstration upon the part of England and France, will be sufficient to prevent Russia from taking any further steps. I think myself that Russia has gone too far to draw back. Russia is a country where the czars are nominally all-powerful, but where, in point of fact, they are as much bound as other sovereigns to follow the wishes of the country. The conquest of Constantinople has long been the dream of every

Russian, and now that the Czar has held out hopes that this dream is about to be realized, he will scarcely like to draw back."

"But surely, father," Harry Archer said, "Russia cannot think herself a match for England and France united."

"I don't know that, my boy. Russia has an enormous population, far larger than that of England and France united. Every man, from the highest to the lowest, is at the disposal of the Czar, and there is scarcely any limit to the force which he is capable of putting into the field. Russia has not fought since the days of Napoleon, and in those days the Russian troops showed themselves to be as good as any in Europe. At Borodino and Smolensko they were barely defeated after inflicting enormous losses on the emperor's army, and, as in the end, they annihilated the largest army even Napoleon had ever got together, they may well think that, fighting close to their own borders, while England and France have to take their troops across Europe, they will be more than a match for us. And now, Jack, we must go down to the town. There is much to do and to think about. The principal part of your outfit I shall, of course, get at Portsmouth, where the tailors are accustomed to work at high pressure. But your underclothes we can get here. Now, my dear, if you will go upstairs and look through Jack's things, and let me know exactly how he stands, I will go down with him to the town, and get anything he requires."

"And will you be able to spare me for a quarter-of-an-hour, father? I should like to be outside the school when they come out at one o'clock, to say good-bye to them. Won't they be surprised, and jolly envious? Oh no, I should think not! They would give their ears, some of them, I know, to be in my place. I should like to say good-bye, too, to old Marshall. His face will be a picture when he finds that he is not going to drop on me for those verses, after all."

It was a day of bustle and business, and Jack, until the very moment when he was embracing his weeping mother and sisters, while his father stood at the door, in front of which was the pony-chaise, which was waiting to take him down to the station, could hardly realize that it was all true, that his school-days were over, and that he was really a midshipman in her Majesty's service.

Harry had already gone to the station on foot, as the back seat in the pony-chaise was occupied by Jack's luggage, and the last words that he said, as he shook hands with his brother, were,—

"I shouldn't be surprised, old boy, if we were to meet in the East before long. If anything comes of it, they will have to increase the strength of the army as well as of the navy, and it will be bad luck indeed if the 33d is left behind."

On arriving at Portsmouth, Major Archer took up his quarters at the famous George Inn, and, leaving their luggage there, was soon on his way down to the Hard. Half a century had gone by since Portsmouth had exhibited such a scene of life and bustle. Large numbers of extra hands had been taken on at the dockyards, and the fitters and riggers labored night and day, hastening on the vessels just put into commission. The bakeries were at work turning out biscuits as fast as they could be made, and the stores were crammed to repletion with commissariat and other stores. In addition to the ships of war, several large merchant steamers, taken up as transports, lay alongside the wharves, and an unusual force of military were concentrated in the town, ready for departure. By the Hard were a number of boats from the various men-of-war lying in the harbor or off Spithead, whose officers were ashore upon various duties. Huge dockyard barges, piled with casks and stores, were being towed alongside the ships of war, and the bustle and life of the scene were delightful indeed to Jack, accustomed only to the quiet sleepiness of a cathedral town like Canterbury. Inquiring which was the "Falcon," a paddle steamer moored in the stream was pointed out to them by a boatman.

"Oh dear," Jack said, "she looks small in comparison with those big men-of-war."

"She is none the worse, Jack, for that," his father said. "If there should be fighting, it will scarcely be at sea. The Russian fleet will not venture to engage the fleets of England and France united, and you are likely to see much more active work in a vessel like the 'Falcon' than in one of those floating castles. Hullo, Charles, is that you?" he broke off, laying his hand upon the shoulder of

a naval officer, who was pushing his way through the crowd of boatmen and sailors to a man-of-war gig, which, with many others, was lying by the Hard.

"Hullo, uncle, is that you?" he replied. "I am glad to see you. I was expecting you here in a day or so. I thought you would run down with the youngster. Well, Jack, how are you? Why, it must be eight years since I saw you. You were quite a little chap then. Well, are you thinking of thrashing the Russians?"

"The boy is half out of his mind with pleasure, Charles," Major Archer said, "and he and all of us are greatly obliged to you for your kindness in getting him his berth. I think you will find him active and intelligent, though I fear he has not shone greatly at school, especially," he said smiling, "in his Latin verses."

"He will make none the worse sailor for that," Charles Hethcote said with a laugh. "But I must be going on board. I have a message from the admiral to the captain and every moment is precious, for things are terribly behindhand. The dockyard people are wellnigh out of their wits with the pressure put upon them, and we are ordered to be ready to sail in a week. How it's all to be done, goodness only knows. You need not come on board, Jack. I will tell the captain that you have arrived, and he would not thank me for bringing any live lumber on board just at present. You had better get him his outfit, uncle, at once, and then he can report himself in full trim to-morrow."

Giving the major the address of the tailor who could be trusted to supply Jack's uniform without loss of time, and accepting an invitation to dine at the "George" that evening, if he could possibly get away from the ship, Lieutenant Hethcote stepped into the gig, and made his way to the "Falcon."

Major Archer and Jack first paid a visit to the tailor, where all the articles necessary for the outfit were ordered and promised for next day. They then visited the dockyard, and Jack was immensely impressed at the magnitude of the preparations which were being made for the war. Then they strolled down the ramparts, and stood for some time watching the batches of recruits being drilled, and then, as the short winter day was drawing to a close, they returned to the "George."

CHAPTER II. AN ADVENTURE AT GIB

It was on the 1st of February, 1854, that the "Falcon" sailed from Portsmouth for the East, and ten days later she dropped her anchor at Gibraltar harbor. Jack Archer was by this time thoroughly at home. In the week's hard work during the preparation for sea at Portsmouth, he had learned as much of the names of the ropes, and the various parts of the ship, as he would have done in a couple of months at sea, and had become acquainted with his new ship-mates. So great had been the pressure of work, that he had escaped much of the practical joking to which a new-comer on board ship, as at school, is generally subject.

He had for comrades four midshipmen; one of these, Simmons, had already nearly served his time, and was looking forward to the war as giving him a sure promotion; two others, Delafield and Hawtry, had already served for two or three years at sea, although only a year or so older than Jack, while the fourth, Herbert Coveney, was a year younger, and was, like Jack, a new hand. There were also in the berth two master's mates, young men of from twenty to two-and-twenty. With all of these Jack, with his high spirits, good-tempered face, merry laugh, soon became a favorite.

During the first two days at sea he had suffered the usual agonies from sea-sickness. But before reaching Gibraltar he had got his sea-legs and was regularly doing duty, being on the watch of the second lieutenant, Mr. Pierson.

The wind, which had blown strongly across the Bay of Biscay and down the coast of Portugal, moderated as the "Falcon" steamed past Cape St. Vincent with its picturesque monastery, and the straits were calm as a mill-pond as she slowly made her way along the Spanish coast and passed Tarifa. Up to the time when she dropped her anchor in the Bay of Gibraltar, the only incident which had happened on the way was that, as they steamed up the straits, they passed close by a homeward-bound P. and O. steamer, whose passengers crowded the sides, and cheered and waved their handkerchiefs to the eastward-bound ship.

The "Falcon" was not a fast vessel, seldom making, under favorable circumstances, more than eight knots an hour. She carried sixteen guns, twelve of which were eighteen-pounders. It had been intended that the "Falcon" should only stay a few hours at Gibraltar, proceeding immediately she had taken in a fresh supply of coal. The engineers, however, reported several defects in her machinery, which would take three or four days to put in order.

Jack was pleased at the delay, as he was anxious to set his foot for the first time ashore in a foreign country, and to visit the famous fortifications of the Rock. The first day he did not ask for leave, as he did not wish to presume upon his being the first lieutenant's relation.

Charles Hethcote differed widely from the typical first lieutenant of fiction, a being as stiff as a ramrod, and as dangerous to approach as a polar bear. He was, indeed, a bright, cheery fellow, and although he was obliged to surround himself with a certain amount of official stiffness, he was a great favorite among officers and crew.

It was not till the third day of his stay that Jack, his seniors having all been ashore, asked for leave, which was at once granted. Young Coveney, too, had landed on the previous day, and Hawtry, whom Jack was inclined to like most of his shipmates, now accompanied him. They had leave for the whole day, and, as soon as breakfast was over, they went ashore.

"What a rum old place!" Hawtry said, as they wandered along the principal street. "It looks as Spanish as ever. Who would have thought that it had been an English town for goodness knows how long?"

"I wish I had paid a little more attention to history," Jack said. "It makes one feel like a fool not to know such things as that when one comes to a famous place like this. Look at that tall fellow

with the two little donkeys. Poor little brutes, they can scarcely stagger under their loads. There is a pretty girl with that black thing over her head, a mantilla don't they call it? There is a woman with oranges, let's get some. Now, I suppose, the first thing is to climb up to the top of the Rock."

With their pockets full of oranges, the boys started on their climb, which was accomplished in capital time. From the flagstaff they enjoyed the magnificent view of the African coast across the straits, of Spain stretching away to their right, of the broad expanse of the blue Mediterranean, and of the bay with its ships, and the "Falcon" dwarfed to the dimensions of a toy vessel, at their feet. Then they came down, paid a flying visit to the various fortifications and to the galleries, whence the guns peer out threateningly across the low, sandy spit, known as the neutral ground.

When all this was finished, it was only natural that they should go to the principal hotel and eat a prodigious luncheon, and then Hawtry proposed that they should sally out for a ramble into Spain.

They had been disappointed in the oranges, which they found in no way better than those which they had bought in England. But they thought that if they could pick them off the trees, they must somehow have a superior flavor. Accordingly they sallied out by the land gate, passed unquestioned through the line of British sentries, and were soon in the little village inside the Spanish lines.

"It's awfully hot," Hawtry said, mopping his forehead. "Who would have thought that it would have been so hot as this in any place in Europe in the middle of February? Just fancy what it must be here in July! Look, there is a fellow with two mules. I expect he would let them. I vote we go for a ride. It's too hot for walking altogether.

"I say, old boy," he said, approaching a tall and powerfully-built man, who was smoking a cigar, and leaning lazily against one of his mules; "you let mules, we hire them, eh?"

The Spaniard opened his eyes somewhat, but made no reply, and continued to smoke tranquilly.

"Oh, nonsense," Hawtry said. "Look here."

And he put his hand into his pocket and pulled out some silver. Then he made signs of mounting one of the mules, and waved his hand over the surrounding country to signify that he wanted a general ride.

The Spaniard nodded, held up five fingers, and touched one of the mules, and did the same with the other.

"He wants five shillings a head," Hawtry said.

"I don't know," Jack said doubtfully. "I don't suppose he knows much about shillings. It may be five dollars or five anything else. We'd better show him five shillings, and come to an understanding that that is what he means before we get on."

The Spaniard, on being shown the five shillings, shook his head, and pointing to a dollar which they had obtained in change on shore, signified that these were the coins he desired.

"Oh, nonsense!" Hawtry said indignantly. "You don't suppose we're such fools as to give you a pound apiece for two or three hours' ride on those mules of yours. Come on, Jack. We won't put up with being swindled like that."

So saying the two lads turned away, and started on their walk.

While they were speaking to the Spaniard, he had been joined by one of his countrymen, and when they turned away, these entered into a rapid conversation together. The result was, that before the boys had gone thirty yards, the Spaniard with the mules called them back again, and intimated that he accepted their terms.

They were about to jump up at once, but the man signed to them to stop, and his companion in a minute or two had brought out two rough rugs which were secured with some cords over the wooden saddles.

"That's an improvement," Jack said. "I was just wondering how we were going to sit on those things, which are not saddles at all, but only things for boxes and barrels to be fastened to."

"I wonder which way we'd better go," Hawtry said, as he climbed up with some difficulty, aided by the Spaniard, on to one of the mules. "My goodness, Jack, this is horribly uncomfortable. I never can stand this. Hi, there! help me down. It would be better a hundred times to ride barebacked."

Accordingly the saddles were taken off, the rugs folded and secured on the animals' backs by a rope passed round them, and then the boys again took their seats.

"I hope the brutes are quiet," Jack said, "for I am nothing of a rider at the best of times, and one feels an awful height at the top of these great mules, with one's legs dangling without stirrups."

"If you find yourself going, Jack," Hawtry said, "the best thing is to catch hold of his ears. Come on, let's get out of this. All the village is staring at us."

The mules, upon the reins being jerked, and boys' heels briskly applied to their ribs, moved on at a fast walk.

"We shall have to stop under a tree and cut a stick presently," Hawtry said. "It will not do to get down, for I should never be able to climb up again. Mind, we must take our bearings carefully, else we shall never get back again. We have neither chart nor compass. Hallo! here comes the mules' master."

They had by this time gone two or three hundred yards from the village, and, behind them, at a brisk trot, seated on a diminutive donkey, was the Spaniard.

"Perhaps it's best he should come," Jack said. "There will be no fear of being lost then, and if one of us gets capsized, he can help him up again."

Upon the Spaniard coming up to them, he gave a sharp shout to the mules, at the same time striking the donkey on which he rode with a stick. Instantly the mules, recognizing the signal, started into a sharp trot, the first effect of which was to tumble Hawtry from his seat into the road, Jack with difficulty saving himself by clutching wildly at the mane.

"Confound it!" Hawtry exclaimed furiously, as he regained his feet, to the Spaniard. "Why didn't you say what you were going to be up to? Starting the ship ahead at full speed without notice! I believe I've broken some of my ribs. Don't you laugh too soon, Jack. It will be your turn next."

The Spaniard helped Hawtry to regain his seat, and they were soon clattering along the dusty road at a brisk rate, the boys quickly getting accustomed to the pace, which, indeed, was smooth and easy. For hours they rode on, sometimes trotting, sometimes walking, taking no heed whither they were going, and enjoying the novelty of the ride, the high cactus hedges, the strange vegetation, little villages here and there, sometimes embowered in orange trees, and paying no heed to time.

Presently Jack exclaimed,—

"I say, Hawtry, it must be getting late. We have been winding and turning about, and I have not an idea how far we are now from Gib. We must be through the gates by gun-fire, you know."

They stopped, and by pantomime explained to the Spaniard that they wanted to get back again as soon as possible.

He nodded, made a circle with his arm, and, as they understood, explained that they were making a circuit, and would arrive ere long at their starting-place.

For another hour and a half they rode along, chatting gayly.

"I say, Jack," Hawtry exclaimed suddenly, "why, there's the sun pretty nearly down, and here we are among the hills, in a lonelier looking place than we have come to yet. I don't believe we're anywhere near Gib. I say, old fellow, it strikes me we're getting into a beastly mess. What on earth's to be done?"

They checked their mules, and looked at each other.

"What can the Spaniard's game be, Hawtry? We've had a good five shillings' worth."

"Let us take our own bearings," Hawtry said. "The sun now is nearly on our left. Well, of course, that is somewhere about west-sou-west, so we must be going northward. I don't think that can be right. I'm sure it can't. Look here, you fellow, there is the sun setting there"—and he pointed to it—"Gibraltar must lie somewhere over there, and that's the way we mean to go."

The Spaniard looked surly, then he pointed to the road ahead, and indicated that it bent round the next spur of the hill, and made a detour in the direction in which Hawtry indicated that Gibraltar must lie.

"What on earth shall we do, Jack? If this fellow means mischief, we are in an awkward fix. I don't suppose he intends to attack us, because we with our dirks would be a match for him with that long knife of his. But if he means anything, he has probably got some other fellows with him."

"Then hadn't we better go in for him at once," Jack said, "before he gets any one to help him?"

Hawtry laughed.

"We can hardly jump off our mules and attack him without any specific reason. We might get the worst of it, and even if we didn't how should we get back again, and how should we account for having killed our mule-driver? No. Whatever we are in for, we must go through with it now, Jack. Let us look as though we trusted him."

So saying, they continued on the road by which they had previously travelled.

"I don't believe," Hawtry said, after a short silence, "that they can have any idea of cutting our throats. Midshipmen are not in the habit of carrying much money about with them, but I have heard of Guerillas carrying people off to the mountains and getting ransoms. There, we are at the place where that fellow said the road turned. It doesn't turn. Now, I vote we both get off our mules and decline to go a step farther."

"All right," Jack said. "I shall know a good deal better what I am doing on my feet than I shall perched up here!"

The two boys at once slid off their mules to the ground.

"There is no turning there," Hawtry said, turning to the hill. "You have deceived us, and we won't go a foot farther," and turning, the lads started to walk back along the road they had come.

The Spaniard leapt from his donkey, and with angry gesticulation endeavored to arrest them. Finding that they heeded not his orders, he put his hand on his knife, but in a moment the boys' dirks flashed in the air.

"Now, my lad," Hawtry said. "Two can play at that game, and if you draw that knife, we'll let daylight into you."

The Spaniard hesitated, then drew back and gave a loud, shrill whistle which was, the boys fancied, answered in the distance.

"Come on, Jack. We must run for it. We can leave this lumbering Spaniard behind, I have no doubt," and sheathing their dirks, the boys set off at full speed.

The Spaniard appeared inclined to follow them, but distrusting his powers, he paused, gave a long, shrill whistle, twice repeated, and then mounted his donkey and driving the mules before him, he followed the boys at a hand gallop.

They had, however, a good start, and maintained their advantage.

"I don't think," Jack said, "we have passed a village for the last hour. When we get to one, we'd better rush into a house, and ask for shelter. These fellows will hardly dare to touch us there."

Had the race been simply between the boys and their immediate pursuer, it is probable that they would have won it, for they were light, active, and in good condition, while the animals behind them had already been travelling for five hours, at a rate considerably above the speed to which they were accustomed. The road, however, was an exceedingly winding one, which gave time to the confederates of the mule-driver to make a short cut, and, as the boys turned a sharp corner, they saw three men barring the road in front.

"It's all up, Jack," Hawtry said, pausing in his run. "It's no use making any resistance. We should only get our throats cut straight off."

Jack agreed, and they walked up to the men in front just as the muleteer came galloping up with his troupe.

"What do you want with us?" Hawtry said, advancing to the men.

There was a volley of maledictions at the run they had given them. The boys were seized by the collar, their dirks, watches, and money roughly taken from them, their arms tied to their sides by the ropes taken from the mules, and they were motioned to accompany their captors. These at once left the road and struck up the hill, the muleteer proceeding along the road with the animals.

With their arms tied, the boys found it hard work to keep up with their captors, who strode along with long steps. The sun had by this time sunk, and presently they heard the distant boom of the sunset gun from Gibraltar.

"That gun must be fifteen miles away," Hawtry said. "What fools we have been, Jack, to be sure!"

In one of the three men who accompanied them they recognized the peasant who had spoken to the muleteer when he refused to accept their first offer, and they had no doubt that he had arranged with the man to lead them to a certain spot, to which he had proceeded direct, while their guide had conducted them by a circuitous route.

They walked for four hours without a pause, ever ascending among the hills, until they at last reached a sort of plateau, upon which some six or eight men were gathered round a fire. Upon three sides the hill rose abruptly, on the fourth the ground sloped away, and in front, seemingly almost at their feet, some 2000 feet below them stretched away the waters of the Mediterranean, sparkling in the moonlight.

"They have got something to eat that smells nice," Jack said, as they approached the fire. "I hope to goodness they are going to give us some. I feel awfully peckish."

The men gathered round the fire rose at the approach of the new-comers, and an animated conversation took place. Then the boys were motioned to sit down, and the rest threw themselves round the fire. Some meat which was roasting on a rough spit over it was taken off, and one of the men undid the cords which tied their arms, and a share of the meat was given them.

"This is stunning," Jack said. "What on earth is it? It does not taste to me like mutton, or beef, or pork, or veal."

"I fancy it's kid," Hawtry said. "Well, it is evident they have no idea of cutting our throats. If they had been going to do that, they would have done it a quarter of a mile after we left the road. I suppose they are going to try to get a ransom for us. Where it's coming from as far as I'm concerned, I don't know, for my father is a clergyman, and has as much as he can do to make ends meet, for there are eight of us and I'm the eldest."

"It's an awful fix altogether," Jack said. "And anyhow, we shall lose our ship and get into a frightful row, and, if somebody won't pay our ransom, I suppose they will knock us on the head finally. The best thing, you know, will be for us to make our escape."

"But how on earth are we to do that?" Hawtry said. "There are ten of them, and I see a lot of guns piled there."

"Oh, I daresay we shall see some chance," Jack said cheerfully. "We must think it over. Jack Easy, Peter Simple, and all those fellows used to get into worse scrapes than this, and they always managed to get out of them somehow; so why shouldn't we? The best thing is, just to think what one of them would have done if he had been in our place. I wish to goodness that we had Mesty prowling about somewhere; he would get us out in no time."

Hawtry answered with a grunt, and devoted himself to his kid. Presently Jack spoke again.

"Look here, Hawtry, I vote that to begin with we both pretend to be in an awful funk. If they think that we are only two frightened boys, they won't keep as sharp a watch over us as if they thought we were determined fellows, likely to attempt our escape. There is the sea down there in front of us, and there are sure to be villages on the coast. Therefore we shall know which way to go if we once manage to escape, and, if we can get down there, we can either claim the protection of the head man in the village, or we can take a boat and make off to sea."

When the meal was over, one of the men, who appeared to be the leader, rose and come to the boys. Pointing to himself, he said, "Pedro," to another "Sancho," to a third "Garcia."

"He wants to know our names," Jack said, and pointing to his companion, he said, "Hawtry," and to himself "Archer."

The Spaniard nodded and resumed his seat, when an animated conversation took place. Jack, in the meantime, began to enact the part which he had arranged, turning over upon his face, and at times making a loud, sobbing noise.

Hawtry, after hesitating for some time, seconded his efforts by burying his face in his hands, and appearing also to give way to violent grief.

CHAPTER III. THE ESCAPE

Shortly after the meal was over, the brigands rose. The boys were again bound, and were laid down on the ground near the fire. One of the brigands then took his seat beside them, and the others, rolling themselves in their cloaks, were soon asleep at the fire. The boys, tired as they were by the long and fatiguing day through which they had passed, were some time getting off to sleep. Indeed, with their arms bound by their side, the only way of doing so was by lying flat upon their backs.

With the early dawn they were awake.

"I expect they are getting up steam on board the 'Falcon,'" Hawtry said, "and no doubt there is a nice row over our being missing. I'd give a good sum, if I had it to give, to be back on her decks again."

The band was soon astir, but for some hours nothing was done. They were evidently waiting for the arrival of some one, as one or other of the bandits went frequently to the edge of the plateau and looked down.

At last one of them announced to his comrades that the person expected was in sight, and shortly afterwards the muleteer of the previous day appeared. Over his shoulder hung a heavy skin of wine. In his hand he carried a large basket, in which were several loaves of coarse bread. His arrival was hailed with a shout. A fresh supply of meat had been placed on the fire immediately his coming was reported, and in a short time the meal was prepared, the meat being washed down by horns of the rough wine of the country.

The lads had been again unbound when the band awoke, and were, as before, invited to share the meal. They continued to maintain their forlorn and downcast attitude. The rascally guide of the day before gave the company an account of the proceedings, and roars of laughter were excited by his tragic imitation of the defiant way in which the boys had drawn their dirks, a proceeding which was rendered the more ludicrous from its contrast with their present forlorn attitude.

"But mind," he continued, "they can run like hares. Going up a hill, no doubt, any of you would soon overtake them, but along a straight road, I would back them against the best of us."

"There is no fear of their trying that," the chief said, pointing to the rifles. "They would soon be stopped if they tried it on. However, they are not likely to make any such mad attempt. They are, after all, only young boys, and their spirit has speedily evaporated."

However, as a measure of precaution, he ordered that the man who was acting as sentry over the boys should always keep his rifle in hand.

The meal over, the muleteer produced from his pocket some writing-paper and a pencil. The chief then wrote on a piece of paper the figures 5000, followed by the word "dollars." Then he said to the boys, "Capitan," giving them a pencil and a sheet of note-paper. He pointed to the figures he had written down, then to the sun, marked with his hand its course twice through the sky, and then drew it significantly across his throat.

"Well," Hawtry said, "that's clear enough. We are to write to the captain to say that unless 5000 dollars are paid in two days we are to have our throats cut. Well, I may as well write,—

"Dear Captain Stuart,—We are in an awful mess. We took some mules in the Spanish lines for a ride yesterday, and the fellow who owned them steered us into the middle of a lot of brigands. They were too strong for us to show fight, and here we are. As far as we can make out, they say that, unless 5000 dollars are paid in two days, we are to have our throats cut. We don't expect that you will get this note, as by this time the 'Falcon' was to have sailed. In that case we suppose it will be all up with us. We intend to try to slip our anchors, and make a bolt for it. We are awfully sorry that we have got into this scrape."

To this epistle the boys both signed their names, and as the muleteer had not provided himself with envelopes, the letter was roughly folded and directed,—

"Captain Stuart, H.M.S. 'Falcon.'"

Another letter, embodying the same in the form of a demand, was then written, after much consultation, by the brigands, with postscript stating that if the bearer were in any way molested, the prisoners would at once be put to death. The youngest of the party, a peasant of some twenty years old, was then selected, and to him the letters were given, with full instructions as to his conduct.

During the next two days, the boys maintained their appearance of extreme despondency. They lay on the ground with their faces buried in their arms, and at times strolled listlessly about. They could see that this conduct had lulled to rest any suspicion of their captors that they might attempt an escape. The sentry no longer kept in their immediate vicinity, and although he retained his gun in his hand, did so as a mere form. The others went about their business, several of them absenting themselves for hours together; and at one time but three men, including the guard, remained at the encampment.

The boys kept every faculty on the alert, and were ready to seize the first opportunity, however slight, which might offer itself. They agreed, that however much their guard might be reduced, it would be unsafe to make the attempt in the daytime, as they were wholly ignorant of the way down to the sea, and the shouts of their pursuers would be sure to attract the attention of any of the party who might have gone in that direction.

As to the two days assigned for payment, they did not anticipate that the crisis would arrive at the end of that time, as they felt sure that the "Falcon" would have sailed before the messenger could have arrived, in which case fresh negotiations would probably be set on foot.

So it proved. On the evening of the day after his departure, the messenger returned, and the news that he brought was greeted with an outburst of ejaculations of anger and disappointment on the part of the brigands. They crowded round the boys, shook their fists at them, cuffed and kicked them. When they had somewhat recovered their equanimity, they made signs that the ship had departed.

By using the word "Governor," they made the boys understand that a fresh letter must be written to that officer.

This was done at once, and another of the party started immediately with it.

Late on into the night the boys talked in low voices as to their best plan of attempting an escape. Although free in the daytime, they were tightly bound at night, and the guards, who were changed every two hours, never for a moment relaxed their vigilance. Finally, they concluded that their only chance was to endeavor to slip away on the following evening, just as it became dusk, when all the party generally reassembled, and were busy cooking their food, or relating what had happened during the day.

Immediately in front of the encampment the slope was extremely steep. The brigands, in going or coming, always turned to the right or left, and kept along the brow for some distance to points where, as the boys supposed, the slope became more gradual, and paths existed by which they could make their way down to the shore.

At one time the boys thought of rolling down the steep slope, and taking their chance, but this they agreed would be a last resource, as it was probable that the slope ended in an absolute precipice.

"I have an idea," Jack said suddenly in the middle of the day.

"What is it, Jack?"

"You see that heap of rugs in which they wrap themselves when they go to sleep? Now I vote that when it gets dusk, we stand for some time at the edge, looking down into the sea; then, when we see our guard chatting with one of the men who have just arrived, and the others busy round the fire, we will quietly move back towards it. If our guard notices us at all, he won't pay any special attention, as we are going that way. We will steal up to the rear of the blankets, within a few feet of where they are standing, and will crawl quietly under them. When we are missed, they are sure

to suppose that we have either made down the slope, or along the brow, and will at once set off in pursuit. The betting is they'll all go, but if only one or two are left, we may take them by surprise. At any rate it seems our best chance."

Hawtry agreed, and it was decided that they should attempt to put the plan into execution that evening.

Late in the afternoon, the brigands, as usual, came dropping in, in twos and threes. One brought in a kid, and two others exhibited to their admiring friends a purse containing some ten or twelve dollars in silver. They related, amid the uproarious laughter of their comrades, the manner in which they had threatened the worthy farmer, its late possessor, into surrendering the proceeds of his day's marketing without resistance. It was already dusk. Jack and Hawtry had a minute before been standing near the edge of the slope. The guard was chatting with the last comer, and keeping one ear open to the narrative told by the fire.

Suddenly he glanced round, and perceived that the figures he had, as he believed, scarcely taken his eye off were missing.

"Madre de Dios!" he exclaimed. "Where are the prisoners?"

At his exclamation, all round the fire started into activity. A hasty glance round the encampment showed that their captives were not within its circle. With an exclamation of fury, the captain seized his gun, and with the butt-end struck the sentry to the ground. Then in furious tones he ordered every man off in instant pursuit. Snatching up their arms, some hurried off one way, some another, shouting threats of vengeance as they went.

As their voices receded, there was a slight movement among the rugs, and the boys' heads peered out from below their hiding-place. The encampment was deserted, save that on the ground lay the form of the prostrate sentinel, while the captain stood, gun in hand, on the edge of the slope, peering down into the gathering darkness.

The boys rose stealthily to their feet, and keeping along by the side of the hill, so as to be out of the direct line of sight should the brigand turn towards the fire, they noiselessly approached him.

He did not look round until they were within five paces, and it was then too late. He turned and threw up his gun, but before he could level it, they both threw themselves upon him.

Taken wholly by surprise, he staggered backwards. He was but a pace from the edge of the steep declivity, and in another moment he fell backward, his gun exploding in the air as he went. The boys heard his body as it rolled and crashed through the slight brushwood on the slope. Fainter and fainter became the sound, and then it suddenly ceased.

As long as it continued the boys stood motionless, and were turning to go, when there was the crack of a rifle, and a ball whizzed between them. Leaping round, they saw the guard, whom they had supposed to be insensible, had risen to his feet. Throwing down the rifle which he had just discharged, and drawing his long knife, he rushed at them.

"Dodge him, Hawtry, dodge him. Get hold of the rifle. I will get a stick from the fire."

The boys separated, one going each way. The Spaniard, still bewildered by the stunning blow he had received, hesitated a moment, and then rushed at Jack, who darted round the fire. Hawtry seized the rifle, and with the butt-end attacked the Spaniard, who turned to defend himself. Jack snatched up a heavy brand from the fire, and coming behind the Spaniard, who was waiting, knife in hand, for an opportunity to rush in between the sweeping blows which Hawtry was dealing at him with the butt-end of the rifle, smote him with all his force across the side of the head.

With a scream of agony the Spaniard fell prostrate and Jack, snatching up his knife, while Hawtry still retained the rifle, they darted off at full speed along the brow.

Presently they heard footsteps of men hastily returning, and drawing aside, threw themselves down among some low bushes. The men were talking eagerly. They had heard the two reports of the guns, and had no doubt that the captain had discovered the fugitives.

When the Spaniards had passed, the boys rose to their feet, and continued their flight at the top of their speed. The men had come from below, and the boys soon discovered traces of a path descending the slope. This they at once took, proceeding with caution now, for the descent was an extremely steep one, and the path little more than a goat track. Fortunately the moon was shining brightly, and by its light they were enabled to follow its windings.

After half an hour's descent, they found themselves in a rough road, along the face of the hill. This they doubted not was the road from one of the coast villages into the interior. They now went more cautiously, for the road was extremely rough, with large stones lying here and there upon it, and a heavy fall or a sprained ankle would be disastrous. They had no fear of pursuit. Once or twice they fancied that they heard shouts far above them, but they considered it likely that the band would be too far paralyzed by the loss of their captain to again take up the pursuit.

Three hours later, they stood by the sea shore, near a tiny fishing village, composed of three or four houses only. They held a consultation as to whether it would be better to rouse the villagers and explain the circumstances, but they had become suspicious of Spaniards, and thought it likely that there would be a close relationship between the people here and the band in their neighborhood. No lights were visible in the village, and it was probable that the inhabitants were already in bed.

They sat down for another hour to avoid the chance of their being surprised by any straggler. Then, proceeding to the shore, they launched a small boat. Hawtry stepped the mast and hoisted the sail, and they were soon making their way off the land. The wind was light, and their progress slow. For a time they kept straight out to sea, and then turned the boat's head towards Gibraltar.

The wind presently died quite away, and, lowering the sails, they got out the oars, and set to work. Beyond trying once or twice upon the Stour, Jack had had no experience in rowing, and his clumsiness excited considerable indignation on the part of Hawtry. The boat was heavy, and their progress, in consequence, very slow. They calculated that they must have twenty-five miles to row, as the point at which they were captured was, Hawtry had judged by the sound of the gun, fully fifteen miles distant from it, and they had walked another ten before arriving at the brigands' encampment.

All night they rowed, until the moon sank, this being, as they were aware, about three o'clock. They then lay down in the boat for a nap, and when they awoke it was daylight. They found that the wind had got up, and was blowing steadily off shore, and that they were now distant some five miles from land, the Rock of Gibraltar rising steeply from the sea some ten miles from them in a straight line.

Hawtry at once set the sail again, and the boat was soon slipping fast through the water.

"What a nuisance!" Hawtry said. "The wind is hauling farther round, and we shall not make into the Rock this tack. This tub of a boat makes no end of leeway. We shall have to make right across towards the African shore, and then tack back again."

They were, as Hawtry anticipated, fully three miles to leeward of Europa Point, as they passed the Rock. The wind was now blowing strongly from the west.

"Upon my word," Hawtry said, "I question whether we shall ever be able to make the Rock in this beast of a boat. She won't sail anywhere near the wind, and makes awful leeway. Hurrah! there's a big steamer coming out. We will hail her."

Hawtry now steered the boat till he had placed her as near as possible in the line which the steamer was pursuing, and then lowered the sail, and waited for her to come up.

When she came within a quarter of a mile the sail was again hoisted, and Hawtry so steered the boat that for a moment Jack thought he would put her under the bows of the steamer. This, however, had the effect which Hawtry had intended, of drawing attention to them.

The steamer passed within thirty feet of them. Hawtry lowered the sail, and standing up, shouted,—

"Throw us a rope!"

A number of persons had been attracted to the side, and one of the officers, seeing two young midshipmen in the boat, at once threw a rope to them, while the officer on duty ordered the engines to be stopped. In another two minutes the boat was hauled alongside. The two lads scrambled up the rope, the boat was cast adrift, and the steamer was again ploughing her way eastward.

The boys found that they were on board the transport "Ripon," having the Coldstream Guards on board, the first detachment of the army on its way east.

Considerable excitement was caused by the sudden and unexpected boarding of the ship by the two young officers, and great curiosity was expressed as to how they had got into such a position. As Hawtry said, however, that they had been twenty-four hours without food, they were at once taken to the saloon, where breakfast was on the point of being served. No questions were put to them until they had satisfied their hunger; then they told the story of their adventures, which caused quite an excitement among the officers.

The "Ripon" had sailed from Southampton docks on the 23d of February, in company with the "Manilla" and "Orinoco."

The next four days passed pleasantly, the boys being made a good deal of by the officers of the Coldstream Guards, but they were not sorry when, on Saturday evening, the lights of Malta were seen, and soon after midnight they dropped anchor in Valetta Harbor. The next morning they were delighted at seeing the "Falcon" lying a few cables' length distant, and, bidding good-bye to their new friends, they hailed a shore boat, and were soon alongside the "Falcon." The first lieutenant was on deck.

"Young gentlemen," he said sternly, "you have committed a very serious offence, and are liable to be tried by court-martial for having deserted your ship. I expected better things of you both. Go below immediately, and consider yourselves under arrest. I shall report your coming on board to the captain."

The boys saluted without a word, and went below to the midshipmen's berth where the tale of their adventures was soon related to their comrades, who were at first inclined to believe that the whole story was an invention got up to screen themselves for breaking leave. However, they soon saw that the boys were in earnest, and the truth of the story as to their being picked up at sea by the "Ripon" could, of course, at once be tested.

Presently they were summoned to the captain's cabin, and there Hawtry again recited the story.

The captain told them that they had erred greatly in going away in such a reckless manner, without taking proper precautions to secure their return before gun-fire. But he said they had already been punished so severely for their thoughtlessness that he should overlook the offence, and that he complimented them on the courage and coolness they had displayed in extricating themselves from the dangerous position into which they had fallen.

He then invited them to breakfast, at which meal the first lieutenant was also present, and here they gave much fuller details of their escape than Hawtry had done in his first narration of it.

At ten o'clock, when the boys were below, they heard a loud cheering, and found that the "Orinoco," with the Grenadiers, had just come into harbor, and were being cheered by their comrades on board the "Ripon" and by the blue jackets of the men-of-war.

All through the day the harbor was alive with boats. Before nightfall the Coldstreams were all ashore, and by Monday evening the last of the Grenadiers had also disembarked.

CHAPTER IV. GALLIPOLI

Every day brought fresh troops to Malta, until the brigade of Guards and eleven regiments of infantry of the line were gathered there. The streets of Valetta were like a fair, crowded with soldiery chattering with the vendors of oranges, dates, olives, and apples. Cigars, too, are nowhere cheaper than in Malta, and as, unfortunately, spirits were equally low in price, the British soldier, small as was his daily rate of pay, found but little difficulty in intoxicating himself.

In a few days the French began to put in an appearance, and the crowd in the streets was even more lively and picturesque than before. All this time the great topic of discussion was whether matters would or would not come to the arbitration of war.

During their stay Jack Archer and his comrades enjoyed themselves heartily, but it was by no means all play. The sailors had an immense deal to do in moving stores, preparing fittings, and getting matters ready for the forward despatch of the troops, should war be finally decided upon.

A month after the arrival at Malta, the doubt was put an end to, for upon the 28th of March war was formally declared, and on the 29th the French sailed for Gallipoli, followed, the next day, by Sir George Brown with the advance party of the light division.

The same day the "Falcon" steamed out of harbor, and, although the stay at Malta had been enjoyed, all hands were delighted at the advance towards the scene of future action.

Gallipoli stands near the upper end of the Dardanelles, and is an important military position.

"It looks a nice little town," Delafield said, on returning after his first visit in the captain's gig, to his comrades. "But I can't say much for it when you see it at close quarters. One got tired of Malta, but Malta was a paradise to this place. The confusion seems to be tremendous. But those jolly old Turks are sitting at their doors, smoking like so many old owls, and do not seem to interest themselves in the slightest."

"And did you see any lovely houris?" Simmonds asked, laughing.

"That I did not," Delafield said. "I saw some bundles looking like rolls of dirty white sheets ready for the wash, with a pair of big, yellow shoes underneath them, and I believe that they were women. I did not see any of their faces. I didn't want to, for I'm sure no decently pretty woman would allow herself to be made such an object as that."

The same work of unloading and transporting goods to the shore, which had gone on at Malta, was continued here. Every day fresh troops arrived, English and French, and the whole of the undulating plain round Gallipoli was dotted with their camps. By the end of the month 22,000 French and some 10,000 English were gathered there.

After the day's work was done, the midshipmen often got leave ashore, and enjoyed the scene of bustle and confusion which reigned there. Enormous numbers of pack animals and bullock-carts were at work, and even at this early period of the campaign the immense superiority of the French arrangements over the English was manifest. This was but natural, as the French, like other European nations, had been in the habit in time of peace of regarding the army as a machine which might be required for war, and had therefore kept the commissariat, transport, and other arrangements in a state of efficiency. In England, upon the other hand, the army had been entirely neglected, and had been made the subject of miserable, petty economy in all its branches, and the consequence was that war found us wholly unprepared, except that we possessed an army of seasoned soldiers such as, in the nature of things under the new regulations, England will never see again.

On going ashore the midshipmen would sometimes ramble away to the camp, sometimes stroll through the town, and amuse themselves by chaffing the grave Turkish shopkeepers, by watching the English and French soldiers staggering along with drunken gravity, sometimes with their arms

round each other's necks, or by kissing their hands airily to the veiled figures, of whom they got dim glimpses through the closely-latticed windows. The upper part of the town was inhabited principally by Greeks, whose sympathies were, for the most part, with the Russians, and who were as quarrelsome and turbulent as the Turks were placid and good-natured.

One evening Hawtry and Jack had obtained leave to be out later than usual, as they had been asked to dine with some of the officers of the Coldstreams whom they had met on board the "Ripon." The meal was a rough one, for the country had been completely eaten up by this immense accession of strangers. Still, the caterer had succeeded in procuring some tough fowls in addition to the ration beef, and as these were washed down by champagne, there was no reason to grumble.

The boys spent a merry evening, and started at half-past ten for the town. This was already quiet, and for the most part asleep, when they reached it. A few officers, who had been dining with the various generals who had their headquarters there, or with friends on board ship, were the sole people in the streets, although from some of the closed windows of the drinking-shops in the Greek quarter came sounds of singing and noise, for every one was earning high wages, and the place was full of Maltese, Alexandrians, Smyrniotes, and, indeed, the riff-raff of all the Mediterranean cities, who had flocked to the scene of action to make money as petty traders, hucksters, camp-followers, mule-drivers, or commissariat-laborers.

As they were passing through a dark and silent street they suddenly heard a sound of shouting and the clash of weapons, the fall of heavy bodies, and the tramping of feet. Then a window was dashed open, a voice shouted, "Help!" and then the strife continued as before.

"Come on, Archer," Hawtry exclaimed. "There are some of our fellows in a row with these Greeks."

The door was fastened, but the boys burst in a window next to it, leapt into the room, groped their way to the door, and then finding the stairs, hurried up. On the landing a dim oil light was burning, but it needed no light to indicate the room in which the struggle was still proceeding. The door stood ajar, and the boys, with drawn dirks, dashed into the room.

It was a large one. In the centre was a table on which were strewn several packs of cards; some chairs lay on the ground; the oil from an overturned lamp was forming a great black stain on the green table-cloth. In the corner by the window, three officers with drawn swords, were defending themselves against the attacks of some twenty Greeks, armed with knives. In the confusion, none had noticed the entry of the boys.

"Pick up a chair, Jack," Hawtry said, recoiling from the idea of rushing with his dirk upon unprepared men.

The two lads each seized one of the strong, but light, chairs scattered on the floor, and, with a sudden hurrah, flung themselves upon the Greeks. Two or three of these were knocked down and the rest, taken by surprise by the sudden attack, recoiled, and the boys were speedily by the side of the assailed officers.

The Greeks drew back, but seeing how slight was the reinforcement, again advanced to the attack. Three of their number lay upon the ground, and several of the others were bleeding freely. Upon the other hand, one of the officers leant against the wall, badly wounded, while both of the others had received nasty cuts. They would, before this, have been overpowered, had they not hastily pulled a small table and a chair or two, so as to form a sort of barricade, across the angle, and so prevented the Greeks from closing upon them. One of the officers was an Englishman, the others were French. All were quite young men. There was scarcely time for the exchange of a word before the Greeks were upon them again.

The boys had again drawn their dirks, but these formed but a poor weapon against the chairs with which several of the Greeks, seeing the inferiority of their knives, had now armed themselves. Hawtry received a crashing blow on the head which sent him staggering back against the wall, and Jack one on his arm which rendered it useless.

"This will never do," the English officer shouted. "Let us make a rush at the scoundrels, and fight our way to the door. It's our only chance."

"Wait a moment," Jack said, a thought striking him. Stooping down behind the others, he pulled out a matchbox from his pocket, struck a light, and applied it to the muslin curtains which hung before the window. In a moment a broad sheet of flame leaped up. The Greeks uttered a shout of terror and surprise.

"Now!" Jack shouted. "All together."

In a moment the five dashed down the table, and flung themselves upon the Greeks. These, taken by surprise, and paralyzed by the great sheet of flame which was already licking the wooden ceiling, recoiled. Some were cut down as they stood. Others were hurled aside. Two or three fell before the dirks of the midshipmen, and in a few seconds the little party had burst through the crowd of their assailants, and had gained the door of the room. Here the Englishman and one of the French officers turned and made a stand, in order to give the midshipmen time to assist their badly-wounded comrade down the narrow stairs, and to open the door of the house. As they flung this open, Jack shouted up that the way was free, and then, half carrying the wounded Frenchman, they hurried down the street, uttering shouts for assistance. The lattice work of the window had already caught fire, and a sheet of flame lit up the street. Before they had gone fifty yards, they heard a noise behind them, as the two officers, followed by the Greeks, issued from the house.

Fortunately, at this moment a party of English officers, who had been dining at the general's, ran up at full speed, attracted by the shouts of the boys and the glare of fire. Upon seeing this accession of strength, the Greeks at once desisted from the attack, and made off. By this time the windows of the various houses were opening, and shouts of affright arose at the sight of the conflagration; for the houses were, for the most part, constructed of wood, and, once begun, there was no saying where a fire would end.

"What is all this about, gentlemen?" one of the officers, a colonel, asked. "Give me your names, for there must be an inquiry into the matter. I see you are all wounded, and 'tis best to get back to camp at once. I fear this will be a serious matter."

In five minutes the street was full of people, and the flames had obtained entire possession of the house, and were rushing high into the air. The wind was blowing briskly, and it was evident that the safety of the whole quarter of the town was menaced. The French officer succeeded in getting four Maltese to carry his comrade to the camp. A door was taken off its hinges, and they were soon upon their way.

Jack and Hawtry, who had only received one or two slight slashes of knives, remained to see what came of it. The Turkish guards were speedily on the spot, but these could do nothing beyond trying to prevent the rabble from commencing a general pillage. From every house the people were throwing out their goods of all descriptions. Every minute the fire spread, and six or seven houses were already in flames when, but a quarter of an hour after the outbreak of the fire, a heavy tramp was heard, and a battalion of French infantry from their nearest camp came up at a double. There was no water, no means whatever of extinguishing the flames, but the active little Frenchmen did not lose a minute. At the word of command, they broke their ranks, and swarmed into the houses, and in a minute a perfect avalanche of goods was thrown from the windows. Some stood along outside the houses, others climbed upon their shoulders, on these again others took their places, and so on until living ladders were formed, up which a score of men climbed the roofs. These set to work with axe and hatchet, tearing off the tiles and hacking down rafters, while their comrades in the houses hewed away at floors and staircases. In less than a quarter of an hour four houses on either side of those in flames were completely gutted, and the fire, thus cut off, speedily burnt itself out, fifteen houses having been consumed.

By this time large numbers of troops, together with sailors from the fleet, had arrived, but the work was fortunately done, and had it not been for the early appearance of the French battalion, and

the energetic measures which they adopted, a great portion of the Greek quarter would have been destroyed.

Among those who had landed was a strong party of seamen from the "Falcon," under Mr. Hethcote. The boys joined these, and returned with them on board ship. They reported to the lieutenant the share which they had had in the affair.

"It is an unpleasant business," he said, "but I do not blame you for going to the assistance of those attacked when you heard an Englishman call for help. Still, Mr. Archer, it is clear that you have pretty nearly burnt down the town of Gallipoli, and I don't know the light in which the admiral and Sir George Brown may view the affair. As you say that no one took any notice of you at the time that the names of the military officers were taken, it is possible that no inquiry will be made about you. I shall, of course, report the matter to Captain Stuart, and he must act as he thinks fit. But, in the meantime, I should advise you to say nothing of the share which you have had in the matter to any one. You must have those gashes you have got plastered up. But I will speak to the surgeon. Do you know the name of the English officer concerned?"

"Yes, sir, he was Lieutenant Tewson of the Grenadier Guards. We only exchanged a few words before he went away, but he begged us to go and see him."

"I should advise you to keep away from him altogether, until the matter has blown over," Mr. Hethcote said. "Did you give him your names?"

"No, sir, we had no time."

"All the better," Mr. Hethcote said. "It will, of course, come out in the course of the inquiry that two midshipmen were concerned, and it is just as well that he cannot give your names. I expect the ship to be ordered up to Constantinople in a day or two, and I hope we may be off before any inquiries are made. One can never say how these big-wigs may take things. Sir George Brown is a tremendous martinet, and he may consider that it would have been far better that five officers, who chose to go to a gambling-house, should be killed, than that Gallipoli, full as it is of valuable stores, and munitions of war, should run the risk of being destroyed by fire. There, now, go off to the surgeon, and get your faces strapped up, and then ask him to come to me at once. If you two young gentlemen go on as you have begun, you are not likely to live to obtain eminence in your profession. It is but two months since we left England, and we have not yet seen an enemy, yet you have had two as narrow escapes for your lives as one could wish to have."

Very severe was the cross-questioning which the lads had to undergo in the midshipmen's berth as to the manner in which they came by their cut faces, and they were obliged to take refuge under the strict order of the first lieutenant that they were to say nothing about it.

Fortunately the next day the "Falcon" received orders to proceed to the Bosphorus, and got up her anchor and steamed up the Dardanelles before dark. Presently Mr. Hethcote came up to Jack, who was on duty on the quarter-deck.

"I tell you what, Jack," he said quietly, "it is very lucky for you that we are away. The French officer died during the night. I hear that his lungs were pierced. Sir George Brown is said to be furious, and threatens to try Tewson by court-martial, for entering a gambling-house in spite of strict orders to the contrary. Of course it is well known that scores of other officers have done the same, but it is only when a thing is found out that there is a row about it. Tewson had been dining on board a French ship, and was going home with the two French officers, who were also there. None of them had been in a gambling-house before, but it seems they had heard of this place, which was one of the most notorious dens in the town, and agreed to look in for a few minutes to see what it was like. They began to play and had an extraordinary run of luck, winning something like four hundred pounds. The bank was broken, and the Greeks wanted them to stop till some more money was procured. This they would not do, and the Greeks then attacked them. Tewson has strong interest, and the affair will probably, in his case, blow over. The Greeks have made a complaint against them for wilfully setting fire to the house, and this is the most serious part of the affair. I am told that both Tewson and the

French officer deny having done so. They say that it was done in order to effect a diversion, by two officers who came in to their assistance in the middle of the fight, and both declare that they do not know who they were or anything about them, as they only saw them for a minute in the middle of the confusion. Some one has said that two young naval officers were seen just at the beginning of the fire, and no doubt inquiries will be set on foot. But now that we are fairly off, they will find out nothing at Gallipoli, and it's likely that it will all blow over. The authorities have plenty to think about at present without troubling themselves very much in following up a clue of this kind."

In all the world there is no more lovely scene than that which greeted Jack Archer's eyes as he went on deck the following morning.

The "Falcon" was anchored about mid-channel. On the left was Constantinople with its embattled wall, its palaces, its green foliage down to the water's edge, its domes and minarets rising thickly. Separated from it by the Golden Horn, crossed by a bridge of boats, are Pera and Galatta, street rising above street. Straight over the bows of the ship was the Bosphorus, with its wooded banks dotted with villas and palaces. To the right was Scutari, with the great barrack standing on the edge of a cliff some fifty feet in height. Little did those who looked at the great square pile of building dream that ere many months it would be crowded from top to bottom with British sick and wounded, and that even its ample corridors would prove wholly insufficient to contain them. The water itself was thronged with shipping of all nations: men-of-war, merchant steamers crowded with stores, troop-ships thronged with red-coats; great barges, laden to the water's edge, slowly made their way between the ships and the shore. The boats of the shipping, filled with soldiers, rowed in the same direction. Men-of-war boats, with their regular, steady swing, went hither and thither, while among all crossed and re-crossed from Constantinople to Scutari, the light caicques with their one or two white-shirted rowers. No boats in the world are more elegant in appearance, none except those built specially for racing can vie with them in speed. The passenger sits comfortably on a cushion in the bottom of the boat, and smokes the long pipe which the boatman, as a matter of course, fills and hands to him as he takes his seat, while the boatmen themselves, generally Albanians, and singularly handsome and athletic men, lay themselves down to their work with a vigor and a heartiness which would astound the boatmen of an English watering-place.

A scene so varied, so beautiful, and so busy could not be equalled elsewhere.

CHAPTER V. A BRUSH WITH THE ENEMY

Two days later Jack obtained leave to go on shore. He hesitated for a moment whether to choose the right or left bank. The plateau of Scutari was covered with the tents of the British army, which were daily being added to, as scarce an hour passed without a transport coming in laden with troops. After a little hesitation, however, Jack determined to land at Constantinople. The camps at Scutari would differ but little from those at Gallipoli, while in the Turkish capital were innumerable wonders to be investigated. Hailing a caïque which was passing, he took his seat with young Coveney, who had also got leave ashore, and accepted with dignity the offer of a long pipe. This, however, by no means answered his expectations; the mouthpiece being formed of a large piece of amber of a bulbous shape, and too large to be put into the mouth. It was consequently necessary to suck the smoke through the end, a practice very difficult at first to those accustomed to hold a pipe between the teeth.

In ten minutes the boat landed them at Pera, close to the bridge of boats across the Golden Horn. For a time the lads made no motion to advance, so astonished were they at the crowd which surged across the bridge: Turkish, English, and French soldiers, Turks in turbans and fezes, Turkish women wrapped up to the eyes in white or blue clothes; hamals or porters staggered past under weights which seemed to the boys stupendous; pachas and other dignitaries riding on gayly-trapped little horses; carriages, with three or four veiled figures inside and black guards standing on the steps, carried the ladies of one harem to visit those of another. The lads observed that for the most part these dames, instead of completely hiding their faces with thick wrappings as did their sisters in the streets, covered them merely with a fold of thin muslin, permitting their features to be plainly seen. These ladies evidently took a lively interest in what was going on, and in no way took it amiss when some English or French officer stared unceremoniously at their pretty faces; although their black guards gesticulated angrily on these occasions, and were clearly far more indignant concerning the admiration which their mistresses excited than were those ladies themselves.

At last the boys moved forward across the bridge, and Jack presently found himself next to two young English officers proceeding in the same direction. One of these turned sharply round as Jack addressed his companion.

"Hallo, Jack!"

"Hallo, Harry! What! you here? I had no idea you had got your commission yet. How are you, old fellow, and how are they all at home?"

"Every one is all right, Jack. I thought you would have known all about it. I was gazetted three days after you started, and was ordered to join at once. We wrote to tell you it."

"I have never had a letter since I left home," Jack said. "I suppose they are all knocking about somewhere. Every one is complaining about the post. Well, this is jolly; and I see you are in the 33d too, the regiment you wanted to get into. When did you arrive?"

"We came in two days ago in the 'Himalaya.' We are encamped with the rest of the light division who have come up. Sir George Brown commands us, and will be here from Gallipoli in a day or two with the rest of the division."

The boys now introduced their respective friends to each other, and the four wandered together through Constantinople, visited the bazaars, fixed upon lots of pretty things as presents to be bought and taken home at the end of the war, and then crossed the bridge again to Pera, and had dinner at Missouri's, the principal hotel there, and the great rendezvous of the officers of the British army and navy. Then they took a boat and rowed across to Scutari, where Harry did the honors of the camp, and at sundown Jack and his messmate returned on board the "Falcon."

The next three weeks passed pleasantly, Jack spending all his time, when he could get leave, with his brother, and the latter often coming off for an hour or two to the "Falcon." Early in May the news arrived that the Russians had advanced through the Dobrudscha and had commenced the siege of Silistria. A few hours later the "Falcon" and several other ships of war were on their way up the Dardanelles, convoying numerous store-ships bound to Varna. Shortly afterwards the generals of the allied armies determined that Varna should be the base for the campaign against the Russians, and accordingly towards the end of May the troops were again embarked.

Varna is a seaport, surrounded by an undulating country of park-like appearance, and the troops were upon their arrival delighted with their new quarters. Here some 22,000 English and 50,000 French were encamped, together with 8,000 or 10,000 Turks. A few days after their arrival Jack obtained leave for a day on shore, and rowed out to Alladyn, nine miles and a half from Varna, where the light division, consisting of the 7th, 19th, 23d, 33d, 77th, and 88th regiments, was encamped. Close by was a fresh-water lake, and the undulated ground was finely wooded with clumps of forest timber, and covered with short, crisp grass. No more charming site for a camp could be conceived. Game abounded, and the officers who had brought guns with them found for a time capital sport. Everyone was in the highest spirits, and the hopes that the campaign would soon open in earnest were general. In this, however, they were destined to be disappointed, for on the 24th of June the news came that the Turks had unaided beaten off the Russians with such heavy loss in their attack upon Silistria that the latter had broken up the siege, and were retreating northward.

A weary delay then occurred while the English and French home authorities, and the English and French generals in the field were settling the point at which the attack should be made upon Russia. The delay was a disastrous one, for it allowed an enemy more dangerous than the Russians to make his insidious approaches. The heat was very great; water bad, indeed almost undrinkable, the climate was notoriously an unhealthy one, and fruit of all kinds, together with cucumbers and melons, extremely cheap, and the soldiers consequently consumed very large quantities of these.

Through June and up to the middle of July, however, no very evil consequences were apparent. On the 21st of July two divisions of French troops under General Canrobert marched into the Dobrudscha, in search of some bodies of Russians who were said to be there. On the night of the 28th cholera broke out, and before morning, in one division no less than 600 men lay dead. The other divisions, although situated at considerable distances, were simultaneously attacked with equal violence, and three days later the expedition returned, having lost over 7000 men. Scarcely less sudden or less fatal was the attack among the English lines, and for some time the English camps were ravaged by cholera.

Jack was extremely anxious about his brother, for the light division suffered even more severely than did the others. But he was not able to go himself to see as to the state of things, for the naval officers were not allowed to go on shore more than was absolutely necessary. And as the camp of the light division had been moved some ten miles farther away on to the slopes of the Balkans, it would have been impossible to go and return in one day. Such precautions as were taken, however, were insufficient to keep the cholera from on board ship. In a short time the fleet was attacked with a severity almost equal to that on shore, and although the fleet put out to sea, the flagship in two days lost seventy men.

Fortunately the "Falcon" had left Varna before the outbreak extended to the ships. The Crimea had now been definitely determined upon as the point of assault. Turkish vessels with heavy siege guns were on their way to Varna, and the "Falcon" was ordered to cross to the Crimea and report upon the advantages of several places for the landing of the allied army. The mission was an exciting one, as beside the chance of a brush with shore batteries, there was the possibility that they might run against some of the Russian men-of-war, who still held that part of the Black Sea, and whose headquarters were at Sebastopol, the great fortress which was the main object of the expedition to the Crimea.

The "Falcon" started at night, and in the morning of the second day the hills of the Crimea were visible in the distance. The fires were then banked up and she lay-to. With nightfall she steamed on until within a mile or two of the coast, and here again anchored. With the early dawn steam was turned on, and the "Falcon" steamed along as close to the shore as she dare go, the lead being constantly kept going, as but little was known of the depth of water on these shores. Presently they came to a bay with a smooth beach. The ground rose but gradually behind, and a small village stood close to the shore.

"This looks a good place," Captain Stuart said to the first lieutenant. "We will anchor here and lower the boats. You, Mr. Hethcote, with three boats, had better land at that village, get any information that you can, and see that there are no troops about. If attacked by a small force, you will of course repel it; if by a strong one, fall back to your boats, and I will cover your retreat with the guns of the ship. The other two boats will be employed in sounding. Let the master have charge of these, and make out, as far as he can, a perfect chart of the bay."

In a few minutes the boats were lowered, and the men in the highest glee took their places. Jack was in the gig with the first lieutenant. The order was given, and the boats started together towards the shore. They had not gone fifty yards before there was a roar of cannon, succeeded by the whistle of shot. Two masked batteries, one upon each side of the bay, and mounting each six guns, had opened upon them. The cutter, commanded by the second lieutenant, was smashed by a round shot and instantly sunk. A ball struck close to the stroke-oar of the gig, deluging its occupants with water and ricochetting over the gunwale of the boat, between the stroke-oar and Mr. Hethcote. Two shot hulled the "Falcon," and others whistled through her rigging.

"Pick up the crew of the cutter, Mr. Hethcote, and return on board at once," Captain Stuart shouted; the engines of the "Falcon" at once began to move, and the captain interposed the ship between the nearest battery and the boats, and a few seconds later her heavy guns, which had previously been got ready for action, opened upon the forts. In two minutes the boats were alongside with all hands, save one of the cutter's crew who had been cut in two by the round shot. The men, leaving the boats towing alongside, rushed to the guns, and the heavy fire of the "Falcon" speedily silenced her opponents. Then, as his object was to reconnoitre, not to fight, Captain Stuart steamed out to sea. He was determined, however, to obtain further information respecting the bay, which appeared to him one adapted for the purpose of landing.

"I will keep off till nightfall, Mr. Hethcote. We will then run in as close as we dare, showing no lights, and I will then ask you to take a boat with muffled oars to row to the village. Make your way among the houses as quietly as possible, and seize a couple of fishermen and bring them off with you. Our interpreter will be able to find out from them at any rate, general details as to the depth of water and the nature of the anchorage."

"Who shall I take with me, sir?"

"The regular gig's crew and Mr. Simmonds. He has passed, and it may give him a chance of promotion. I think, by the way, you may as well take the launch also; it carries a gun. Do not let the men from it land, but keep her lying a few yards off shore to cover your retreat if necessary. Mr. Pascoe will command it."

There was a deep but quiet excitement among the men when at nightfall the vessel's head was again turned towards shore, and the crews of the gig and launch told to hold themselves in readiness. Cutlasses were sharpened and pistols cleaned. Not less was the excitement in the midshipmen's berth, where it was known that Simmonds was to go in the gig; but no one knew who was to accompany the launch. However, Jack turned out to be the lucky one, Mr. Pascoe being probably glad to please the first lieutenant by selecting his relation, although that officer would not himself have shown favoritism on his behalf.

It was about eleven o'clock when the "Falcon" approached her former position, or rather to a point a mile seaward of it as nearly as the master could bring her, for the night was extremely dark and the land scarcely visible. Not a light was shown, not a voice raised on board, and the only sound

heard was the gentle splash of the paddles as they revolved at their slowest rate of speed. The falls had been greased, the rowlocks muffled, and the crew took their places in perfect silence.

"You understand, Mr. Hethcote," were Captain Stuart's last words, "that you are not to attempt a landing if there is the slightest opposition."

Very quietly the boats left the "Falcon's" side. They rowed abreast and close to each other, in order that the first lieutenant could give orders to Mr. Pascoe in a low tone. The men were ordered to row quietly, and to avoid any splashing or throwing up of water. It was a longer row than they had expected, and it was evident that the master, deceived by the uncertain light, had brought the vessel up at a point considerably farther from the shore than he had intended. As they got well in the bay they could see no lights in the village ahead; but an occasional gleam near the points at either side showed that the men in the batteries were awake and active. As the boat neared the shore the men rowed, according to the first lieutenant's orders, more and more gently, and at last, when the line of beach ahead became distinctly visible, the order was given to lie upon their oars. All listened intently, and then Mr. Hethcote put on his helm so that the boat which had still some way on it drifted even closer to the launch.

"Do you hear anything, Mr. Pascoe?"

"I don't know, sir. I don't seem to make out any distinct sound, but there certainly appears to be some sort of murmur in the air."

"So I think, too."

Again they listened.

"I don't know, sir," Jack whispered in Mr. Pascoe's ear, "but I fancy that at times I see a faint light right along behind those trees. It is very faint, but sometimes their outline seems clearer than at others."

Mr. Pascoe repeated in a low voice to Mr. Hethcote what Jack had remarked.

"I fancied so once or twice myself," he said. "There," he added suddenly, "that is the neigh of a horse. However, there may be horses anywhere. Now we will paddle slowly on. Lay within a boat's length of the shore, Mr. Pascoe, keep the gun trained on the village, and let the men hold their arms in readiness."

In another minute the gig's bow grated on the beach. "Quietly, lads," the first lieutenant said. "Step into the water without splashing. Then follow me as quickly as you can."

The beach was a sandy one, and the footsteps of the sailors were almost noiseless as they stole towards the village. The place seemed hushed in quiet, but just as they entered the little street a figure standing in the shade of a house rather larger than the rest, stepped forward and challenged, bringing, as he did so, his musket to the present. An instant later he fired, just as the words, "A Russian sentry," broke from the first lieutenant's lips. Almost simultaneously three or four other shots were fired at points along the beach. A rocket whizzed high in the air from each side of the bay, a bugle sounded the alarm, voices of command were heard, and, as if by enchantment, a chaos of sounds followed the deep silence which had before reigned, and from every house armed men poured out.

"Steady, lads, steady!" Mr. Hethcote shouted. "Fall back steadily. Keep together, don't fire a shot till you get to the boat; then give them a volley and jump on board. Now, retire at the double."

For a moment the Russians, as they poured from the houses, paused in ignorance of the direction of their foes, but a shout from the sentry indicated this, and a scattering fire was opened. This, however, was at once checked by the shout of the officer to dash forward with all speed after the enemy. As the mass of Russians rushed from the village, the howitzer in the bows of the launch poured a volley of grape into them, and checked their advance. However, from along the bushes on either side fresh assailants poured out.

"Jump on board, lads, jump on board!" Mr. Hethcote shouted, and each sailor, discharging his musket at the enemy, leapt into his place. "Give them a volley, Mr. Pascoe. Get your head round and row. Don't let the men waste time in firing."

The volley from the launch again momentarily checked the enemy, and just as she got round, another discharge from the gun further arrested them. The boats were not, however, thirty yards from the shore before this was lined with dark figures who opened a tremendous fire of musketry.

"Row, lads, row!" Mr. Pascoe shouted to his men. "We shall be out of their sight in another hundred yards."

CHAPTER VI. THE ALMA

Desperately the men bent to their oars, and the heavy boat surged through the water. Around them swept a storm of musket balls, and although the darkness and their haste rendered the fire of the Russians wild and uncertain, many of the shot took effect. With a sigh, Mr. Pascoe fell against Jack, who was sitting next to him, just at the moment when Jack himself experienced a sensation as if a hot iron had passed across his arm. Several of the men dropped their oars and fell back, but the boats still held rapidly on their way, and in two or three minutes were safe from anything but random shot. At this moment, however, three field pieces opened with grape, and the iron hail tore up the water near them. Fortunately they were now almost out of sight, and although the forts threw up rockets to light the bay, and joined their fire to that of the field guns, the boat escaped untouched.

"Thank God we are out of that!" Mr. Hethcote said, as the fire ceased and the boats headed for a light hung up to direct them.

"Have you many hurt, Mr. Pascoe?"

"I'm afraid, sir, Mr. Pascoe is either killed or badly wounded. He is lying against me, and gives no answer when I speak to him."

"Any one else hurt?" Mr. Hethcote asked in a moment.

The men exchanged a few words among themselves.

"There are five down in the bottom of the boat, sir, and six or seven of us have been hit more or less."

"It's a bad business," Mr. Hethcote said. "I have two killed and three wounded here. Are you hit yourself, Mr. Archer?"

"I've got a queer sensation in my arm, sir, and don't seem able to use it, so I suppose I am, but I don't think it's much."

"Pull away, lads," Mr. Hethcote said shortly. "Show a light there in the bow to the steamer."

The light was answered by a sharp whistle, and they heard the beat of the paddles of the "Falcon" as she came down towards them, and five minutes later the boats were hoisted to the davits. "No casualties, I hope, Mr. Hethcote?" Captain Stuart said, as the first lieutenant stepped on board. "You seem to have got into a nest of hornets."

"Yes, indeed, sir. There was a strong garrison in the village, and we have suffered, I fear heavily. Some eight or ten killed and as many wounded."

"Dear me, dear me!" Captain Stuart said. "This is an unfortunate circumstance, indeed. Mr. Manders, do you get the wounded on board and carried below. Will you step into my cabin, Mr. Hethcote, and give me full details of this unfortunate affair?"

Upon mustering the men, it was found that the total casualties in the two boats of the "Falcon" amounted to, Lieutenant Pascoe killed, Midshipman Archer wounded; ten seamen killed, and nine wounded. Jack's wound was more severe than he had at first thought. The ball had gone through the upper part of the arm, and had grazed and badly bruised the bone in its passage. The doctor said he would probably be some weeks before he would have his arm out of a sling. The "Falcon" spent another week in examining the Crimean coast, and then ran across again to Varna. Here everything was being pushed forward for the start. Over six hundred vessels were assembled, with a tonnage vastly exceeding that of any fleet that had ever sailed the seas. Twenty-seven thousand English and twenty-three thousand French were to be carried in this huge flotilla; for although the French army was considerably larger than the English, the means of sea-transport of the latter were vastly superior, and they were able to take across the whole of their army in a single trip; whereas, the French could convey but half of their force. Unfortunately, between Lord Raglan, the English Commander-in-

Chief, and Marshal Saint Arnaud, the French commander, there was little concert or agreement. The French, whose arrangements were far better, and whose movements were prompter than our own, were always complaining of British procrastination; while the English General went quietly on his own way, and certainly tried sorely the patience of our allies. Even when the whole of the allied armies were embarked, nothing had been settled beyond the fact that they were going to invade the Crimea, and the enormous fleet of men-of-war and transports, steamers with sailing vessels in tow, extending in lines farther than the eye could reach, and covering many square miles of the sea, sailed eastward without any fixed destination. The consequence was, as might be expected, a lamentable waste of time. Halts were called, councils were held, reconnaissances sent forward, and the vast fleet steamed aimlessly north, south, east, and west, until, when at last a landing-place was fixed upon, near Eupatoria, and the disembarkation was effected, fourteen precious days had been wasted over a journey which is generally performed in twenty-four hours, and which even the slowly moving transports might have easily accomplished in three days.

The consequence was the Russians had time to march round large bodies of troops from the other side, and the object of the expedition—the capture of Sebastopol by a *coup de main*—was altogether thwarted. No more imposing sight was ever seen than that witnessed by the bands of Cossacks on the low shores of the Crimea, when the allied fleets anchored a few miles south of Eupatoria. The front extended nine miles in length, and behind this came line after line of transports until the very topmasts of those in the rear scarce appeared above the horizon. The place selected for the landing-place was known as the Old Fort, a low strip of bush and shingle forming a causeway between the sea and a stagnant fresh-water lake, known as Lake Saki.

At eight o'clock in the morning of the 14th of September, the French admiral fired a gun, and in a little more than an hour six thousand of their troops were ashore, while the landing of the English did not commence till an hour after. The boats of the men-of-war and transports had already been told off for the ships carrying the light division, which was to be the first to land, and in a wonderfully short time the sea between the first line of ships and the shore was covered with a multitude of boats crowded with soldiers. The boats of the "Falcon" were employed with the rest, and as three weeks had elapsed since Jack had received his wound, he was able to take his share of duty, although his arm was still in a sling. The ship to which the "Falcon's" boats were told off lay next to that which had carried the 33d, and as he rowed past, he exchanged a shout and a wave of the hand with Harry, who was standing at the top of the companion-ladder, seeing the men of his company take their seats in the boats. It was a day of tremendous work. Each man and officer carried three days' provisions, and no tents or other unnecessary stores were to be landed. The artillery, however, had to be got ashore, and the work of landing the guns on the shingly beach was a laborious one indeed. The horses in vain tugged and strained, and the sailors leaped over into the water and worked breast high at the wheels, and so succeeded in getting them ashore. Jack had asked permission from Captain Stuart to spend the night on shore with his brother, and just as he was going off from the ship for the last time. Simmonds, who had obtained his acting commission in place of Mr. Pascoe, said, "Archer, I should advise you to take a tarpaulin and a couple of bottles of rum. They will be useful before morning, I can tell you, for we are going to have a nasty night."

Indeed the rain was already coming down steadily, and the wind was rising. Few of those who took part in it will ever forget their first night in the Crimea. The wind blew pitilessly, the rain poured down in torrents, and twenty-seven thousand Englishmen lay without shelter in the muddy fields, drenched to the skin. Jack had no trouble in finding his brother's regiment, which was in the advance, some two or three miles from the landing-place. Harry was delighted to see him, and the sight of the tarpaulin and bottles did not decrease the warmth of his welcome. Jack was already acquainted with most of the officers of the 33d.

"Hallo, Archer," a young ensign said, "if I had been in your place, I should have remained snugly on board ship. A nice night we are in for!"

So long as the daylight lasted, the officers stood in groups and chatted of the prospects of the campaign. There was nothing to do—no possibility of seeing to the comforts of their men. The place where the regiment was encamped was absolutely bare, and there were no means of procuring any shelter whatever.

"How big is that tarpaulin, Jack?"

"About twelve feet square," Jack said, "and pretty heavy I found it, I can tell you."

"What had we better do with it?" asked Harry. "I can't lie down under that, you know, with the colonel sitting out exposed to this rain."

"The best thing," Jack said after a minute's consideration, "would be to make a sort of tent of it. If we could put it up at a slant, some six feet high in front with its back to the wind, it would shelter a lot of fellows. We might hang some of the blankets at the sides."

The captain and lieutenant of Harry's company were taken into consultation, and with the aid of half a dozen soldiers, some muskets bound together and some ramrods, a penthouse shelter was made. Some sods were laid on the lower edge to keep it down. Each side was closed with two blankets. Some cords from one of the baggage carts were used as guy ropes to the corners, and a very snug shelter was constructed. This Harry invited the colonel and officers to use, and although the space was limited, the greater portion of them managed to sit down in it, those who could not find room taking up their places in front, where the tent afforded a considerable shelter from the wind and rain. No one thought of sleeping. Pipes were lighted, and Jack's two bottles of rum afforded a tot to each. The night could scarcely be called a comfortable one, even with these aids; but it was luxurious, indeed, in comparison with that passed by those exposed to the full force of the wind.

The next morning Jack said good-bye to his brother and the officers of the regiment, to whom he presented the tarpaulin for future use, and this was folded up and smuggled into an ammunition cart. It was not, of course, Jack's to give, being government property, but he would be able to pay the regulation price for it on his return. Half an hour later, Jack was on the beach, where a high surf was beating. All day the work of landing cavalry and artillery went on under the greatest difficulties. Many of the boats were staved and rendered useless, and several chargers drowned. It was evident that the weather was breaking up, and the ten days of lovely weather which had been wasted at sea were more bitterly regretted than ever. No tents were landed, and the troops remained wet to the skin, with the additional mortification of seeing their French allies snugly housed under canvas, while even the 4000 Turks had managed to bring their tents with them. The natural result was that sickness again attacked the troops, and hundreds were prostrated before, three days later, they met the enemy on the Alma. The French were ready to march on the 17th, but it was not until two days later, that the British were ready; then at nine o'clock in the morning the army advanced. The following is the list of the British force. The light division under Sir George Brown—2d Battalion Rifle Brigade, 7th Fusiliers, 19th Regiment, 23d Fusiliers, under Brigadier Major-General Codrington; 33d Regiment, 77th Regiment, 88th Regiment, under Brigadier-General Butler. First division, under the Duke of Cambridge—The Grenadier, Coldstream and Scots Fusilier Guards, under Major-General Bentinck; the 42d, 79th and 93d Highlanders, under Brigadier-General Sir C. Campbell. The second division, under Sir De Lacy Evans—The 30th, 55th, and 95th, under Brigadier-General Pennefather; the 41st, 47th and 49th, under Brigadier-General Adams. The third division under Sir R. England—The 1st, 28th and 38th under Brigadier-General Sir John Campbell; the 44th, 50th, and 68th Regiments under Brigadier-General Eyre. Six companies of the fourth were also attached to this division. The fourth division under Sir George Cathcart consisted of the 20th, 21st, 2d Battalion Rifle Brigade, 63d, 46th and 57th, the last two regiments, however, had not arrived. The cavalry division under Lord Lucan consisted of the Light Cavalry Brigade under Lord Cardigan, composed of the 4th Light Dragoons, the 8th Hussars, 11th Hussars, 13th Dragoons and 17th Lancers; and the Heavy Cavalry Brigade under Brigadier-General Scarlett, consisting of the Scots Greys, 4th Dragoon Guards, 5th Dragoon Guards, and 6th Dragoons. Of these the Scots Greys had not yet arrived.

It was a splendid sight, as the allied army got in motion. On the extreme right, and in advance next the sea, was the first division of the French army. Behind them, also by the sea, was the second division under General Canrobert, on the left of which marched the third division under Prince Napoleon. The fourth division and the Turks formed the rearguard. Next to the third French division was the second British, with the third in its rear in support. Next to the second division was the light division, with the Duke of Cambridge's division in the rear in support. The Light Cavalry Brigade covered the advance and left flank, while along the coast, parallel with the march of the troops, steamed the allied fleet, prepared, if necessary, to assist the army with their guns. All were in high spirits that the months of weary delay were at last over, and that they were about to meet the enemy. The troops saluted the hares which leaped out at their feet at every footstep as the broad array swept along, with shouts of laughter and yells, and during the halts numbers of the frightened creatures were knocked over and slung behind the knapsacks to furnish a meal at the night's bivouac. The smoke of burning villages and farmhouses ahead announced that the enemy were aware of our progress.

Presently, on an eminence across a wide plain, masses of the enemy's cavalry were visible. Five hundred of the Light Cavalry pushed on in front, and an equal number of Cossacks advanced to meet them. Lord Cardigan was about to give the order to charge when masses of heavy cavalry made their appearance. Suddenly one of these extended and a battery of Russian artillery opened fire upon the cavalry. Our artillery came to the front, and after a quarter of an hour's duel the Russians fell back; and soon after the army halted for the night, at a stream called the Boulyanak, six miles from the Alma, where the Russians, as was now known, were prepared to give battle. The weather had now cleared again, and all ranks were in high spirits as they sat round the bivouac fires.

"How savage they will be on board ship," Harry Archer said to Captain Lancaster, "to see us fighting a big battle without their having a hand in it. I almost wonder that they have not landed a body of marines and blue-jackets. The fleets could spare 4000 or 5000 men, and their help might be useful. Do you think the Russians will fight?"

"All soldiers will fight," Captain Lancaster said, "when they've got a strong position. It needs a very different sort of courage to lie down on the crest of a hill and fire at an enemy struggling up it in full view, to that which is necessary to make the assault. They have too all the advantage of knowing the ground, while we know absolutely nothing about it. I don't believe that the generals have any more idea than we have. It seems a happy-go-lucky way of fighting altogether. However, I have no doubt that we shall lick them somehow. It seems, though, a pity to take troops direct at a position which the enemy have chosen and fortified, when by a flank march, which in an undulating country like this could be performed without the slightest difficulty, we could turn the position and force them to retreat, without losing a man."

Such was the opinion of many other officers at the time. Such has been the opinion of every military critic since. Had the army made a flank march, the enemy must either have retired at once, or have been liable to an attack upon their right flank, when, if beaten, they would have been driven down to the sea-shore under the guns of the ships, and killed or captured, to a man. Unfortunately, however, owing to the jealousies between the two generals, the illness of Marshal Arnaud, and the incapacity of Lord Raglan, there was neither plan nor concert. The armies simply fought as they marched, each general of division doing his best and leading his men at that portion of the enemy's position which happened to be opposite to him. The sole understanding arrived at was that the armies were to march at six in the morning; that General Bosquet's division, which was next to the sea, was, covered by guns of the ships, to first carry the enemy's position there; and that when he had obtained a footing upon the plateau, a general attack was to be made. Even this plan, simple as it was, was not fully carried out, as Lord Raglan did not move his troops till nine in the morning. Three precious hours were therefore wasted, and a pursuit after the battle which would have turned the defeat into a rout was therefore prevented, and Sebastopol saved, to cost tens of thousands of lives before it fell. The Russian position on the Alma was along a crest of hills. On their left by the sea these rose

precipitously, offering great difficulties for an assault. Further inland, however, the slope became easy, and towards the right centre and right against which the English attack was directed, the hill was simply a slope broken into natural terraces, on which were many walls and vineyards. Near the sea the river ran between low banks, but inland the bank was much steeper, the south side rising some thirty or forty feet, and enabling its defenders to sweep the ground across which the assailants must advance. While on their left the Russian forces were not advanced in front of the hill which formed their position, on the lower ground they occupied the vineyards and inclosures down to the river, and their guns were placed in batteries on the steps of the slope, enabling them to search with their fire the whole hill-side as well as the flat ground beyond the river.

The attack, as intended, was begun by General Bosquet. Bonat's brigade crossed the river by a bar of sand across the mouth where the water was only waist-deep, while D'Autemarre's brigade crossed by a bridge, and both brigades swarmed up the precipitous cliffs which offered great difficulties, even to infantry. They achieved their object, without encountering any resistance whatever, the guns of the fleet having driven back the Russian regiment appointed to defend this post. The enemy brought up three batteries of artillery to regain the crest, but the French with tremendous exertions succeeded in getting up a battery of guns, and with their aid maintained the position they had gained.

When the sound of Bosquet's guns showed that his part of the programme was carried into effect, the second and third divisions of the French army crossed the Alma, and were soon fiercely engaged with the enemy. Canrobert's division for a time made little way, as the river was too deep for the passage of the guns, and these were forced to make a detour. Around a white stone tower some 800 yards on their left, dense masses of Russian infantry were drawn up, and these opened so tremendous a fire upon the French that for a time their advance was checked. One of the brigades from the fourth division, which was in reserve, advanced to their support, and joining with some of the regiments of Canrobert's division, and aided by troops whom General Bosquet had sent to their aid, a great rush was made upon the dense body of Russians, who, swept by the grape of the French artillery, were unable to stand the impetuous attack, and were forced to retire in confusion. The French pressed forward and at this point also of the field, the day was won.

In the mean time the British army had been also engaged. Long before they came in sight of the point which they were to attack they heard the roar of cannon on their right, and knew that Bosquet's division were engaged. As the troops marched over the crest of the rounded slopes they caught glimpses of the distant fight. They could see masses of Russian infantry threatening the French, gathered on the height, watch the puffs of smoke as the guns on either side sent their messengers of death, and the white smoke which hung over the fleet as the vessels of war threw their shells far over the heads of the French into the Russian masses. Soon they heard the louder roar which proclaimed that the main body of the French army were in action, and burning with impatience to begin, the men strode along to take their share in the fight. Until within a few hundred yards of the river the troops could see nothing of it, nor the village on its banks, for the ground dipped sharply. Before they reached the brow twelve Russian guns, placed on rising ground some 300 yards beyond the river, opened upon them.

"People may say what they like," Harry Archer said to his captain, "but a cannon-ball makes a horribly unpleasant row. It wouldn't be half as bad if they would but come silently."

As he spoke a round shot struck down two men a few files to his right. They were the first who fell in the 33d.

"Steady, lads, steady," shouted the officers, and as regularly as if on field-day, the English troops advanced. The Rifles, under Major Northcote, were ahead, and, dashing through the vineyards under a rain of fire, crossed the river, scaled the bank, and pushed forward to the top of the next slope. It was on the plateau beyond that the Russian main body were posted, and for a time the Rifles had hard work to maintain themselves. In the meantime, the Light Division were advancing in open

order, sometimes lying down, sometimes advancing, until they gained the vineyards. Here the regular order which they had so far maintained was lost, as the ground was broken up by hedges, stone walls, vines and trees. The 19th, 7th, 23d and 33d were then led, at a run, right to the river by General Codrington, their course being marked by killed and wounded, and crossing they sheltered themselves under the high bank. Such was the state of confusion in which they arrived there that a momentary pause was necessary to enable the men of the various regiments to gather together, and the enemy, taking advantage of this, brought down three battalions of infantry, who advanced close to the bank, and, as the four regiments dashed up it, met them with a tremendous fire. As hotly it was answered, and the Russians retired while their batteries again opened fire.

There was but little order in the British ranks as they struggled forward up the hill. Even under this tremendous fire the men paused to pick grapes, and all the exertions of their officers could not maintain the regular line of advance. From a rising ground a Russian regiment kept up a destructive fire upon them, and the guns in the batteries on their flank fired incessantly. The slaughter was tremendous, but the regiments held on their way unflinchingly. In a few minutes the 7th had lost a third of their men, and half the 23d were down. Not less was the storm of fire around the 33d. Confused, bewildered and stunned by the dreadful din, Harry Archer struggled on with his company. His voice was hoarse with shouting, though he himself could scarce hear the words he uttered. His lips were parched with excitement and the acrid smell of gunpowder. Man after man had fallen beside him, but he was yet untouched. There was no thought of fear or danger now. His whole soul seemed absorbed in the one thought of getting into the battery. Small as were the numbers who still struggled on, their determined advance began to disquiet the Russians. For the first time a doubt as to victory entered their minds. When the day began they felt assured of it. Their generals had told them that they would annihilate their foes, their priests had blessed them, and assured them of the protection and succor of the saints. But the British were still coming on, and would not be denied. The infantry behind the battery began to retire. The artillery, left unprotected, limbered up in haste, and although three times as numerous as the men of the Light Division, the Russians, still firing heavily, retired up the hill, while, with a shout of triumph the broken groups of the 23d, the 19th, and 33d burst into the battery, capturing a gun which the Russians had been unable to withdraw.

CHAPTER VII. BEFORE SEBASTOPOL

Not long were the Light Division to enjoy the position they had won. Breathless, exhausted, bleeding, they were but a handful; and the Russians, looking down upon them and seeing that they were unsupported, again advanced in heavy masses, and the Light Division fell back.

Had their division had the whole of their strength they might have been enabled to hold the position they had won. But just as they crossed the river, there was an unfounded alarm of a cavalry attack on the flank, and the 77th and 88th were halted to repel this, and took no share in the advance by the rest of the division.

As the shattered regiments fell back before the Russians in a state of disorder, they saw advancing up the slope behind them the brigade of Guards in as regular order as if on parade. For a moment the splendid formation was broken as the disordered troops came down upon them. But opening their files they allowed the Light Division to pass through them, and then closing up again moved forward in splendid order, the Highland Brigade keeping pace with them on their left, while the regiments of the Light Division reformed in their rear and followed after.

Steadily, under a storm of fire, the Guards advanced. Grape, canister, round shot, shell, and shot, swept through them but they kept forward till nigh crossing bayonets with the Russian infantry.

At this moment, however, two British guns mounted on a knoll opened upon the Russians, the victorious French threatened their flank, the Russian gunners limbered up and retired, and their infantry suddenly fell back.

On the right of the Light Division, General Sir De Lacy Evans had also been fighting sternly. The second division had advanced side by side with that of Prince Napoleon. The resistance which he encountered was obstinate, but more skilled in actual warfare than his brother generals, he covered his advance with the fire of eighteen guns, and so bore forward, suffering far less than the division on his left. He had, however, very heavy fighting before he gained the river. The village had been set on fire by the Russians, and the smoke and flames greatly incommoded the men as they fought their way through it. The 95th, however, dashed across the bridge under a storm of missiles, while the 55th and 30th waded through the river, and step by step won their way up the hill. Then the firing ceased, and the battle of Alma was won.

The force under the Russians consisted of some 37,000 men, of whom 3500 were cavalry. They had eighty guns, besides two light batteries of horse artillery. Inferior in number as they were, the discrepancy was more than outbalanced by the advantage of position, and had the troops on both sides been of equally good material, the honor of the day should have rested with the defenders.

The British loss consisted of 26 officers killed and 73 wounded, 327 men killed and 1557 wounded. The French had only 3 officers killed and 54 wounded, 253 men killed and 1033 wounded. The Turks were not engaged. The Russians lost 45 officers killed and 101 wounded, 1762 men killed and 2720 wounded. The Allied Army had 126 guns against 96 of the Russians; but the former, owing to the nature of the ground, played but a small part in the fight.

The whole of the loss fell upon a comparatively small number of the English regiments, and as the French had 9000 men in reserve who had not fired a shot, there was no season why the greater portion of the army, with all the cavalry, should not at once have followed on the track of the beaten Russians. Had they done so, the war in the Crimea would have been over in three days. That time, however, elapsed before a move was made. The reason assigned was the necessity of caring for the wounded and burying the dead. But this might have been committed to the hands of sailors and marines, of whom 5000 might have been landed at night; in which case the whole Allied Army could have marched at day break.

It was a sad sight when the four regiments of the Light Division mustered after their work was done. Hitherto in the confusion and fierce excitement of the fight, men marked not who stood and who fell. But now as the diminished regiments paraded, mere skeletons of the fine corps which had marched gayly from their camping-ground of the night before, the terrible extent of their losses was manifest. Tears rolled down the cheeks of strong men who had never flinched in the storm of fire, as they saw how many of their comrades were absent, and the glory of the victory was dimmed indeed by the sorrow for the dead.

"I wanted to see a battle," Harry Archer said to Captain Lancaster, who, like him, had gone through the fight without a scratch, "but this is more than I bargained for. To think of half one's friends and comrades gone, and all in about two hours' fighting. It has been a deadly affair, indeed."

"Yes, as far as we are concerned, Archer. But not for the whole army. I heard Doctor Alexander say just now that the casualties were about 1500, and that out of 27,000 men is a mere nothing to the proportion in many battles. The French have, I hear, lost rather less."

"I thought in a battle," Harry said, "one would see something of the general affair, but I certainly did not. In fact, from the time when we dashed up the river bank till the capture of the battery, I saw nothing. I knew there were some of our men by the side of me, and that we were all pushing forward, but beyond that I knew absolutely nothing. It was something like going through a tremendous thunder shower with one's head down, only a thousand times more so."

After parade the men scattered in groups; some went down to the river to fill their canteens, others strolled through the vineyards picking grapes, and in spite of the fact that in many places the dead lay thickly together, a careless laugh was sometimes heard. The regiments which had not been engaged were at work bringing in the wounded, and Doctor Alexander and his assistants were busy at the ghastly task of amputating limbs and extracting balls.

The next day a few officers from the fleet came up; among these was Hawtry, who was charged with a special mission from Jack, who could not again ask for leave, to inquire after his brother. The wounded were sent down in arabas and litters to the ships, a painful journey of three miles. The French wounded fared better, as they had well-appointed hospital vans. Seven hundred and fifty Russian wounded were collected and laid together, and were given in charge of the inhabitants of a Tartar village near; Dr. Thomson, of the 44th Regiment with a servant volunteering to remain in charge of them, with the certain risk of capture when the Russian troops returned after our departure.

On the morning of the 23d the army started, continuing its march along the road to Sebastopol, the way being marked not only by debris thrown away by the retreating Russians, but by the cottages and pretty villas having been sacked by the Cossacks as they retired.

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